

February 17

Lesson 12 (NIV)

OUR MIGHTY GOD

DEVOTIONAL READING: Psalm 114

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Psalm 66

PSALM 66:1-9, 16-20

- ¹ Shout for joy to God, all the earth!
² Sing the glory of his name;
make his praise glorious.
³ Say to God, “How awesome are
your deeds!
So great is your power
that your enemies cringe before
you.
⁴ All the earth bows down to you;
they sing praise to you,
they sing the praises of your
name.”
⁵ Come and see what God has done,
his awesome deeds for mankind!
⁶ He turned the sea into dry land,
they passed through the waters
on foot—
come, let us rejoice in him.
⁷ He rules forever by his power,
his eyes watch the nations—
let not the rebellious rise up
against him.
⁸ Praise our God, all peoples,
let the sound of his praise be

heard;

- ⁹ he has preserved our lives
and kept our feet from slipping.
¹⁶ Come and hear, all you who fear
God;
let me tell you what he has done
for me.
¹⁷ I cried out to him with my mouth;
his praise was on my tongue.
¹⁸ If I had cherished sin in my heart,
the Lord would not have lis-
tened;
¹⁹ but God has surely listened
and has heard my prayer.
²⁰ Praise be to God,
who has not rejected my prayer
or withheld his love from me!



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KEY VERSE

Shout for joy to God, all the
earth!—**Psalm 66:1**

OUR LOVE FOR GOD

Unit 3: Songs That Glorify the God of Love

LESSONS 11–13

LESSON AIMS

After participating in this lesson, each learner will be able to:

1. Identify the allusions in *Psalm 66* to God's rescue of Israel at the crossing of the Red Sea.
2. Discuss the impact that sharing one's personal testimony can have on other believers.
3. Write a prayer of gratitude to God for one way that he has shown his power in his or her life.

LESSON OUTLINE

Introduction

- A. The Mother of All Bombs
 - B. Lesson Context
- I. Come and Praise (*PSALM 66:1–4*)
 - A. Appeal Made to Everyone (vv. 1, 2)
Those Annoying Songs
 - B. Acclaim Given to God (vv. 3, 4)
 - II. Come and See (*PSALM 66:5–9*)
 - A. Recalling God's Deliverance (vv. 5, 6)
 - B. Rejoicing in God's Reign (vv. 7–9)

Power Without Electricity

- III. Come and Hear (*PSALM 66:16–20*)
 - A. Give Heed to My Testimony (vv. 16–19)
 - B. Give Praise to God (v. 20)

Conclusion

- A. Remembering Our History with God
- B. Prayer
- C. Thought to Remember

HOW TO SAY IT

Assyrian	Uh-sear-e-un.
Babylonian	Bab-ih-low-nee-un.
Canaanites	Kay-nun-ites.
Edomites	Ee-dum-ites.
Moabites	Mo-ub-ites.
Philippians	Fih-lip-ee-unz.
Philistines	Fuh-liss-teenz or Fill-us-teenz.
Selah	See-luh.
(Hebrew)	
Zechariah	Zek-uh-rye-uh.

Introduction

A. The Mother of All Bombs

As I sat down to write the draft for this commentary, the radio informed me that the US military had just dropped a MOAB (Massive Ordnance Air Blast) bomb in a strike in Afghanistan. Nick-

named the “Mother of All Bombs,” MOAB is the largest nonnuclear bomb in the US arsenal. Due to its massive size—21,000 pounds and 30 feet long—it can’t be delivered like other conventional bombs. It is transported within range of its target by a specially modified cargo plane, released, and then remotely guided to its target. One MOAB yields an explosive force equivalent to 11 tons of TNT.

The power of the bomb wasn’t limited to the battlefield. The MOAB also took over the news cycle. Whatever else the commentators planned on discussing that day fell by the wayside. Pundits debated whether such a show of force was justified and speculated on the political implications of the event. Others wondered if there was justification for such a weapon to exist at all. Throughout the day, world governments weighed in with messages of support or condemnation regarding the use of the bomb. The entire world took notice when a weapon of that magnitude was unleashed.

Psalm 66 explores a different type of might—God’s power. God’s mighty acts toward Israel were so great that every nation had to take notice and react.

B. Lesson Context

Traditionally, the Psalms are seen as a collection of five books. These five are Psalms 1-41; 42-72; 73-89; 90-106, and

107-150. Our texts for today and last week fall in the second of these five books. As overall characteristics, the psalms of this second book feature relatively many songs of trust and/or complaint plus some praise hymns.

The five books that compose the Psalms are seen to consist of subcollections that share similar themes. In that light, today’s text from Psalm 66 fits with the short collection Psalms 65-68. These four songs focus on the entire earth and all her nations. The nations are depicted as confessing (or needing to confess) God’s power and praising (or needing to praise) him for his just rule.

This concern in Psalm 66 with other nations’ worship of God has led scholars to wonder if an international crisis was the background for its writing. Two possibilities are usually suggested. One is the Assyrian crisis of 701 BC (see 2 Kings 18:13-19:36); the other is after the release from Babylonian captivity. The date of the psalm’s writing under the latter proposal would be after the rebuilding of the temple in 515 BC, since Psalm 66:13 refers to that structure (compare Ezra 6:15).

No one knows which theory (if either) is correct. Yet this uncertainty does not rob the psalm of its dynamic power. It can be applied to any deliverance the people of God experience.

Remembering that psalms are ancient

Israel's worship songs, [Psalm 66](#) presents itself as five stanzas. These five consist of verses [1-4](#), [5-7](#), [8-12](#), [13-15](#), and [16-20](#). Three of the stanza transitions are marked by the word *Selah*, occurring at the ends of verses [4](#), [7](#), and [15](#) (see footnote of 2011 NIV on verse [4](#)). One stanza transition is marked by the psalmist's shift to writing in the first person in verse [13](#). Today's lesson explores the first two stanzas in full, part of the third stanza, and the entirety of the fifth.

I. Come and Praise ([PSALM 66:1-4](#))

A. Appeal Made to Everyone (vv. [1](#), [2](#))

1. Shout for joy to God, all the earth!

The hymn opens with a roar as *all the earth* is charged to *shout for joy* in acknowledgement of the one true *God*. Since his works are not constrained within the borders of Israel, every nation everywhere is challenged to join Israel in worshipping him. The same challenge concludes the stanza (see below). The imperative *shout for joy* suggests to some the idea of a triumphant army celebrating a victory (see also [Psalms 81:1](#); [95:1](#); [98:4](#); [100:1](#)).

2. Sing the glory of his name; make his praise glorious.

The nature of the joyful noise is now refined in terms of *the glory* that God is

due. The challenge for the crowd to sing in such a manner as to *make his praise glorious* allows no half-hearted or insincere praise! The word *glorious* captures the idea of an individual's reputation in the community and how others regard that person (compare [Psalms 79:9](#); [86:9](#); [Isaiah 42:8, 12](#)).

The Hebrew words for *glory* and *glorious* are based on a root that means "heavy" in various contexts. Some students propose, therefore, that to glorify someone is to add weight to his or her reputation. But conclusions regarding such added meanings are best avoided unless the author makes it clear that it is intended. One example of such an intention seems to be [2 Corinthians 4:17](#), where Paul—writing in Greek while having an expert knowledge of Hebrew—speaks of a "glory that far outweighs them all." A play on the common Hebrew root for the words *heavy* and *glory* is obvious in this case, given the construction of the sentence. But the same is not obvious in [Psalm 66:2](#).

We may wonder how our singing glorifies God's *name*. Is it through the skill of our voices, the level of our sincerity, the volume that results, or the nature of the lyrics? The psalmist doesn't specify, but undoubtedly the level of our sincerity is the starting point for honoring the name of God.

What Do You Think?

Other than congregational singing, what are some other ways we can bring honor to God's name and reputation?

Digging Deeper

Conversely, what are some ways that we may inadvertently detract from God's reputation?

THOSE ANNOYING SONGS

It's happened to all of us: we get a song stuck in our head—one that goes around and around without end. That can be so annoying!

I've found that a short stint in children's church can do just that. "Father Abraham had many sons. Many sons had Father Abraham. I am one of them, and so are you. So let's just praise the Lord. Right arm?..."

There—I've planted the seed. "Father Abraham" will run through your mind all day long!

Though a song stuck in one's head may be annoying, it is not damaging. But some thoughts that stick in our heads can indeed do great damage to us, thoughts like these: *No one loves me. I always blow it. There's no hope for me. I never do anything right.*

Where do such thoughts originate? They are planted in our minds by our

enemy. Satan keeps singing the same choruses over and over to us. It is a song with the title "God Does Not Care for You."

How do you get rid of the devil's songs that get stuck in your head? The wrong approach is to try to force those songs out of your head by strength of will; even if you succeed, they will merely return later (compare [Luke 11:24-26](#)). The right approach is to replace those songs with better ones. The Psalms, the hymnbook of ancient Israel, is a good place to find some great songs. They are life-giving and faith-building.

Genuine worship will renew your heart. Sing songs of praise like you mean it.

By the way, Father Abraham *did* have many sons. I am one of them, and so are you. So let's just praise the Lord!

—C. T.

B. Acclaim Given to God (vv. 3, 4)

3. Say to God, "How awesome are your deeds! So great is your power that your enemies cringe before you.

Having addressed the peoples of all lands in the first two verses, the psalmist now instructs them in a proper way to address God, whose *deeds are awesome*. So *great* are God's deeds of *power* that his *enemies* have no choice but to *cringe before* him. Compare David's use of the same word as translated *cover* in [2 Samuel](#)

22:44–46 and its parallel [Psalm 18:43–45](#) (the 1984 NIV uses “cringing” and “cringe”). Even God’s enemies will offer homage (cringe) before him, though not from the heart.

4. “All the earth bows down to you; they sing praise to you, they sing the praises of your name.”

We should be careful in understanding the sense of *all the earth bows down to you*. In both the psalmist’s day and ours, most peoples of the earth do not worship the one true God. Thus this phrase should be understood as prophetic.; this conclusion is supported by the tense of the Hebrew verb translated *bows down*. The Scriptures foretell a time when the entire world will worship Jesus (see [Romans 14:11](#); [Philippians 2:10](#)).

From the very beginning, God’s plan has been to use Israel as the beachhead from which he brings salvation to all the nations ([Genesis 12:1–3](#); [22:17, 18](#)). We know this is accomplished through Jesus and the spread of the gospel ([Isaiah 49:6](#); [Matthew 28:19, 20](#); [Acts 13:47](#)).

When Jesus returns, he will come not as a suffering servant but as a conqueror. Then all the nations of the world will submit either out of heartfelt worship or begrudging obligation. [Revelation 15:3, 4](#) predicts that those in Christ will sing the Song of Moses: “Great and marvelous are your deeds, Lord God Almighty. Just and

true are your ways, King of the nations.”

Regarding the footnoted word *Selah*, see the [Lesson Context](#).

II. Come and See ([PSALM 66:5–9](#))

A. Recalling God’s Deliverance (vv. 5, 6)

5. Come and see what God has done, his awesome deeds for mankind!

Echoing his own words in [Psalm 66:3](#), above, the psalmist stresses anew why everyone should worship the Lord: his *works* toward humanity are *awesome*, again in the sense of inspiring terror or awe. What the psalmist implores the reader to *come and see* is the topic of the next verse.

6. He turned the sea into dry land, they passed through the waters on foot—come, let us rejoice in him.

Specifically, the psalmist invites his audience to ponder anew what God did in the exodus. By the time God *turned the sea into dry land* to allow the Israelites to pass *through the waters on foot* ([Exodus 14:21, 22](#)), he had already worked 10 miracles in the form of plagues ([Exodus 7–11](#)). When the people saw the bodies of the Egyptian soldiers washed up on the beaches, they “feared the Lord ... and put their trust in him” ([14:31](#)). Next came rejoicing ([15:1–21](#)). Every subsequent generation of Israelites should *rejoice in him*, as well, in remem-

bering these facts (compare [1 Corinthians 10:1](#)).

[Psalm 66:2](#) refers to God's glory or reputation. Here we are given a tangible way that God established his reputation among "mankind" ([66:5](#)). The Song of Moses describes the fear that would fall over the Philistines, Edomites, Moabites, and Canaanites—all peoples that Israel would eventually face in their conquest of the promised land—when they learned how God mightily delivered his people ([Exodus 15:14–16](#)).

What Do You Think?

What steps can we take to remind each other of our victorious history with God?

Digging Deeper

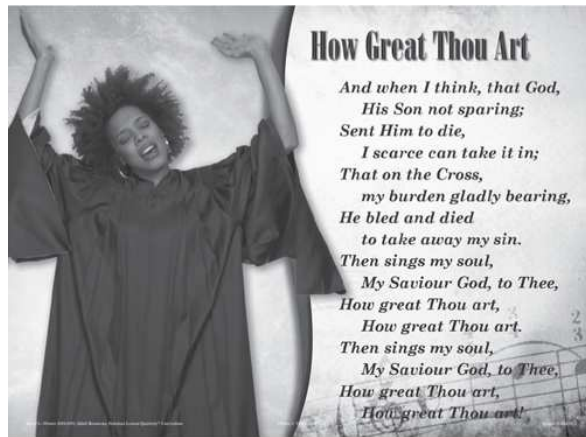
Which biblical figure in [Hebrews 11](#) convinces you most of the importance of this question? Why?

B. Rejoicing in God's Reign (vv. 7–9)

7. He rules forever by his power, his eyes watch the nations—let not the rebellious rise up against him.

The readers cannot be reminded too often of God's eternal rule in power. The Song of Moses ends with this declaration: "The Lord reigns for ever and ever" ([Exodus 15:18](#)). It is God who is the king of all the earth. In that capacity, he rules with great power and his accom-

plishments are awesome (compare [Psalm 145:13](#)).



Visual for Lessons 11 & 12. Associate this with the question for v. 18 as you ask, "What role does singing play in indicating the condition of the heart?"

As he rules, he sees everything. Nothing escapes his notice. He is able to watch the nations easily because he is sovereign over them as well as over Israel (compare [Exodus 3:16](#); [Psalm 11:4](#)).

Any nation can suffer the consequences of being an enemy of God. Rebellion is always characterized by defiance of a higher authority. In effect, those who do so justify their actions by switching allegiance to a different authority. Often that different authority is merely the rebels themselves as they attempt to become autonomous; thus do the rebellious rise up against him.

But no rebellion against God ever results in good. Before a nation, society, or person dares try to exalt self above

God, the lessons of history should be consulted!

Again, see the [Lesson Context](#) regarding the word *Selah*.

POWER WITHOUT ELECTRICITY

A thunderstorm rolled through, and the power went out. Our praise team was unplugged. No electric guitars, no electric keyboard, no microphones, and no overhead projectors. Our power for worship was gone.

No electricity also meant no lights and no air conditioning. Our sanctuary has no windows that can be opened, and it was cloudy outside; so the room was very dimly lit.

But as the service started, a cool breeze began to blow through the open doors. The aroma of fresh-fallen rain was exhilarating. The room brightened a bit as the clouds rolled back. We began praising Jesus to the accompaniment of a piano. It turned into a morning blessed by God.

Before we started the service, the elders and I prayed that God would get the power turned on ... and he did! It was a powerful worship service. We praised God. We fed on the Word of God and the bread of life. We still didn't have any electricity, but there was no shortage of power.

By the time we dismissed, the clouds

were gone. I was locking up, a little past noon, when the lights came back on. "Go figure," I said to myself. But then I said, "Thank you, Lord, for turning on the power before the power came on."

What a great day in the Lord it turned out to be! Thinking about it makes me want to flip off all the circuit breakers this coming Sunday. Or perhaps I should leave to the Lord what level, type, and source of power we should experience. How often do you let earthly types of power—electrical or otherwise—pull your gaze away from the ultimate source of power? See [Zechariah 4:6](#).

—C. T.

What Do You Think?

What Scriptures will you memorize to remind yourself during times of crisis that the sovereign God is the ultimate source of power?

Digging Deeper

How can you ensure that your recall of such Scriptures during crisis doesn't end up being an empty mantra?

8. Praise our God, all peoples, let the sound of his praise be heard;

As we read the psalmist's exhortation to the Israelites here, we remind ourselves that Christians inherit this mandate. It is both a privilege and a responsibility to *let the sound of his praise be heard*.

The recipients of God's generosity need to take the lead in worshipping him. How much more this is true for Christians today, who are aware of the great salvation provided by Jesus Christ (compare [1 Corinthians 10:11](#))!

9. he has preserved our lives and kept our feet from slipping.

The reason for this renewed praise is God's continuing care for his people. The God who rescued an entire nation in the exodus is more than capable of preserving every individual *life* (compare [Psalm 30:3](#)).

The psalmist's generation may have experienced a life-threatening event (see the [Lesson Context](#)). Yet God sustains those who remain loyal to him (compare [1 Kings 19:18](#); [Romans 11:4](#)). Life is always precarious and precious. Without God's constant care, we are dead. The fact that he *kept our feet from slipping* should assure us that we need not rely on our own power. That is what the wicked do, and they ultimately lose (compare [Deuteronomy 32:35](#); [Job 12:5](#)).

**III. Come and Hear
(PSALM 66:16-20)**

A. Give Heed to My Testimony (vv. 16-19)

16. Come and hear, all you who fear God; let me tell you what he has done for

me.

As we rejoin the psalm in the final stanza, the scene has changed again. In the first stanza ([Psalm 66:1-4](#)), all the nations are challenged to praise God. In the second stanza ([66:5-7](#)), Israel is to lead the praise before the nations by recounting God's mighty rescue of his people from Egypt. The third stanza ([66:8-12](#)) recalls either the exodus or a more recent time of trouble and rescue. In the fourth stanza ([66:13-15](#)), the psalmist personally vows to offer sacrifices extravagantly to God as a response to his recent rescue.

Now, in the fifth and final stanza ([66:16-20](#)), the psalmist begins a personal testimony regarding God's work in his life. His personal experience is about to become one of public declaration.

What Do You Think?

What preparations can you make to ensure that the story of what God has done in your life endures as a witness to the next generation?

Digging Deeper

Should drafting your own eulogy be part of this effort? Why, or why not?

17. I cried out to him with my mouth; his praise was on my tongue.

This is another instance of parallelism that so often characterizes Hebrew

poetry, with the words *cried, him, and my mouth* in the first statement reflecting *praise, his, and my tongue* in the second expression, respectively. Thus it would be a mistake to think the psalmist is saying two different things. He is actually offering one thought, which he repeats with similar words.

This singular thought is important: instead of immediately asking for help or complaining about something, the psalmist *praised* God. This reminds us that our praise of God should come first, no matter the circumstances of life.

18. If I had cherished sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened;

This acknowledgment is also reflected by David in [Psalm 32:3-5](#). The psalmist knows that the condition of his *heart* matters to God. There are certain conditions that hinder the effectiveness of prayers (examples: [Lamentations 3:40-44](#); [1 Peter 3:7](#)), and unconfessed *sin* is certainly one of them.

What Do You Think?

What plan can you enact to ensure that you take inventory on the condition of your heart on a regular basis?

Digging Deeper

Is this something that others can assist with, or is it strictly personal? Why?

19. but God has surely listened and has heard my prayer.

The psalmist recognizes that *God* has, in fact, *heard* him. Given this successful outcome, the reader may be tempted to draw up a checklist of the various points of the previous verses that lead up to here. That may be useful in terms of the broad contours that prayer should take. But we should always caution ourselves that God is not like a fictional genie who grants our wishes as long as we follow a certain procedure.

B. Give Praise to God (v. 20)

20. Praise be to God, who has not rejected my prayer or withheld his love from me!

In closing, the psalmist voices a praise blessing to God for attending to the psalmist's prayer. Prayers to fictional gods are never heard ([Psalm 115:4-6](#)), and praying to the one true God is no guarantee that he will listen. (Compare [Jeremiah 11:11](#): "Therefore this is what the Lord says: 'I will bring on them a disaster they cannot escape. Although they cry out to me, I will not listen to them'"; also [14:12](#).)

Going hand in hand with the psalmist's prayer being heard is God's continuing *love*. The word being translated occurs about 250 times in the Old Testament., with varying translations such as "great love" ([Psalm 17:7](#)).

Conclusion

A. Remembering Our History with God

Despite the circumstances in the psalmist's day, God was still sovereign and all-powerful. He was still worthy of praise. He was still the judge who ruled all nations and knew the true condition of every individual human heart.

All the above remains true today. Although we are surrounded by those who do not fear God, we can do so nonetheless. Although we are surrounded by those who do not praise God, we can do so nonetheless. We can make a commitment to remind ourselves continually of his history with us. We can also encourage each other by sharing our personal testimonies of how he has demonstrated his strength in our lives.

As we do (or, perhaps, because we do), we will find ourselves submitting to his ways, regardless of whether those around us do so as well.

B. Prayer

Lord God, we know that you are always good and always strong, regardless of our circumstances. We praise you for the times when you have been our mighty deliverer. We pray this in the name of Jesus, the mighty who delivers us from sin. Amen.

C. Thought to Remember

Praise reminds us of God's might, and God's might reminds us to praise.

INVOLVEMENT LEARNING

Enhance your lesson with [NIV Bible](#)
Student

Into the Lesson

As the class settles in, announce, “We are going to play a little ‘Name That Tune.’ As I hum the tunes, just shout out the title if you know it.” Choose tunes from secular culture that are familiar to your learners—show tunes, kid songs, classic rock, country, etc. If you are not musical, ask someone with musical talent to do this for you.

Option 1. Place in chairs copies of the “Sing and Shout” crossword puzzle from the reproducible page, which you can download, for learners to begin working on as they arrive. *Option 2.* Distribute the crossword puzzle as a take-home activity at the conclusion of class.

After either activity, introduce Bible study by saying, “Secular culture uses music in ways that do not honor God. But when we lift up voices in praise to God, it is music to his ears. Let’s explore reasons to shout for joy to our Creator.”

Into the Word

Have students take turns reading the eight verses of [Psalm 66:1-9, 16-20](#). Then form students into three smaller groups,

each to come up with a two-minute radio-commercial jingle that praises God for his mighty works. Announce that groups are free to choose whatever music genre they desire for their commercials: soul, country, jazz, Christian rap.

Option 1. If groups find it too difficult to come up with both lyrics and tune, suggest they start with a familiar jingle and rewrite the words while keeping the tune. Be ready to suggest some jingles as examples for groups that are still stuck.

Option 2. You can flip the above option and suggest groups use the words of the lesson text as lyrics they will put to a tune of their own creation.

Allow groups several minutes to complete the assignment. Offer the chance do a live performance before the class to any group open to doing so. Discuss why this task was hard (or easy).

Option. Distribute handouts (you create) that are headed this way:

*God’s mighty deeds of
Creation / Deliverance from Egypt /
Salvation*

Form small groups and assign each group one of the three topics in the second line. Say, “[Psalm 66](#) leads us to praise God joyfully for his mighty deeds. Use the next few minutes to list from the text specific actions by God in your assigned category that make him worthy of

praise.” Allow time for groups to share their resulting lists.

to allow learners a time for personal confession and reflection.] With hearts lifted in gratitude, we pray in Jesus’ name. Amen.”

Into Life

Make a transition by saying, “We live in a noisy world, but so many of the sounds we hear involve arrogant boasting. ‘I did this. I am incredible. Look at me!’ But the psalmist reminds us to put the spotlight on God.”

Have students pair off to discuss something great that God has done in their lives. After allowing time for volunteers to share their stories, ask, “Don’t you feel encouraged by hearing these stories? How can we do a better job of telling others about how God has blessed us?” Encourage free discussion and brainstorming.

Wrap up by asking each person to write a prayer of gratitude to God for one way he has shown his greatness and power to him or her. Offer volunteers the chance to read their prayers aloud. Time permitting, discuss reasons (excuses) people fool themselves with for not praising God. (*Option.* Use the “Boasting About God” activity from the reproducible page to explore another angle regarding praise of God.)

Close with this prayer: “We praise you mightily on Sundays, O Lord! But during the week we often fall short in doing so. Forgive us when we fail. [*Pause*