



WOODLAND HEIGHTS

CHRISTIAN CHURCH

The Power of Praise Series Part #1 – The Power of Praising God

Small Group Discussion Guide on Psalm 136:1-9, 26

Woodland Heights Christian Church Core Value Connection

This sermon on Psalm 136:1-9, 26 aligns with the core value of **Worship** at Woodland Heights Christian Church. Worship is about offering every part of our lives—including our daily work—as a living sacrifice to God, transforming ordinary tasks into acts of praise and devotion (Romans 12:1).

The sermon's call to move from paycheck to praise echoes the heart of true worship: living wholeheartedly for the Lord in all circumstances, not just in song or sanctuary. This message challenges us to deepen our worship beyond Sunday gatherings, aligning with our church's mission to "Reach, Teach, and Serve others for the Cause of Christ" as we train disciples who glorify God in the marketplace, reflecting His eternal worth through integrity, gratitude, and purpose in every effort (1 Corinthians 10:31).

Section #1 – ENCOUNTER

"Observing God's Word"

Imagine a weary soul caught in the whirlwind of daily frustrations—traffic jams, endless to-do lists, and unexpected setbacks—yet pausing to lift a voice in praise, declaring God's goodness amid the storm. Suddenly, perspective shifts; chaos fades as the heart anchors in the unchanging love of the Creator. In Psalm 136:1-9, 26, the psalmist's repetitive refrain echoes like a heartbeat, reminding us that God's steadfast love endures forever, turning ordinary thanksgiving into a powerful act of worship. Let's dive into this passage and discover how God invites us to experience the transformative power of praise in our own lives.

Let's start our study by anchoring ourselves in Scripture. Read Psalm 136:1-9, 26 (ESV) as a group, family, or an individual, letting God's Word sink in. Picture the scene: The psalmist composing this hymn of victory, calling God's people to respond to His character and works with overflowing gratitude.

Core Questions

- What do you notice about the words and instructions of the Psalmist in this passage? Why is this relevant?
- What are key words, phrases, or themes that grab your attention in this text?
- What is the main lesson or lessons that you learn about the character of God from Psalm 136?

Section #2 – EXPLORE

“Understanding the Passage and Sermon”

Let's unpack the psalmist's hymn of praise with questions that connect the sermon's insights to our lives. Discuss these as a group or reflect on them as an individual. We'll dive deeper into the three power-packed points outlined in the message, exploring how they challenge us to shift from grumbling to gratitude, drawing from historical examples, cultural context, scientific insights, and practical applications.

Quote – “Praise is the key that releases the power of God in the darkest night.” – **Joni Eareckson Tada**

- What does the quote from Joni Eareckson Tada teach us today? Why is this an important lesson to remember, especially in a culture where over 70% of people report feeling overwhelmed by stress according to recent health surveys?

Point #1 – Praise God for His Goodness and Sovereignty, Recognizing Him as the Ultimate Authority (Psalm 136:1-3)

The psalmist declares, “Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever. Give thanks to the God of gods, for his steadfast love endures forever. Give thanks to the Lord of lords, for his steadfast love endures forever” (Psalm 136:1-3).

The sermon highlights how this opening call to praise shifts our focus from life's chaos to God's unchanging character revealing that God reigns supreme. The repeated phrase, “for his steadfast love endures forever,” emphasizes covenant love (*hesed* in Hebrew), an enduring commitment that outlasts circumstances.

- How does the emphasis on God's goodness and lordship challenge the common tendency to grumble in difficult times? Reflect on a time when your focus was more on problems than on praising God's sovereignty.
- How does this Psalm encourage modern Christians facing cultural pressures or distractions to choose gratitude over dissatisfaction?
- Have you experienced how praising God's sovereignty equipped you for challenges? How can this inspire you today?

Point #2 – Experience the Heart of the Hymn of Victory in Your Life by Praising God for His Mighty Works (Psalm 136:4-9)

The psalmist continues praising the Lord in verses 4-9 by the majestic recounting of creation which transforms praise into a response to God's power. The sermon notes that in our culture, where cynicism and randomness dominate worldviews, this mindset shifts focus from chaos to covenant, making every act of praise a counter to despair.

Scientific research from Dr. Caroline Leaf supports this: gratitude rewires the brain through neuroplasticity, reducing stress pathways and boosting emotional stability, with studies showing regular practice lowers stress and enhances resilience. This illustrates how thanking God for specific wonders renews the mind, combating anxiety and restoring purpose.

- What does the phrase “for his steadfast love endures forever” reveal about the eternal value of God's creative works? How might viewing creation as a “love story” change your daily approach to praise?

- The sermon cites Dr. Caroline Leaf’s research on gratitude’s brain-rewiring effects. Share a personal example of feeling overwhelmed – how can praising God’s mighty works bring renewed purpose and impact others?

Point #3 – Discover God’s Unshakable Love as You Praise the Author of Everlasting Life (Psalm 136:26)

The psalmist concludes, “Give thanks to the God of heaven, for his steadfast love endures forever” (Psalm 136:26). This wide-angle view reminds us that our true Master is the God who rules over all, judging impartially and rewarding faithfulness with eternal inheritance. The sermon illustrates that a 21-day gratitude practice shifts mindsets to detoxify negative thoughts and foster positivity.

- What does the title “God of heaven” reveal about His fairness and boundless love? How does this encourage you when facing unfair treatment or trials?
- Have you had a moment where praise shifted your perspective on pain? What steps can you take to praise with greater expectation?

Section #3 – EMBRACE

“Applying God’s Word”

Go deeper into the Word of God by applying what you’ve learned to your life today. Reflect on these action steps and discuss how you can live out the truths from Psalm 136:1-9, 26.

- **Identify Your Focus Shift:** Think of an area in your life where chaos overshadows Christ – perhaps stress at work or family tensions. Write down one specific step you can take this week to pause and praise God’s goodness, like the psalmist, to rewire your perspective.
- **Practice Daily Gratitude:** Inspired by the 21-day challenge, start a thanksgiving journal. Each day, note three things from creation or God’s provision, thanking Him for His steadfast love. Spend a moment in prayer, asking God to reveal how this builds resilience in your soul.
- **Share Contagious Praise:** Praise multiplies joy, as the sermon notes. Commit to one act of gratitude this week that impacts others, such as thanking a friend for their kindness or sharing God’s love in a conversation. Discuss with the group how you can support each other in living this out.
- **Memorize and Reflect:** Memorize the sermon’s memory verse, Psalm 136:26 (ESV): “Give thanks to the God of heaven, for his steadfast love endures forever.” Reflect on how this transforms your view of life’s challenges and invites God’s power into your daily routine. Share with the group how this verse challenges or inspires you.

Closing Challenge and Prayer

As a group, pray for one another to embrace the power of praise, just as the psalmist did. Encourage each member to take at least one of the action steps above and follow up next week to share how God worked through their gratitude. Consider participating in a Sunday School class or inviting someone new to join your small group to continue growing in faith together.