

Volume setting

Planning

Theme Words for prayer

Four weeks in which we use the psalms to help us deepen our prayer.

Week 4 of 4

Volume setting Psalm 126

Our consideration of Psalm 126 this week fulfils our exploration of these words that can help and support our prayer, with the opportunity to sing and shout for joy.

Find alternative resources for *Bible Sunday* at www.biblesociety.org.uk.

This week's reading provides an opportunity to:

- recognise God in action in the world
- respond to God with shouts of joy.

Other Bible readings for this week

RCL Proper 25 Yr B, Jeremiah 31.7-9, Hebrews 7.23-28, Mark 10.46-52

ROOTS www.rootsontheweb.com

Week by week

Bible notes
Prayers
PostScript: up-to-the minute comment
Bible study worksheet
Children's Sheet
Templates for craft activities
Further resources
Links to other materials for this week



Prepare your session

Read **Psalm 126** and the *Bible notes* on page 44.

Choose from the materials to suit the age range, length of session and preferences of your group.

Integrate prayers and singing at appropriate moments.

For shorter sessions, use the reading followed by *Hallelujah!* on page 45.

Prayers

Additional prayers can be found on page 45. All prayer text is on the [WEB](#).

A prayer to sing

To the tune of Three Blind Mice

God loves us, (x2)
God makes us happy, (x2)
God keeps all the promises he makes to us
and so we know in him we can trust,
nothing can change his love for us.
Yes, God loves us.

A prayer of joy

Look at the world you have made for us,
Alleluia, shout for joy!
Feel the love you pour out on us,
Alleluia, shout for joy!
See the promises you have made to us,
Alleluia, shout for joy!
Look at the people you have given us,
Alleluia, shout for joy!
Amen.

A prayer of commitment

May the dreams that I dream be from you, oh Lord,
may the hopes that I hope come from you.
May the praise that I shout be for you, oh Lord,
may the promises I claim be from you.
May the trust that I trust be in you, oh Lord,
may the songs that I sing be for you.
Amen.

Music

See p.1 for key to abbreviations.

Sing

A living song (C&P)
Colours of day
Down by the riverside (C&P)
He came down that we might have love
I'm going to paint a perfect picture (C&P, RSJ)
I will bring to you (C&P)
I will sing, I will sing
Jesus put this song into our hearts
Life the for the poor was hard and tough (CHY, RSJ)
Lost and found (C&P, RSJ)
Peace is flowing like river (C&P)
Praise him in the morning
The vine and the fig tree (C&P)

Listen

'The Happy Song' (*Deeper*) by Delirious Sing for joy (CD), Julia Wylie Music – a collection of original and traditional children's praise songs

Gather

Prepare the space

Decorate the room as if you were celebrating something. You could use flags, bunting, banners, streamers or balloons. As the group arrives, play some joyful music.

Gathering activity

Play a simple memory game by placing a selection of party items (e.g. party popper, blowout, rattle, whistle, confetti, candle, badge, bubbles) on a tray. Give the children 60 seconds to memorise the items. Out of sight, remove one item then ask the children to guess what is missing.

Gathering prayer

How glad we are that we are here today with our friends to learn more about you, Lord.
We are glad to be able to celebrate all you have done for us.
Amen.

Open the Word

Based on Psalm 126
Bible notes are on page 44.

With very young children

A chance to discover restoration and joy.

You will need: building bricks e.g. Lego™, Duplo™, wooden bricks.

You might use this simple paraphrase and actions.

God helps us to rebuild and make new
(*make building action with fists*).

Alleluia (*wave arms*).

Shout for joy (*shout 'hurray'*).

- Show the children a tumbling pile of bricks and invite them to rebuild a beautiful building.
- Invite them to shout (*or wave their arms*) with joy when it is completed.

Guidance on exploring the Bible reading with young people is on the next page.

With children

- Ask the children to think of different words people might use to say they feel happy. Invite the children to choose words they would use to say they felt happy.
- Explain that, in today's psalm, the people have returned to their home country and they feel happy. Ask the children to repeat the words in bold in the story. How do they think the people might say these words? Would it be quiet or loud? Do they think the people would stand still or dance?
- Practise saying or shouting the phrase with the children and encourage them to move as the people may have moved.

Talk about

After reading the Bible story to your group, use these discussion points.

The Israelites dreamed of coming back to their homeland, and in this psalm they are celebrating the fulfilment of that dream.

- What dreams or hopes do you have for your future?
- What was the Israelites' dream?
- How do you think they felt when they arrived back in their homeland?
- How did they express their happiness?

Sing and shout for joy

based on Psalm 126

It is possible this psalm was written by God's people returning to Jerusalem from exile. They are celebrating what God has done for them, that he has fulfilled his promises to them. As they return, they see the restoration that needs to take place, but continue to celebrate what God has done for them.



We are here! We're back!

How we dreamed of the day when the Lord would bring us back home, back where we belong.

Alleluia, shout for joy!

Even others look at us and say

'The Lord has done great things for them!'

And he has!

The Lord has done great things for us!

Alleluia, shout for joy!

And now that we are where we belong, Lord,
help us to rebuild, to restore and to make new.

Turn everything bad to good,
turn everything sad to happy,
So that we can continue to say

Alleluia, shout for joy!

Bible study and response with young people

- Beforehand, read **Psalm 126**. There are several versions available at www.biblegateway.com.
- Read and print out a copy of the Bible study sheet for each group member. There are additional Bible notes on the [WEB](#).
- In the session, read the Bible passage together, look at the *Bible notes* and *Make connections* sections. Use this conversation spark to provoke first reactions from the group: *If you could live anywhere in the world, with anyone, where would you go and who would you be with?*
- The *Explore* section guides individuals through the passage to discover what it might reveal to them.
- Encourage people to respond to their discussion using the response activity below or the options on the next page.

Respond What can you do? **YP**

A practical shout of joy

You will need: information about aid agencies, or those listed below; internet access.

- People still get caught up a long way from home, frightened in a strange land.
- Find out about the work of church and other agencies to support refugees and asylum seekers, the homeless or the runaway, in this country.
- Discover a practical thing you might do to celebrate their work and raise their profile in your community. While this is about becoming more aware, it is also celebrating God at work through the agencies and actions of God's people.

Live in faith

Begin each day by saying thank you to God, for all God does in the world.

End each day by saying thank you to God, for all God has done for you.

Volume setting Psalm 126

Bible notes

From the time of King David (1000–922 BC), the capital city of the Israelites was Jerusalem, built on Mount Zion, with the Temple eventually built right on the top of the mountain. Zion, then, means Jerusalem, but it also symbolises salvation. However, in 597 BC the city was taken by the Babylonians and the temple was destroyed. All the leading figures among the Jews were marched into exile in Babylon about 1,000 miles away.

However, the Babylonians were defeated by the Persians under Cyrus and the exiles were allowed to go home in 538. A few years later they built a second temple in which all these psalms were performed. This Psalm, 126, was written at this time when 'the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion'. The psalm is a little ambiguous, however, as the psalmist may be dreaming of these events, which he believes (rightly) were about to happen.

The Negeb of verse 4 is an arid desert in the south of Israel. Still as dry as ever, it is occupied by Bedouin wanderers. When it does rain, the streams (or wadis) are suddenly filled with rushing water, which restores fertility to the area for a time. This image of a transformation from aridity to fertility is here used as an analogy of the change in Israel's fortunes after captivity and exile. In the same way, the psalmist uses the image of farming to illustrate how tears and weeping change to shouts of joy. In every case, unhappiness is temporary, as God fulfils the deepest desires of the Israelites.

Make connections

The Jewish experience of exile in Babylon can be found in a number of places in the Old Testament.

In a land as dry as Israel, water is a vivid symbol of health and prosperity. This symbol has been used particularly by John 4.7-15 and 5.2-9 where it probably has a connection with baptism by immersion.

The psalm expresses the joy of knowing God has provided abundantly, that prayers are answered. We, too, are called to celebrate the abundant joy of knowing God provides for our needs.

Explore

In the past four weeks we have looked at four psalms that have taken us from praising God, pleading with God, being reassured, and finally having one's desires fulfilled.

- What images do you think best express fulfilment or well-being?
- How might it feel to be captive away from your home, or forced to live away from your homeland like an asylum seeker, or someone caught up in a war?
- What do you think it would feel like to find refuge in a new home?

The people of Israel wrote and sang today's psalm in response to the joy of seeing God restore their fortunes.

Create your own works of praise.

- Think about a time when you were happy.

In the psalm, the happiness of the people was increased by seeing God as the cause of their joy.

- How might you see God at work in your joyful moments?

The psalmist responded in verse and in song: create a modern equivalent. You might like to write a poem about it, or create a rap or write new words to a tune you know, so you could sing about it. If you find it easier to respond to God's action in a less personal way, base your poem or song on current events.

Respond to the Word

Based on Psalm 126

See p.43 for ways of presenting the Bible reading.

Play Wildest dreams

C + YP 10 MINS

A memory game to get thinking about dreams

- Sit the group in a circle and ask them to think for a moment of something exciting that they could only dream might happen. Encourage them to use their imagination and not to worry about how realistic it might be, but tell them they have to be able to describe it using just a few words.
- Choose a volunteer to start. They will say, 'In my wildest dreams...' and describe their dream in three or four words only. (For example, 'In my wildest dreams I fly to the moon.')
- Going clockwise, the next child says, 'In my wildest dreams...' then describes their own dream followed by the first dream. (For example, 'In my wildest dreams I swim with dolphins and fly to the moon.')
- Each child has to list their own dream followed by every previous dream, until the last child in the circle has to list everyone's dreams.
- Explain that the psalm says that, when God brought his people back to Jerusalem, they were so happy it seemed as if their wildest dreams had come true.

Shout Hallelujah!

 + C 5 MINS

Shouts of joy from around the world

- Ask children to repeat after you some shouts of joy from around the world, shouting them as loudly as they can:
 - Hallelujah! (Israel)
 - Slava bogu! (Russia)
 - Buíochas le Dia! (Gaelic)
 - Puji Tuhan! (Indonesia)
 - Sifa Kwa Mungu (Swahili)
 - Pris Herren! (Denmark)
- If you have members of your church who have lived in other countries, invite them to come and share with the group how God is praised in that language/culture.
- Encourage the children to try to find out other shouts of joy this week.

Write Rap for joy

C + YP 15 MINS

A chance to respond to the good things God has done

You will need: pencils and paper.

- Ask the group to share ideas about what God has done that make us want to shout for joy.
- Tell them that the psalm says the people were filled with 'shouts of joy' or 'happy songs', and that they are going to turn their ideas into a rap.
- Encourage them to think of a beat for their rap to go to – read out and tap along to 'a-one and a-two and a-three and a-four' as an example.
- People might work in twos or threes to write a 'rap for joy', including some of their ideas. A rap can rhyme but doesn't have to.
- If they feel comfortable doing so, you could ask them to perform their rap to the rest of the group.

Make Great things collage

 + C 10 MINS

Describing the great things God has done in the world

You will need: coloured paper; pencils; scissors; glue; glitter; sequins.

- Ask the children to think of things that God has done that makes them feel happy, and choose one of these things to make a collage of it using the materials provided.
- Encourage them to create as bright, colourful and joyful a collage as they can.

Make Noise

 + C 10 MINS

Make shakers to create a joyful noise

You will need: yoghurt pots; dried beans or peas; strong tape; paper; colouring pens or paint.

You may have made shakers from the activity on 7 October. If so, use them again creating shouts of joy. If not, you could make them now. Instructions are on page 33.

- Ask the children to come up with their own 'shout of joy', something they want to praise God for, and write it on their shaker. Remind them about how people celebrate when someone scores a goal at a football match. Can they be just as exuberant?
- Play or sing a song of praise and invite the children to make as much joyful noise as you can bear!

Pray Arrow prayers

 + C + YP 5 MINS

A quick prayer

- Explain to the group that, over the last four weeks, we have been looking at different prayers in the psalms, but that prayers don't have to be formal, structured and planned.
- An arrow prayer is a very short prayer of only three or four words that we can fire up to God quickly, just like an arrow fired from a bow. Arrow prayers can be said out loud or in our heads.
- Ask the youngsters to think of some arrow prayers to go with verses 1-3 of today's psalm. These are arrow prayers that shout to God with joy.
- Finally, ask them to think of some arrow prayers to go with verse 4 of today's psalm. These prayers ask for God's help.

Send out

Live in faith

Encourage the children to look for signs of God in action in the world, and to fire an arrow prayer to God to give thanks for these times.

Pray

Teach us to be glad.

Teach us to celebrate all you have done for us and all you continue to do in our lives.

Alleluia, loving God, let us shout for joy!

Amen.