

🌱 **Goal:** To joyfully thank God in prayer.

Connecting with the Biblical Text

Psalm 100 is a five-verse psalm of thanksgiving. As you read, notice how the writer describes God. What is this writer most thankful for? The writer is joyously celebrating that humans have an ongoing, intimate connection with God. Not only we are a part of God's creation, but God's creation is ongoing as we experience the many ways we belong to God and the ways that God claims us as God's own. We are God's people. Knowing and celebrating this relationship, we offer praise and thanks. Notice the final descriptions of God. The psalmist wants all who hear this song to worship and join together in celebrating God's goodness, abiding love, and faithfulness. In "Commentary on Psalm 100," Joel LeMon says, "In a time where Christian communities are increasingly fractured and contentious, it is difficult to imagine a throng of faithful witnesses moving together as one in praise to God. It is precisely at this difficult time, however, when Old One Hundredth should come to our lips. Whenever we sing this psalm, we join a vast community of praise throughout the course of history. As we bear witness to God's goodness, we step into a procession that stretches across time and place. We celebrate God's enduring commitment to the redemption of the world and reaffirm our common identity as God's people. Our loud shouts of praise announce the coming of God's kingdom." (This article was first published on WorkingPreacher.org, June 18, 2017, bit.ly/GLPsalm100Commentary.)

Connecting with the World

- 🌱 As you think about your life of faith this week, recall the people in your life for whom you are most thankful.

- 🌱 Now think about people in history whose lives have made a difference in the world. People whose lives have been a living witness to what the prophet Micah asks—doing justice, loving mercy, and walking humbly with God. Name these people and give thanks for the difference they have made.
- 🌱 Write a prayer of thanksgiving for God's presence in the world and in your life. Follow the outline of Psalm 100 by making the prayer five verses long.
- 🌱 Watch the YouTube video "Old Hundredth" Sung by 200 Voice Mass Choir for Classic Hymns Album "Sweet Hour of Prayer" (bit.ly/GLOldHundredth, 4:42).

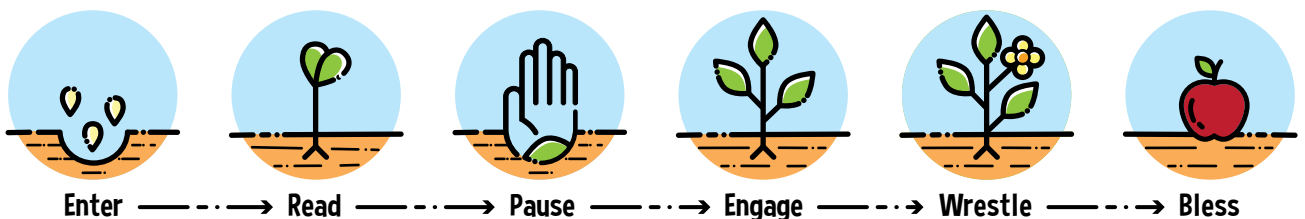
Connecting with the Spiritual Lives of Children

Sometimes a blessing at a meal is the only spiritual practice some people have. Even before they have words, many children experience learning to say "thank you" at the table by holding hands and listening to the blessing. When we help children find their own words to say "thank you" to God, they grow up understanding how to pray and how to offer their words of thanks, just like the writer of Psalm 100.

Connecting with the Spiritual Lives of Adults

Do you ever find yourself saying, "Thank you, God" in the middle of the day or when you see the sun shining again after two days of gray skies and rain? Prayers of thanksgiving are the easiest kind of prayer to say. Thanking God requires that you are aware of where you are, what's going on around you, and how you feel connected with God's presence in your life. What are you most thankful for on this day?

God of all life, thank you for the breath you give me each day. Amen.



Gathering Supplies

Based on your choices, you will need:

- ✓ *Growing in God's Love: A Story Bible*
- ✓ Battery-operated candle
- ✓ Carpet squares, cushions, or a blanket
- ✓ An invitation to an event
- ✓ A thank-you note
- ✓ *Glory to God* hymnal or hymnal with "Praise God from Whom All Blessings Flow (Doxology)"
- ✓ Rhythm instruments
- ✓ Newsprint
- ✓ Copies of Resource Page 1
- ✓ Drawing supplies

Preparing to Lead

Take a few minutes to read Psalm 100 from your Bible and ponder these questions:

- ✓ How are we to thank God?
- ✓ When are we to thank God?
- ✓ Why are we to thank God?
- ✓ What questions do you have or what new insight did you gain?

Explore the background of the book of Psalms by watching the YouTube video "Book of Psalms Summary: A Complete Animated Overview" (bit.ly/GLPsalmsSummary, 8:58).

In *Growing in God's Love: A Story Bible*, read the background to Songs and Wise Sayings on page 151 and "Thank You, God!" on page 152.

Before the children arrive, arrange a comfortable seating area using carpet squares, cushions, or a blanket. Set the battery-operated candle in the center of the gathering area.

Think of each child in your group, and name them in prayer, using this prayer or one of your own:

"Thank you, God, for (Name)."



Enter into sacred space together.

Gather the children on the carpet squares, cushions, or a blanket.

Begin with a statement that will encourage the children to focus. For example: "We gather to hear God's word and to thank God. We light the light of Jesus to lead us as we learn." Turn on the battery-operated candle.

Wonder together about invitations

- ✓ I wonder why people send invitations.
- ✓ I wonder if you've ever received an invitation. What was your response?
- ✓ I wonder what the writer of the psalm we will hear today will invite us to do.

Wonder together about thank-you notes

- ✓ I wonder why people send thank-you notes.
- ✓ I wonder if you have ever received a thank-you note.
- ✓ I wonder how it made you feel.
- ✓ I wonder how we can thank God for all God does for us.

Pray together, inviting the children to respond with "I come, Lord" when you hold out your hand.

Let us pray. Dear Lord, you invite me into your presence.

I come, Lord.

Dear Lord, you invite me to learn of your ways.

I come, Lord.

Dear Lord, you invite me to know of your love.

I come, Lord.

Dear Lord, I come to give you thanks.

I come, Lord.

Amen.

Leading



Read a story of God's people.

Turn to page 152 in *Growing in God's Love: A Story Bible* and show the children the illustration for "Thank You, God!" Ask the children what they see in the picture.

Explain that a psalm is a poem, and many psalms were written as songs to God. A psalmist is the writer of the psalm.

Read aloud the story.



Pause to let God's Word enter into hearts and minds.

Invite the children to take a few moments in silence and think about what they heard and how they felt when they heard Psalm 100.



Engage curiosity and imagination with God's story.

Choose one or both options:

- Psalm Meditation
 - ✦ Lead the group in a reflective meditation using Psalm 100 from the Bible your church uses. Explain that you will read each verse of the psalm and ask a question. After each question, allow a time of silence for the children to answer the question using only their imaginations to picture their answers.
 - Read aloud Psalm 100:1–2.
 - Ask: Whom is the writer of the psalm calling to serve and come before the Lord?
 - Time of silence
 - Read aloud Psalm 100:3.
 - Ask: How do we know we belong to God?
 - Time of silence
 - Read aloud Psalm 100:4.
 - Ask: How can we thank God?
 - Time of silence
 - Read aloud Psalm 100:5.
 - Ask: Why is God good?
 - Time of silence.
 - ✦ Discuss what images came to life in their imaginations or what emotions or insights they experienced during the meditation.

○ A Wonderful Sound

- ✦ Wonder together how a tree, cow, flower, worm, or other plants and animals could make a joyful noise to the Lord.
- ✦ Encourage the children to move and make the noises of the plants and animals. Listen to the joy of their laughter.

○ Making a Joyful Noise

- ✦ Explore the lyrics to "Praise God, from Whom All Blessings Flow" (*Glory to God* hymnal, #606) or a hymnal with that song, also known as the Doxology.
 - ✦ Encourage children to use the word "God" in place of "Him" in the second and third lines. Sing together or show the YouTube video "Doxology" (bit.ly/GLDoxologySong, 0:46) and invite the children to sing along with the video.
 - ✦ Hand out rhythm instruments and invite the children to march around the area playing instruments to the hymn.



Wrestle with our place in God's story.

○ Giving Thanks Joyfully

- ✦ God gives us different methods of voice and speech to praise God's greatness. Using four of our voices—whispering, shouting, speaking, and singing—experiment with how to make joyful and joyless sounds with each voice. Wonder together how voices can be used to thank God.
 - I wonder how we can use our whisper voice to thank God.
 - I wonder how we can use our shouting voice to thank God.
 - I wonder how we can use our speaking voice to thank God.
 - I wonder how we can use our singing voice to thank God.
- ✦ God also gives us our bodies to give thanks to God. Together, explore different ways to use hands and feet to convey thanksgiving and praise. Use the following prompts to begin the discussion.
 - I wonder how we can use our hands to give thanks to God. (clap, snap, play instruments)

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- I wonder how we can use our feet to give thanks to God. (show someone the way, dance, stomp, jump)
- Try out each suggestion while brainstorming new ones along the way.

Include how children's bodies may or may not move all the same. If there are children who cannot move their hands or feet, include questions about facial expressions or head movements, such as nodding, turning, and rocking.



Bless one another with God's grace.

Remind the children that psalms were often sung as prayers to God. End with the echo song below, sung to the song "Where Is Thumbkin?" Invite the children to repeat each line after you. Explain that when you sing the last line, you will point to one of the children and after the group repeats the line, that child should make a joyful noise of their choice praising God. Sing one round for each child in the group.

We can thank God /
for God's love. /
Make a joyful noise now. /
Go for it! /

Turn off the candle, and thank the children for being part of today's session.



Grow with more.

- Helping Children Link the Old and New Testament
 - ✦ Explain that there are many places in the Bible where believers are called to praise God and invite people into a life of faith.
 - ✦ Provide Bibles and have the children find the two texts, Psalm 100 and Matthew 28:18–20, and place a scrap of paper in each place. Invite them to follow along as you read aloud, or invite two volunteers to read aloud, Psalm 100 and Matthew 28:18–20.
 - ✦ On a sheet of newsprint, make two columns, one headed "Psalm 100" and the other "Matthew 28:18–20." Ask the following questions and write the children's responses in the appropriate columns.
 - Who is speaking?
 - Who is listening?
 - Who is to respond?
 - What response is expected?
 - What will cause the response?
 - Other insights?
- Psalm 100 Comic Strip
 - ✦ Provide copies of Resource Page 1 and invite the children to turn Psalm 100 into a comic strip by drawing pictures to illustrate the verse in each of the boxes.

Make a joyful noise to
the LORD, all the earth.

Serve the LORD with gladness; come
into his presence with singing.

Know that the LORD is God. It is he
who made us, and we are his; we are his
people and the sheep of his pasture.

Enter his gates with thanksgiving
and his courts with praise. Give
thanks to him; bless his name.

For the LORD is good; his steadfast love endures forever and his faithfulness to all generations.

