

Small Group Study Guide for

The 30-Day Praise Challenge

By
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A Message to Small Group Leaders

Dear Friend,

I am so glad you have chosen to journey through The 30-Day Praise Challenge with friends. Spiritual growth happens best in the context of community. With that in mind, this small-group material is designed with authenticity in mind. The questions in this guide do not have “right” or “wrong” answers. They are simply designed to facilitate honest conversation about your praise experience. Share only what you feel comfortable sharing with your group. My suggestion is that each member of the group commit to confidentiality between members so that your small group feels safe.

This five-week study covers a progression in your praise journey. The first week is built around the theme of your longings. The second week centers on the themes of awakening to God’s presence and enjoying Him. The third week focuses on the themes of trusting and thanking God. The fourth week considers surrendering and resting in God. The final week emphasizes the themes of overcoming and persevering in your journey of praise.

My prayer for you is that you will be able to gather with some close friends to process all that God teaches you as you journey through The 30-Day Praise Challenge, and that in the journey, you will fall more deeply and passionately in love with Jesus Christ. May He bless you beyond what you can imagine!

I’d love to hear about your experience with *The 30-Day Praise Challenge*! Please contact me at becky@beckyharling.com.

Blessings and joy,
Becky Harling

Week 1

Longing

(Psalm 63)

Introduction:

God created us with deep sense of longing. Hudson Taylor, the founder of China Inland Mission, called these longings “heart thirsts” and “soul-thirsts.” I love those phrases, because they describe the deep inner ache of our souls. Many of us run from, hide from, or anesthetize our longings. God wants us to feel our longings. He created us with a deep ache in our heart that only He can fill. One of the deepest needs of our souls is to *adore*: love, honor, and worship someone who will never disappoint. This is one of the reasons praising God is so important. It’s not that God is some insecure egotist who continually needs us to tell Him how great He is—rather, it’s that our souls ache with the desire to adore. The most amazing truth is that as we adore Him, we discover that His heart has been longing for us.

1. One of our longings is for community—both community with each other and community with God. Take a few moments and have each person in your group introduce themselves and why they chose to be a part of this study.
2. As a group, make a list of some of the longings of the human heart. Then share with your group a longing you have personally experienced.
3. When you hear the word *praise*, what comes to mind?
4. How would you describe to a friend the difference between praising God and praying to God?
5. Read Psalm 63. David wrote this psalm while he was in the desert. We all experience times in emotional deserts. God can use those times to awaken in us a deeper longing for Him. Look through this Psalm. Choose one word to describe the intensity of David’s longing.
6. What intentional choices does David make to connect more deeply with God?
7. David writes, “My soul will be satisfied as with the richest of foods; with singing lips my mouth will praise you” (Psalm 63:5). In what ways do you feel

God can satisfy your soul? Do you think complete satisfaction is possible? Why or why not?

8. How might you arrange your schedule to fit praise into your life? Discuss your ideas for making time for the challenge as a group.

9. What changes would you like to see in yourself as a result of taking *The 30-Day Praise Challenge*?

Group Praise Time:

Listen to “The Longing” by All Sons and Daughters.

Then spend some time as a group praising God that He alone can satisfy the deepest longings of your soul.

Week 2

Awakening and Enjoying

(Following Days 1–7)

Introduction:

As we become intentional about praising God, the Holy Spirit begins to awaken in our souls a deeper understanding and experience of God's presence. As the Holy Spirit awakens our hearts to God's presence, we become more keenly aware that He is the answer to all of our longings, and we begin to enjoy God.

1. Read Psalm 84:1–4. The Sons of Korah, the writers of this Psalm, express an intense longing for God's presence. If God is everpresent, why do you think we have such difficulty feeling His presence?
2. Read Psalm 84:5–7. The Valley of Baca was called the "valley of weeping." Has there ever been a time in your life when you felt like you were living in the valley of weeping? Share with the group the circumstances of that dark season. Do you think it is hypocritical to praise God when you are sad or grieving? Why, or why not?
3. Read Psalm 57:7–11. What part do you feel praise plays in experiencing God's presence?
4. Describe a time when you experienced the presence of God in a way that felt tangible. (Have each person in the group who feels comfortable share their experiences.) Are there commonalities in the stories? If so, what are they?

Reflecting Back on Your Week:

1. As a group reflect back on your first week of the praise challenge. Where did you make time in your day to spend twenty minutes praising God?
2. Was there a particular area of your life where you felt the need for wisdom from God? How did praising God impact your ability to discern His will?
3. How did praising God impact your energy level? In what ways were you able to draw strength from the Almighty as you spent time praising Him?

4. Was it hard or easy for you to praise God for the specific way He designed you? If you feel comfortable, share with the group what you experienced emotionally on this day.

5. It can feel difficult to trust God particularly during seasons of waiting. What you are waiting for at this present time? What's been the most difficult part of waiting?

6. How do you delight and celebrate God best? Alone or in a group? Inside or outside in creation? What did you experience as you took your praise time outside?

Group Praise Time:

Listen to "My Delight Is in You Lord" by Christy Nockels

Focus your praise time as a group on the tangible presence of God. Praise Him that He is near and that your deepest desires are met in Him. Praise Him that He invites you to enjoy Him.

Week 3

Trusting and Thanking

(Following Days 8–15)

Introduction:

Negative thinking is the pattern for many. It's easy, when encountering life's difficulties, to allow our minds to go to the worst-case scenario. But every day, we have a choice to direct our conscious thoughts. As we go deeper into the journey of praise, gratitude becomes habitual, and we begin to find that it slowly becomes easier to trust God. There is a direct correlation between trusting God and thanking God.

1. Read Philippians 4:4–20. One of the issues that Paul addresses in this passage is anxiety. Anxiety is a complex issue, but Paul gives some practical suggestions for overcoming anxiety. In what areas of life have you struggled with anxiety?
2. How do gratitude and thankfulness help quiet anxiety?
3. Read Philippians 4:8, 11. Contentment is a challenge. How would you define contentment? What have you found to be most effective in the realm of changing your thought patterns?
4. Paul writes that he can “do everything through Him who gives him strength.” (Philippians 4:13) In what areas of life have you struggled with self-doubt? As you have been faithfully praising God, what changes have you experienced in the realms of self-doubt and confidence?

Reflecting Back on Your Week:

1. Did you notice any changes in yourself in the realm of anxiety as you praised God this week?
2. In what ways did praising God for His Holy Spirit help your confidence grow?
3. In the religious system in which you grew up, how much emphasis was placed on making you feel guilty? How did praising God quiet your feelings of guilt?
4. Read Proverbs 3:5–6. Trusting God can feel nebulous. When we share our stories of trust, we give others a tangible picture of what trusting God looks like.

As a result, they have a better idea of what it means to trust God. Share with the group a situation in which praising God helped you trust Him more.

4. As you think back over the last week of praising God, which day was the most challenging for you? Why?

5. Think about your life at this moment. Are you presently facing a situation that feels impossible? Share the situation with your group, and then, as a group, spend a few moments praising God that He is able to do more than you can imagine.

Group Praise Time:

Listen to “Trust” by Sixpence None the Richer

Spend some time as a group praising God for His attributes (holiness, goodness, faithfulness, love, etc.) and that He is trustworthy.

Week 4

Surrendering and Resting

(Following Days 16–22)

Introduction:

The more we praise and worship Jesus Christ, the more we willingly surrender to God's love. The more we surrender, the more our ability to rest and abide in God increases.

1. Read Romans 12:1–2. When you hear the word *surrender*, what comes to mind? Why do you think so many people are hesitant to surrender to God?
2. What is the hardest thing for you personally to surrender? In what ways did praising God impact your willingness to surrender?
3. Read Psalm 62:1–2, 5, 8. How would you describe resting in Christ? Why do you think it is so difficult for us to simply rest in His love and provision?
4. How would you describe the correlation between the amount of stress we experience and the degree to which we are willing to surrender to God?
5. John 15:1–8. How might praising God impact our ability to abide in Christ? How do you think praising God impacts our fruitfulness?

Reflecting Back on Your Week:

1. Which day of praise was the most impactful for you? Why?
2. On day 24, you praised God for His healing power. God doesn't always heal in the way we want. How did you feel about praising God for His healing? Have you ever experienced healing in a miraculous way? If so, and if you feel comfortable, share your experience with the group.
3. As you have progressed in your journey of praise, have you heard God speak to you? If so, describe your experience.
4. God even takes your mistakes and turns them around for good in your life. What has that looked like for you?
5. Read Psalm 119:169–175. Many of us long to feel heard. The Psalmist cries out for the Lord to listen to his cry. Has there been a time in your life when you felt

strongly like God heard your cry and answered your prayer? How does answered prayer impact your willingness to surrender?

Group Praise Time:

Listen to “I Surrender” by Hillsong United.

When the music ends, spend some time as a group praying and surrendering every part of your lives to Him as an act of worship.

Week 5

Overcoming and Persevering

(Following Days 23–30)

Introduction:

At times it feels that evil is winning. However, the Bible tells us that Jesus Christ has conquered Satan for all time through His death and resurrection. His name, Jesus, actually means “Jehovah Savior; Jehovah Victor.” We are promised victory as we praise Him as Lord of our lives. That doesn’t mean we will never sin or suffer attack. We won’t experience perfection until we reach heaven. However, when we realize that the victory has already been won, it becomes easier to persevere.

1. Read through the story recorded in 2 Chronicles 20:1–26. What lesson, if any, does this story contain that is applicable to our lives today?
2. Read Revelation 12:11. Think through your own personal story. When you praise God for what He has done in your personal story, that becomes your testimony. Why do you think part of overcoming involves telling your story?
3. Read Hebrews 10:35–36. How has persevering in *The 30-Day Praise Challenge* strengthened your confidence?

Reflecting Back on Your Experience:

4. Reflect back on your experience of *The 30-Day Praise Challenge*. Were there any areas of your life where you experienced new victories? If you feel comfortable, share those areas with the group.
5. What attitude changes did you experience as you intentionally praised God each day? Share with the group.
6. At any point in your journey through *The 30-Day Praise Challenge*, did you feel like quitting? What kept you going?
7. What day was most impactful for you? Why?
8. What day was the most challenging for you? Why?
9. In what ways did you experience the presence of God as you journeyed through the challenge?

10. What surprised you most in your experience as you journeyed through the challenge?

Group Praise Time:

Listen to “Ten Thousand Reasons” by Matt Redman

End your time together as a group by spending time praying and thanking God for any changes you experienced during *The 30-Day Praise Challenge*.