

Questions week beginning 12 January 2025

Happy New year!

READ PSALM 100

1. In some Churches, worship is a solemn thing in order to maintain reverence. This psalm, however, calls people to “shout for joy”, “worship with gladness” and enter his courts with “thanksgiving” and “praise”.

- i. Do you find worshipping the Lord in this kind of enthusiastic and joyful way easy or hard? What might help us and what might hinder us from doing so?
- ii. Do you have a favourite “joyful song”? (v2)

2. The motivation for such joyful worship is the enduring goodness, love and faithfulness of God (v5 NIV). (or goodness, mercy and truth of God King James Version) . What evidence of these qualities did you see at work last year?

3. At the heart of this Psalm is a declaration of identity (v3). Whilst it was probably written with the people of Israel specifically in mind, it could be helpful to consider how it speaks personally to us today as well.

- i. What does it mean to “know” that the Lord is God?
- ii. Bearing in mind that we are the product of our parent’s love, what does it mean to say that “*it is he who made us*”?

4. In the Old Testament God is often seen as being a Shepherd, and His people being His flock (e.g. Psalm 23, Psalm 79:13, Psalm 80:1, Ezekiel 34:31). In the New Testament Jesus called Himself the Good Shepherd (John 10:11), likened His followers to being sheep (Matthew 10:16, 25:31-46) and church elders as being shepherds of His flock (1 Peter 5:1-4). In verse 3 of Psalm 100 His people are called “*sheep of your pasture*”

- i. How would you describe the “pasture” that Jesus has provided for Christians to live in?”
- ii. How does this “pasture” differ from the one that we used to live in before we were Christians?

READ PROVERBS 3:1-6

Note: This is written as if “wisdom” was a person speaking to God’s people

5. In Psalm 100 verse 5, the love and faithfulness of God (or mercy and truth of God) provoked joyful worship. In verse 3 of this Proverb the people of God are called to demonstrate those same qualities: to “*bind them around your neck*” and “*write them on the tablet of your heart*”. What does that image convey to you? What might it look like in practice?

6. Note what verse 4 says is the fruit of doing the above. Do you think these are goals that God would want us to be actively pursuing in 2025 or should we just see them as being the promised repercussion of us choosing to be loving and faithful (merciful and truthful)?

7. Verses 5-6 often appear on posters/social media memes, but it is helpful to give consideration to what it is actually saying. In order to experience the Lord making our paths straight (or direct our paths) in verse 6 the writer says we need to do a few specific things:

- i. Trust in the Lord (v5). What does that actually mean?
 - ii. Trust Him with “*all of your heart*” (v5). What might “half-hearted” trusting look like?
 - iii. “*Lean not on your own understanding*” (v5). Does that mean we should never listen to our own thoughts or reason?
 - iv. “*In all your ways submit to him*” (v6) The King James version says, “*acknowledge Him*”. The New Living Translation says, “*Seek his will in all you do*”. How do you go about involving God in your decision-making process so that you acknowledge Him and submit your ways to Him?
- a. Do you tell Him what you want to do and look for His peace?
 - b. Do you ask Him to tell you what He wants for you and then wait for His answer?
 - c. Do you just go ahead with your own plans and repent if it all goes wrong?
 - d. Do you adopt a different approach?