

COMMUNITY GROUP QUESTIONS THANKSGIVING

Psalm 111

Pastor Darren Carrington – December 1, 2013

MEMORY VERSE

“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; all those who practice it have a good understanding. His praise endures forever!” (Psalm 111:10, ESV)

DISCUSSION STARTERS

Take time as a group to share and discuss what you are thankful for in 2013. How has God blessed you this year? What are the significant events, people, and circumstances that stand out?

COMMUNITY GROUP QUESTIONS — THANKSGIVING

Throughout much of the Bible, the flow of communication is from God to people. In the Psalms, however, the flow of communication is from people to God. The Psalms are songs and prayers from people to God or about God, and were used in ancient Hebrew worship.

Read Psalm 111.

Psalm 111 is an alphabetic acrostic psalm, in which each line of psalm begins with the next letter of the Hebrew alphabet (which is lost in the English translation). The pattern begins after the opening “Praise Yahweh”; when the lines are divided according to the Hebrew letters, there are 22 lines. After an introductory statement praising God (v. 1), it has two main sections. The first section focuses on God’s works and His character (vv. 2–6). The second section focuses on God’s covenants and commands (vv. 7–9). The final verse of the psalm combines these concerns into a subtle call for obedience and loyalty to God (v. 10).¹

¹ John D. Barry et al., *Faithlife Study Bible* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2012), Ps 111:1–10.

² *Ibid.*, Ps. 111:7. The word *’ad*, which can mean, “lasting future time,” is synonymous with *’olam*, which means, “long time” or “future time” (vv. 5, 9). In Ps. 111, these terms appear with the meaning “forever” and



The psalmist uses a broad term for the works (v. 2) of God so that the audience can reflect on the wide range of God's works. Only one work (food, v. 5) is mentioned.

- Identify and reflect on some of God's works.
- How has God provided for you this past year?

In verse 7, the term precepts, *piqqudim*, which means "instructions," or "procedures," is sometimes associated with the term "upright" (v. 8). The psalmist seems to have constructed this psalm to focus on God's precepts (see note on 113:3).²

- While it is easy to acknowledge God's precepts are trustworthy, at times, our actions reveal that we doubt God's promises. Identify a few of these precepts, commands, and promises that you doubt are true or trustworthy. How can you grow in your trust in the promises of God?

Verse 10 echoes other wisdom literature on fearing God (Prov. 1:7; 9:10; Job 28:28).

- What does fearing God mean to you?³

GROUP ACTIVITY

Compose an acrostic Psalm.

Follow the pattern that David used in writing Psalm 111 by using successive letters of the alphabet, offering praises and requests to God. To prepare, assign letters around the group, then allow 5 minutes for each person to write out praises of thanksgiving for their assigned letters.

For example:

A – Almighty God, we praise you tonight for you awesome power. You are able to do anything, and nothing is more powerful or can conquer you.

B – Benevolence you show to your children is so appreciated! You are a kind God who doesn't treat me as my sin deserves (*from someone who lost his or her job...*).

² Ibid., Ps. 111:7. The word *'ad*, which can mean, "lasting future time," is synonymous with *'olam*, which means, "long time" or "future time" (vv. 5, 9). In Ps. 111, these terms appear with the meaning "forever" and serves as a bookend in Ps. 111. The verses between these bookends use the term *'olam*, describing how God remembers His covenant until *'olam* (v. 5) and has commanded His covenant until *'olam* (v. 9). In v. 8, the psalmist combines the two terms, declaring that God's precepts are established "forever and ever" (v. 8). This pattern draws attention to God's precepts, which are trustworthy (v. 7) and to be performed faithfully (v. 8).

³ The idea of "fear" seems to lie somewhere between "respect" and "terror." The fear of God is the foundation or source of wisdom. The primary prerequisite of biblical wisdom is the proper stance towards God and His requirements.



