

WRAP-UP

Declaring God's Goodness – read Psalm 145 aloud.

Psalm 145:1-21 NLT – 1... I will exalt you, my God and King, and praise your name forever and ever. 2 I will praise you every day; yes, I will praise you forever. 3 Great is the LORD! He is most worthy of praise! No one can measure his greatness. 4 Let each generation tell its children of your mighty acts; let them proclaim your power. 5 I will meditate on your majestic, glorious splendor and your wonderful miracles. 6 Your awe-inspiring deeds will be on every tongue; I will proclaim your greatness. 7 Everyone will share the story of your wonderful goodness; they will sing with joy about your righteousness. 8 The LORD is merciful and compassionate, slow to get angry and filled with unfailing love. 9 The LORD is good to everyone. He showers compassion on all his creation. 10 All of your works will thank you, LORD, and your faithful followers will praise you. 11 They will speak of the glory of your kingdom; they will give examples of your power. 12 They will tell about your mighty deeds and about the majesty and glory of your reign. 13 For your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom. You rule throughout all generations. The LORD always keeps his promises; he is gracious in all he does. 14 The LORD helps the fallen and lifts those bent beneath their loads. 15 The eyes of all look to you in hope; you give them their food as they need it. 16 When you open your hand, you satisfy the hunger and thirst of every living thing. 17 The LORD is righteous in everything he does; he is filled with kindness. 18 The LORD is close to all who call on him, yes, to all who call on him in truth. 19 He grants the desires of those who fear him; he hears their cries for help and rescues them. 20 The LORD protects all those who love him, but he destroys the wicked. 21 I will praise the LORD, and may everyone on earth bless his holy name forever and ever.

MEMORY VERSE

God is our refuge and strength, always ready to help in times of trouble.

- Psalm 46:1 NLT

PRAYER (20 MIN)

Ask your group to pray for you regarding one area where you can apply this study in your life: _____

Pray for your group members' needs: _____

Challenge- Find opportunities to share God's praise this week.

“The Ebenezer Stone” Rhythms and Revival #7

INTRODUCTION

Sometimes we forget the good things God has done when there are so many challenges and disappointments competing for our attention. It is time to step back, to draw a deep breath and share the stories of where God has moved in our lives. God is faithful and has done great things which we can celebrate. In chapter 7 of 1 Samuel, we see a moment of victory for the Israelites that was memorialized by a stone called Ebenezer- Stone of Help. That stone, in that place, stood as a reminder for generations to come, that God is our help.

Ice Breaker

Is there a keepsake in your home that serves as a reminder of a special person or event?

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Story Behind the Stone

1 Samuel 7:10-12 NLT - 10 Just as Samuel was sacrificing the burnt offering, the Philistines arrived to attack Israel. But the LORD spoke with a mighty voice of thunder from heaven that day, and the Philistines were thrown into such confusion that the Israelites defeated them. 11 The men of Israel chased them from Mizpah to a place below Beth-car, slaughtering them all along the way. 12 Samuel then took a large stone and placed it between the towns of Mizpah and Jeshanah. He named it Ebenezer (which means "the stone of help"), for he said, "Up to this point the LORD has helped us!"

This passage out of 1 Samuel is the conclusion of a longer story concerning the Israelites' struggle with the Philistines in the past. It wasn't always so simple as God showing up and Israel being victorious. There had been losses along the way.

1 Samuel 4:1-3 NLT - 1 And Samuel's words went out to all the people of Israel. At that time Israel was at war with the Philistines. The Israelite army was camped near Ebenezer, and the Philistines were at Aphek. 2 The Philistines attacked and defeated the army of Israel, killing 4,000 men. 3 After the battle was over, the troops retreated to their camp, and the elders of Israel asked, "Why did the LORD allow us to be defeated by the Philistines?" Then they said, "Let's bring the Ark of the Covenant of the LORD from Shiloh. If we carry it into battle with us, it will save us from our enemies."

Some suggest that the place where Samuel set up this memorial stone was the same where, twenty years before, the Israelites were defeated by the Philistines.

What was the Israelites' solution to their defeat at that time? How is that different from their solution in 1 Samuel 7?

1 Samuel 7:5-6, 10-12 NLT - 5 Then Samuel told them, "Gather all of Israel to Mizpah, and I will pray to the LORD for you." 6 So they gathered at Mizpah and, in a great ceremony, drew water from a well and poured it out before the LORD. They also went without food all day and confessed that they had sinned against the LORD. (It was at Mizpah that Samuel became Israel's judge.) ... 10 Just as Samuel was sacrificing the burnt offering, the Philistines arrived to attack Israel. But the LORD spoke with a mighty voice of thunder from heaven that day, and the Philistines were thrown into such confusion that the Israelites defeated them. 11 The men of Israel chased them from Mizpah to a place below Beth-car, slaughtering them all along the way. 12 Samuel then took a large stone and placed it between the towns of Mizpah and Jeshanah. He named it Ebenezer (which means "the stone of help"), for he said, "Up to this point the LORD has helped us!"

It wasn't the ark that protected them, it was God. We too might fail to recognize that the power of God comes from our direct relationship to God Himself. When they sought God with earnest repentance, prayer, fasting and sacrifice, He stepped in to defeat their enemy. That is the help Samuel memorialized with the Ebenezer Stone.

2. A Reason to Celebrate

Psalms 111:1-4 NLT - 1 Praise the LORD! I will thank the LORD with all my heart as I meet with his godly people. 2 How amazing are the deeds of the LORD! All who delight in him should ponder them. 3 Everything he does reveals his glory and majesty. His righteousness never fails. 4 He causes us to remember his wonderful works. How gracious and merciful is our LORD!

So why was it important to erect an Ebenezer? Because it helped Israel remember that God had helped them. In the Psalms we see praise is closely connected with our remembering God's wonderful works, and God Himself causes us to remember.

Where is the Psalmist declaring praise? Who is he encouraging to reflect on what God has done? What are some of the ways available to us today to declare God's praise?

Psalms 46:1-3 NLT - 1 ... God is our refuge and strength, always ready to help in times of trouble. 2 So we will not fear when earthquakes come and the mountains crumble into the sea. 3 Let the oceans roar and foam. Let the mountains tremble as the waters surge!

The past year was filled with circumstances that could evoke fear. But let's remember, just as in Psalm 46, God is ready to help us through those times. He is our refuge and strength and has faithfully shown up for us in so many ways.

Share the ways you have seen God move over the past year, and let it be a declaration of praise for his faithfulness to you.