

Gladness not sadness! - a one-off study for small groups

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Q1 Why could it be that given broadly the same set of circumstances in their lives, some people seem to be really happy and contented while others are full of doom and gloom?

Read Psalm 100

We ought to ask ourselves the question: can God take as much pleasure in our worship if there is no joy evident in it? Worship of course is not confined to church services and singing, even though there may be no better platform for our worship than an inspiring service.

There will of course be times when for good reasons we in heaviness and when it is a real struggle to worship at all: of course God is pleased with our worship, possibly even most pleased with it when we have determined to worship no matter what might deter us. But generally ...

Let's commit to being joyful whenever possible, exuberant even, as we come to worship whether in church celebration or in small group sharing. Let's remember that worship is a good old Anglo-Saxon word meaning *worth-ship*: any activity in which we tell God and others, or any action by which we demonstrate how much worth we see in God.

In this Psalm we are given two reasons to express to God how much we appreciate him. Let's look at each in turn and discuss in the group how understanding this should make us appreciate God more.

The first reason to express to God how much we appreciate him is that we are his people, made by him and looked after by him. The psalm says 'we are ... the sheep of his pasture.'. There are many places in the Bible where the picture is painted of the care of the Shepherd for the sheep in his care and even Jesus used this picture in a parable (Jn 10:14-15). Psalm 23 amplifies the idea stated in Psalm 100, and you may care to think about some aspects of this care (this is not an exhaustive list). The descriptions are jumbled up to help us take in each one as we solve the riddles:

We have the UORREECS of God's PLUSYP (Ps 23:1)

We have TRES in God's NEERSPEC (Ps 23:2)

We can experience ASTERROTINO of our TIMESOON (Pr 23:3)

We are encouraged to VILE by God's DASTRANDS (Ps 23:3)

And when we need it there is both TRUSPOP and BRUKEE! (Ps 23:4)

The second reason to express to God how much we appreciate him is that God has shown us something of his eternal unchanging nature. Two of these are revealed in Psalm 100 and two elsewhere: again, just to make us think, they first need to be unscrambled:

His enduring attribute of VOLE (Ps 100:5)

His enduring attribute of SETHULIFFANS (Ps 100:5)

His enduring attribute of RYLOG (Ps 104:31) – **Q2** in what ways is this seen?

His enduring attribute of OWNERN (Ps 102:12) – eg by what he can do in our lives (Is 55:11-13)

His enduring attribute of GUESTISHONERS (Ps 111:3)

Why not spend time writing a short psalm of your own in which you can express these things to God as an act of worship? (Groups may care to defer this to the start of the next meeting to give time to compose)