

Mosaic Christian Community

Rejoicing, Thanksgiving, and Praise.

Psalm 67:5-6, Philippians 4:4

MATERIAL FOR GROWTH GROUPS

DECEMBER 2023, Week 1-4

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WEEK 1
THE POWER OF PRAISES

Scripture: Psalm 67: 5-7 GNT, “Let the peoples praise You, O God; Let all the peoples praise You. 6 Then the earth shall [b]yield her increase; God, our own God, shall bless us.7 God shall bless us, And all the ends of the earth shall fear Him.”

Goal: To help believers understand the divine power of praises in activating the miracles, deliverance and divine transformation.

Introduction

The Bible contains many testimonies of men and women who experienced God’s power as they praised God (a). Jesus is the same yesterday, today and forever; hence He can do the same and even much more in our days. In this month of December, we will be studying one of the keys of the Kingdom; Rejoicing, thanksgiving and Praises. Paul admonished us in Philippians 4:4 to rejoice always, but why? Today, we are focusing specifically on the power and benefits that praising God has on believers. Praise to God refers to lifting God, and offering appreciation to Him for who He is, and also the acknowledgment of all His wonderful and righteous deeds. Praise has the power to help us fix our hearts and minds on God, His word and His power to save, heal and deliver. Praise holds a significant place in the life of every believer. It is a powerful spiritual activity that can transform our life, our situation and draw us closer to God and His ways (b). As we continually seek to praise and worship God, we will become more conscious of His divine presence, His provisions and His power in our lives. Be encouraged to cultivate a heart of praise and allow this to shape our perspective and strengthen our faith, until praise becomes our first response in every situation. This is the secret to consistent victory (c). Also, cultivate the culture of entering His gates with thanksgiving and His courts with praise, because He is worthy of all honor and glory (d).

(a) 2 Chronicles 20:21-22, (b) Hebrews 13:15, (c) Psalm 34:1,5,7 (d) Psalm 100:4-5, Psalm 102:18

Discussion

1. Why is praise important in the life of a believer?
2. How do praises influence our spiritual lives?
3. What effects does praise have on difficult situations?
4. In what ways can we incorporate praise into our daily lives?
5. Have you ever praised during a very difficult situation? If yes, how did it impact your situation?

Conclusion

Praise, as emphasized in Psalm 100:4, is crucial because it acknowledges God's sovereignty, goodness, and faithfulness. It shifts our focus from our circumstances to the greatness of God. It is an act of reverence to God and a physical demonstration of our love and gratitude towards God (e). When we praise God, our heart is fixed on God, this shifts our perspective from the size of our problem to the power and the wisdom of God (f). Praise has the power to uplift and encourage us, drawing us closer to God. It strengthens our faith, increases our awareness of God's presence.. It activates God's intervention and brings about victory amid trials and challenges (g). We can incorporate praises by setting aside time for worship and thanksgiving, singing hymns and spiritual songs (h), and continually expressing gratitude in all circumstances. Praising God amidst difficult situations has brought brought great victory in the bible to people like King Jehoshaphat in 2 Chronicles 20:21, Paul and Silas in Acts 16:25-26, Joshua at the wall of Jericho. Since Jesus is the same yesterday, today and forever, chose to constantly give praise praise and thanksgiving to God in every situation (i).

(e) Psalm 22:23, (f) Psalm 34:1-4, (g) Acts 16:25-26, (g) Psalm 69:30-31, (h) Ephesians 5:19, (i) 1 Thessalonians: 16-18

Prayer

Thank you, Lord, for the gateway you have made for us to reach you through praises. Even if we have ten thousand tongues, it would not be enough to praise. So we ask oh Lord for fresh grace to continually enter your courts with humility in our hearts and give to you the sacrifice of praise with the fruit of our lips be made available to every one of us. Amen.

WEEK 2

OVERCOMING DEPRESSION THROUGH REJOICING AND THANKSGIVING

Scripture: Philippians 4:6 "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus"

Goal: For believers to know how to handle and overcome obstacles, and depression and rejoice in every circumstance.

Introduction

Paul admonished us in Philippians 4:4 to rejoice always, but is this really possible with all the happenings around the world today? For instance, this year has brought both good and bad experiences to many people; some goals were accomplished, while others were not, we gained, we lost, we laughed, we cried, etc. While some people seem happy and content, others are suffering from depression; a mental state characterized by feelings of low mood and a lack of motivation. The current times have also significantly increased the risks of depression. However, thanks be to God for preparing us with spiritual tools to navigate these times joyfully and victoriously (a). In line with our theme of rejoicing, thanksgiving, and praise, today we are exploring the profound truth that rejoicing and praising God have the power to lift us out of depths of depression. Amid our struggles, we are called to turn our hearts towards God and find hope in His promises. Psalm 147:3 shows us that God heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds. By knowing and understanding what God says about our situation, we can be rest assured of our victory against any affliction or illness. The Word of God reveals to us the transforming power of rejoicing and praise in overcoming depression (b). As we take hold of the promises contained in these scriptures, we are reminded that joy follows mourning as God gives us beauty for ashes, oil of joy for mourning, and garment of praise for spirit of heaviness (c). God desires to exchange our despair for praise, our mourning for dancing, and our faint spirit for a steadfast heart (d). During moments of struggles, let us remember to fix our gaze on the eternal promises of God rather than the transient challenges we face (e).

(a) Philippians 4:6-7, (b) Psalm 42:11, (c), Isaiah 61:3, (d) Psalm 30:11, (e) 2 Corinthians 4:16-18

Discussion

1. How does the promise of joy coming in the morning, as stated in Psalm 30:5, offer hope to those struggling with depression?
2. In what ways can continuous thanksgiving and rejoicing help people overcome depression? Psalm 34:1, Thessalonians 5:16-18
3. How can you encourage a fellow believer to be joyful when he/she is dealing with depression?
4. What role does God's healing and renewal play in the process of overcoming depression, Psalm 147:3, 2 Corinthians 4:16-18

5. Have you ever experienced victory over depression by thanksgiving, rejoicing and praising God? Share with us

Conclusion

The Word of God encourages us to rejoice always, because it has a transforming power in overcoming depression. God's word is full of promises concerning every aspect of our lives; a more sure word of prophecy capable of bringing us out of darkness into daylight (f). A heart of joy helps us to see the promises and provisions of God, and this turns our mourning into joy and dancing (g). The assurance that joy follows weeping brings hope, reminding us that God's favor and restoration will come after the darkest times (h). Continuous praise and thanksgiving foster an atmosphere of gratitude, trust and mountain-moving faith in God. This in turn, leads to a transformation of perspective and a deep sense of peace, which can aid in overcoming depression (i). We must continue to remind ourselves that the scriptures have the antidote to whatever illness, affliction, or infirmities, and it is the will of God that we all live in good health and sound mind (j). The imagery of exchanging mourning for a garment of praise illustrates God's desire to bring restoration and joy to those who are brokenhearted, offering hope and a new sense of purpose. God's healing and renewal bring inner strength for perseverance, reminding us that our current struggles are temporary, while our hope and ultimate restoration lie in the infallible, eternal promises of God.

(f) 2 Peter 1:19 Philippians 4:4 (g) Isaiah 12:3, Psalm 30:11, (h) Psalm 126:5-6, (i) Jeremiah 15:6, (j) 3 John 1:2

Prayer

May the God of all comfort and joy fill our hearts with the strength to rejoice and praise Him in all circumstances, bringing hope and healing to those who are battling depression. Amen.

WEEK 3

REJOICING IN ADVERSITIES AND CHALLENGES

Scripture: James 1:2-4 (NIV) "Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything."

Goal: For participants to understand why we need to be joyful even in difficult circumstances

Introduction

Over the past weeks, we have continually emphasized the importance of thanksgiving and praises in our everyday lives. How about days that we don't feel like? Days when it feels like everything seems to work against us and feel like God is far from us? These trials can be difficult and overwhelming, leading us to question our faith and resilience. Some days it might even be persecution. However, the Bible provides us with guidance on how to rejoice amid adversity and find strength in such challenges. Persecutions and trials often come to prepare us for incoming blessings (a) and today persecutions may be used to strengthen your faith (b). When we rejoice through all these we honor and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ (c). Our sufferings and challenges birth perseverance if we allow ourselves to go through them with a heart of gratitude and praise knowing that we are being built and energized spiritually (d). There is no great soldier or warrior who never fought any battle. God's strengths are made known in our weaknesses (e).

(a) James 1:2-4, (b) 1 Peter 1:6-7, (c) 1 Peter 4:12-13, (d) Romans 5:3-4, (e) 2 Corinthians 12:9-10

Discussion

1. What does it mean to rejoice in adversity?
2. Can you share examples of people who rejoiced in difficult situations in the bible who experienced divine turn arounds?
3. Have You ever rejoiced or praised during a difficult time? How did it change you or the situation?
4. How would you advise a young believer that they should rejoice even when going through a difficult situation?
5. Why does Paul delight in weakness and hardship? 2 Corinthians 12:9-10

Conclusion

To rejoice in a period of adversity means to draw strength from the Spirit, and express it as joy in the face of physical challenges. This is why the bible says in Nehemiah 8:10 that the joy of the Lord is our strength, and it becomes easier as we grow in our knowledge of God. Several people engaged the weapon of rejoicing and experienced divine turn around in the bible; examples include King Jehoshaphat in *2 Chronicles 20:21*, *Paul and Silas in Acts 16:25-26*, *Joshua and the Children of Israel at the wall of Jericho in Joshua 6:20*. Rejoicing during difficult situations means shifting our focus from the problem, to focus on God who can provide solutions to these challenges (f). Rejoicing causes us to focus on His character and renew our mind to His faithfulness, love and power (g). As we develop more faith in His power than in our problems; we begin to see into the spiritual realm and walk by faith in God rather than by the sight of what exists here in the temporal realm (h). Every believer needs to know that being born again does not exempt us from trials and tribulations (i). However, we have that great assurance that we will overcome (j). Hence, it is a mandate and of great importance that believers rejoice always. God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in him as we see it in *Philippians 3:1*, and *Phil 4:4* we have to rejoice in the Lord always. We grow through the trials that we go through; hence, do not faint or think God has forsaken you. These are commands that describe the mandate for joy in situations that may seem almost impossible to find joy in (*Philippians 2-14-15*). This is a reverse command to do all things with joy even in circumstances where it would most likely be natural to grumble.

(f) Philippians 4:4-7, (g) Romans 12:2, (h) 2 Corinthians 4:18, (i) John 16:33, (j), 1 Corinthians 10:13 (k), Romans 5:3-4

Prayer

Dear Father, strengthen me with the joy of your Spirit and help me hold on to your word. and continue to rejoice amid adversity and challenges, knowing that God is faithful and working all things for my good. Amen.

WEEK 4

GRATITUDE (CULTIVATING A GRATEFUL HEART)

Scripture: Psalm 107:1 NIV, “Give thanks to the LORD, for he is the Lord, for his love endures forever.”

Goal: To encourage believers to practice gratitude as a spiritual discipline and emphasize on the importance of cultivating a lifestyle of gratitude.

Introduction

Gratitude towards God is the state of being appreciative, and acknowledging the goodness, faithfulness, and blessings that God pours out upon us, Gratitude is more than just a feeling; it is an attitude and mindset backed up with action that can transform our perspective and relationship with God. Today, we are discussing the biblical foundation for cultivating a grateful heart and practical ways to nurture gratitude in our daily lives. Gratitude opens our hearts to experience joy, contentment, and a deeper sense of his presence (a). As we cultivate a heart of gratitude, let us remember that our thankfulness should not be determined by our circumstances (b), but a consistent action in response to the character and love of our Heavenly Father. Psalm 100 says we should enter his presence with thanksgiving and praise (c). Does it also affect our approach to worship and prayer? Absolutely! It sets the tone for our worship and prayers, aligning our hearts with the truth of who God is and expressing our appreciation for His blessings (d) is a demonstration of our love for Him and Faith in him.

(a) Phil 4:6-7, (b) 1 Thessalonians 5:18, (c) Psalm 100:4, (d) Psalm 103:2-5

Discussion

1. What are the practical ways and benefits of cultivating a lifestyle of gratitude?
2. Discuss biblical and living examples of people who did /did not express gratitude in a situation.
3. How does cultivating a thankful heart contribute to our spiritual growth, and witness to others?
4. Identify common obstacles that may hinder believers from cultivating a grateful heart.
5. What are the benefits of being thankful and how has it transformed you as a believer in witnessing to others?

Conclusion

Colossians 3:16 shows us one of the practical ways we can embrace a lifestyle of gratitude, by allowing the word of God to dwell in us richly. This is important because it is the presence of God's word in us that gives us the strength and stamina to maintain the a posture of gratitude. We are encouraged to cultivate a lifestyle of gratitude so that gratitude is our natural response when

adversity comes. Rather than choosing to complain like the children of Israel did in the wilderness, we chose to sing and dance like Paul and Silas did in the prison when gratitude becomes our lifestyle. The scripture severally stated the importance of gratitude, even Jesus gave thanks (e). Cultivating a grateful heart is a journey that requires intentionality and discipline, we should emulate the biblical characters who lived a life of gratitude such as David, giving thanks to God and urging others to do the same (f). Daniel was a daunt follower of the Lord and he gave thanks and did not waver even when faced with the threat of the lion's den (g), Paul and Silas in the prison, and the leper in Luke 17:11-19 are few examples of people who embraced gratitude. Expressing gratitude has the power to uplift and encourage us to draw closer to God. It strengthens our faith, increases our awareness of God's presence, and brings about a transforming shift in our perspective (h). We should not let impatience, envy, greed, pride, inability to acknowledge dependency, and the trend of comparing ourselves to other people hinder us from being grateful. The rewards of gratitude are immeasurable. By our gratitude, we can be made whole. As we approach the new year, let us commit to having a mindset of thankfulness in our daily lives and recognize that through Christ, we have abundant reasons to be grateful. Let us end this year with a grateful heart!

(e) Matthew 26:26-27, (f) Psalm 7:17, (g) Daniel 6:10, (h) Psalm 34:1-3

Prayer

Lord, we thank you for the countless blessings. We are grateful for the lessons learnt this year, through trials, and challenges for they have shaped our character, and deepened our faith. May our hearts be continually filled with the spirit of faith to always believe in you and may we always rejoice and express our gratitude in every moment of our lives. Amen.