



Community Group Discussion Guide

June 2, 2024

Psalm 66 | Come and See What God Has Done

MOTIVATE

Starter Question:

- ⇒ *How would you define worship? What picture comes to your mind when you hear the word worship?*

DISCUSS

Psalm 66 is the second of four chapters in a row that praise God for His deliverance from a foreign opponent. Written by an anonymous author, this psalm breaks up a large section of chapters authored by David (Psalm 51-65), although there are many connections between Psalm 65 and 66, such as vows, sacrifices, and worship. This is a Thanksgiving Psalm, praising God's answer to the prayer of a particular person.

Scholars believe this psalm may have been written by a king of Israel. This could potentially be King Hezekiah after a victory over an enemy, generally agreed upon to be the Assyrians (2 Kings 19; Isaiah 36-37). The psalmist invited the people of Israel to join him in worshipping God for this answered prayer. He encouraged the people to declare God's awesome deeds and His faithfulness to preserve them through trials.

- ⇒ *If you were to write a Thanksgiving Psalm today, what would be your theme?*

Psalm 66:1-4 *Shout for joy to God, all the earth; 2 sing the glory of his name; give to him glorious praise! 3 Say to God, "How awesome are your deeds! So great is your power that your enemies come cringing to you. 4 All the earth worships you and sings praises to you; they sing praises to your name. Selah"*

The psalmist began with a global invitation to worship God. To worship means to ascribe honor and worth. It is a reciprocal and intimate relationship between God's divine action and our human response to Him. Scripture shows worship happening when God's people are gathered in the tabernacle, temple, or church (1 Chronicles 29:20-22; Acts 13:2). We also see worship happen in smaller settings, like individual encounters or within families (Genesis 29:35; 8:16-9:17). Worship occurs in heaven as well (Isaiah 6).

In the Old Testament we primarily see worship through offerings, confession, and music (Leviticus 1-7, 1 Chronicles 25, 2 Samuel 6:14). In the New Testament there is more of a focus on prayer, praise, and instruction (Acts 2:42-47).

The most important part of worship is communing with God. Worship began in Genesis when God presided in the garden with Adam and Eve. When sin entered the world, direct fellowship with God was broken. God's presence moved to the tabernacle and temple then later became flesh when Jesus

descended, and now dwells within us through the Holy Spirit. Worship is largely the way we live moment by moment as a response to God's grace and presence in our lives (1 Corinthians 10:31).

- ⇒ ***What are some other forms of worship that we see in Scripture?***
- ⇒ ***How does the idea of communing with God change your view of worship?***

The psalmist invited all of the earth to praise God's glorious name and His awesome deeds. Names represent personality in Hebrew culture, so the psalmist challenged the earth to worship God's character and holy attributes. He knew that God's mighty acts caused Israel's enemies to quiver and shrink when facing Him, therefore the psalmist forecasted that the entire earth will sing, dance, and praise God's name.

- ⇒ ***With the understanding that worship is expressing intimacy with God, what does it actually look like to worship God's character and His holy attributes?***

Psalm 66:5-7 Come and see what God has done: he is awesome in his deeds toward the children of man. **6** He turned the sea into dry land; they passed through the river on foot. There did we rejoice in him, **7** who rules by his might forever, whose eyes keep watch on the nations—let not the rebellious exalt themselves. *Selah*

The psalmist focused on what God did for Israel and the impact this had on the surrounding nations. He chose two deeds: crossing the Red Sea after being delivered from slavery in Egypt and crossing the Jordan River before entering the Promised Land (Exodus 14:1-31; Joshua 3:1-17).

The exodus from slavery was the "birth" of the Jewish nation and one of the most remarkable displays of God's power. It is historically and theologically a key event in the Old Testament. The Israelites remembered and celebrated it often.

Crossing the Jordan River was another crucial milestone. During flood season the river swells to half a mile wide and around ten feet deep. This was the last major landmark before the Israelites entered into the Promised Land. It was a physical marker of leaving the wilderness and a reminder of God's faithfulness to uphold His covenant. These are powerful deeds, showing that God is sovereign over creation and that He will be victorious over any nation that rises against Him.

- ⇒ ***What do these two events teach us about God's faithfulness and His sovereignty?***
- ⇒ ***What are some New Testament equivalent events that had a similar impact on believers and nonbelievers?***

It is important to remember that God performed these miracles, not because the Israelites were deserving, but because they were chosen to reflect His glory to the surrounding nations. His awesome deeds for the nation of Israel were designed to be missional. The entire world benefited from these two events because Israel's freedom was the conduit through which God would redeem the world (John 4:22-26). What God has done for the Israelites, He has done for all the nations.

- ⇒ ***How would these events have impacted the surrounding nations?***
- ⇒ ***How can our worship today be missional?***

Psalm 66:8-12 *Bless our God, O peoples; let the sound of his praise be heard, 9 who has kept our soul among the living and has not let our feet slip. 10 For you, O God, have tested us; you have tried us as silver is tried. 11 You brought us into the net; you laid a crushing burden on our backs; 12 you let men ride over our heads; we went through fire and through water; yet you have brought us out to a place of abundance.*

The psalmist remembered how challenging the Israelites journey had been, but also how God preserved them through every trial. He used several metaphors to describe God's providential care through their sufferings:

a. God has not let our feet slip: He kept them physically and spiritually alive (Deuteronomy 30:20; Proverbs 10:30).

b. God has tried us as silver: The Hebrew word used for "test" is *ba'an*, and means to investigate, examine, or try. It is often associated with the refining of metal and depicts trials that are meant to purify God's people. Refining reveals motives and integrity (Proverbs 17:3; 1 Peter 1:6-7).

c. God brought us into the net: This phrase could refer to being a prisoner of war. Or it could recall Joseph, who was lured into a trap by his brothers (Genesis 37). Regardless of how it is translated, the phrase drives home the idea that what Israel's enemies intended for evil, God intended for good (Genesis 50:20).

d. God placed a crushing burden on our backs: Most likely a reference to slavery in Egypt or other nations that defeated Israel in battle.

e. God allowed men to ride over our heads: A description of oppression from Israel's enemies.

f. God led us through fire and water: A metaphor for severe troubles.

If anyone had reason to praise God, it was most certainly Israel. It would have been enough for God to simply sustain their lives. But God rescued them, restored them, and provided all that they needed and more (Psalm 36:7-9).

Trials refine us and produce deeper wisdom that helps us discern truth and remain disciplined. Trials reveal our idols and increase our dependence on God. When we see that He is the same God on the other side of suffering, it produces a deeper love and gratitude for our Father, giving us all the more reason to praise Him.

⇒ ***How did the Israelites' sufferings eventually lead them into a place of abundance and produce a heart of praise?***

Psalm 66:13-15 *I will come into your house with burnt offerings; I will perform my vows to you, 14 that which my lips uttered and my mouth promised when I was in trouble. 15 I will offer to you burnt offerings of fattened animals, with the smoke of the sacrifice of rams; I will make an offering of bulls and goats. Selah*

The psalmist shifted focus to an individual's testimony. This person made a vow during a time of trial and came to fulfill it in the midst of the rest of the worshippers. He had vowed to offer sacrifices, not to bribe God into answering his prayer, but as an act of personal dedication.

The burnt offerings were a way to consecrate oneself before the Lord and vow offerings were a symbol of gratitude (Numbers 15:3). This individual chose to bring the best he had – multiples of fattened rams, bulls, and goats. These were lavish sacrifices, potentially indicating that others were joining in as a result of an answered prayer in the individual's life. This worshiper was dedicated to the Lord and the community joined in to add praise.

- ⇒ ***Why is attempting to "bribe" God with sacrifices or obedience not a good option?***
- ⇒ ***Since we no longer have sacrifices, how can we effectively bring our best to worship with the Lord?***
- ⇒ ***When God does something wonderful in our lives, why should we take the opportunity to praise and worship Him?***

Psalm 66:16-20 *Come and hear, all you who fear God, and I will tell what he has done for my soul. 17 I cried to him with my mouth, and high praise was on my tongue. 18 If I had cherished iniquity in my heart, the Lord would not have listened. 19 But truly God has listened; he has attended to the voice of my prayer. 20 Blessed be God, because he has not rejected my prayer or removed his steadfast love from me!*

The individual worshiper continued to share how he cried out to God and how He had listened. The Old Testament insists that each member of God's people must own the covenant for themselves, therefore, each of them could declare what God had done for them.

Our experience with God is similar. Salvation is a personal relationship with Jesus, therefore we each have a unique story to share. When God answers our prayer, it is our responsibility and privilege to praise Him and share that good news with others.

- ⇒ ***What is a unique part of your testimony or an answered prayer that you can praise God for?***

The psalmist used the phrase "cherished iniquity." This indicates "an awareness of." Hypocrisy is a barrier to our relationship with God (Isaiah 59:1-2). Every unanswered prayer is not an indicator of sin in our lives, as sinlessness is not a prerequisite for prayer, but prayer gives us an opportunity to examine our hearts.

We need to ask God to reveal if we are cherishing what is corrupt, and if we are, we must confess it and forsake it. David prayed to "forgive my hidden faults and keep me from willful sin" (Psalm 19:12-13). We may not be able to remember every sin, but our attitude should be one of continual confession and obedience. When we pursue what is right in God's eyes and confess our sins, we can be confident God hears our prayers (1 John 3:19-22). Then we too can join in this song of praise for God's awesome deeds in our lives.

- ⇒ ***How can we determine if unanswered prayers are due to our unconfessed sin?***

TRANSFORM

1. Make personal application: God performed amazing miracles for the nation of Israel and within individual people's lives that reflected His glory to nations around them. These displays of His power and fulfillments of His promises led God's people to worship loudly and unapologetically. Although we may not see a physical sea parted in our lifetime, we are surrounded by blessings and answered prayers that should cause us to proclaim God's goodness through word and worship. God never stops working for our good, even in the midst of suffering or unanswered prayers. We can be confident when we come to Him humbly and honestly that He will hear us and continue to pour out His steadfast love upon us.

- ⇒ ***Why are we more prone to ask for prayer than to share praise? Who is one unbeliever that you need to share God's deeds with?***
- ⇒ ***What trials or refinement have you experienced that resulted in an enlarged view of God or deeper understanding of His character?***
- ⇒ ***Have you ever experienced an unconfessed sin preventing you from experiencing blessings? What finally caused you to repent?***

2. Pray: Pray in a way that utilizes the style of this psalm. Begin by praising God's character and declare how He is worthy of worship. Praise Him for amazing things He has done for His people and for you. Thank Him for bringing you through a hard season or specific trial. Confess any sins that are on your heart and ask Him to reveal unknown sin to you. Ask the Holy Spirit to give you courage to share what God has done in your life with others.

STUDY

Resources used, compiled from, and quoted:

- *Christian Standard Study Bible (2017), pages 873-874.*
- *English Standard Version Study Bible (2008), pages 1127-1128.*
- *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary (2015), pages 150, 524-525, 925, 1338, 1426, 1670-1672.*
- *Holman Old Testament Commentary, Psalms 1-75 (2004), pages 331-334.*
- *New International Version Life Application Study Bible (1997), pages 973-974.*
- *Wiersbe Old Testament Bible Commentary (2007), page 947.*