



# Community Group Discussion Guide

May 26, 2024

Psalm 65 | God of All Creation

## MOTIVATE

Starter Question:

- ⇒ *Share an experience where you felt truly in awe of God's ability to create and sustain life.*

Optional activity:

- ⇒ *Ask group members to find and share a picture from their phones that displays God's incredible creation.*

## DISCUSS

Psalm 65 is the first of four psalms in a row that praise God for His blessings in nature and for the gracious way He interacts with His people. Written by David to the choirmaster, it is considered to be a Thanksgiving Psalm.

Scholars differ on when and why this was psalm written. The consensus is that it celebrated a fruitful harvest at either the Feast of Tabernacles, Feast of Weeks, or Feast of Unleavened Bread. The Sinai Covenant (Exodus 19:3-6) ties the believing response of God's people to the fruitfulness of the land He gave them. David praised God for His grace to continue blessing His people despite their failure. David recognized that Yahweh is the God of the covenant and the God of creation. This psalm should enlarge our view of the supremacy of God, develop gratitude in our hearts, and remind us of our desperate dependence on God for all our needs.

- ⇒ *Is it a challenge for you in your current spiritual journey to believe that God is a giver of good gifts? Why or why not?*

**Psalm 65:1** *Praise is due to you, O God, in Zion, and to you shall vows be performed.*

Zion is the name of the city that David captured and made the capital of Israel (2 Samuel 5:7). Jerusalem was the name of the city-state as a whole, whereas Zion is the fortified section of the city. It is sometimes known as the City of God and can refer to the heavenly Jerusalem as well (Hebrews 12:22). David indicated that praise is due to God in both the earthly and heavenly realms.

In biblical times, vows were taken very seriously and acted as a binding contract. Vows were usually expressions of devotion and often used in the context of prayer. Breaking a vow was a serious offense (Deuteronomy 23:21-23). The fulfillment of a vow was usually followed by a thanks offering (Leviticus 7:11-21). Zion was often the place where God's people gathered for worship, so it is likely worshippers gathered there, and that this song was the fulfillment of a promise to praise God for His answered prayers.

- ⇒ ***How do you typically express your gratitude or your devotion to God?***
- ⇒ ***Describe a time when God answered your prayers in a particularly special way. How did you respond to Him?***

***Psalm 65:2-4*** *O you who hear prayer, to you shall all flesh come. 3 When iniquities prevail against me, you atone for our transgressions. 4 Blessed is the one you choose and bring near, to dwell in your courts! We shall be satisfied with the goodness of your house, the holiness of your temple!*

David described God as “you who hear prayer.” This is what set Yahweh apart from the pagan gods of the non-Jewish nations around Israel. The surrounding nations might have made similar vows or sacrifices, but their gods of wood and stone could not hear or answer like the God of the Israelites.

As the God who hears prayers, He invites all of humanity to trust Him and come to Him in prayer and worship (Isaiah 2:2-4). This invitation is evidence of God’s unlimited kindness and mercy. Though our sin separates us from God, He made a way for us to be brought near to Him by the sacrifice and atonement of Jesus’ death on the cross. The Hebrew word for “atone” can also be interpreted as “cover,” “cleanse,” or “forgive,” which is exactly what Jesus’ death did for believers.

In biblical times, to “dwell in God’s courts” was a privilege reserved for only certain people. The Levites and priests had to perform numerous sacrifices to be considered clean enough to enter the sacred rooms of the temple or tabernacle where God’s holy presence resided (Numbers 3:5-51). Because of Jesus, all believers have access to God’s presence at any time. God made us a royal priesthood, set apart for His courts. In His presence we receive numerous spiritual blessings, like deeper knowledge of God, refreshment, and divine peace.

- ⇒ ***How does God hearing our prayers set Him apart from the idols we tend to worship today?***
- ⇒ ***What emotions or thoughts are stirred in your heart when you think about dwelling in God’s courts?***

***Psalm 65:5-8*** *By awesome deeds you answer us with righteousness, O God of our salvation, the hope of all the ends of the earth and of the farthest seas; 6 the one who by his strength established the mountains, being girded with might; 7 who stills the roaring of the seas, the roaring of their waves, the tumult of the peoples, 8 so that those who dwell at the ends of the earth are in awe at your signs. You make the going out of the morning and the evening to shout for joy.*

David’s song of praise and thanksgiving moved to how God reveals Himself through creation. Yahweh performed amazing miracles through His creation to save and fight for the people of Israel. He made the sun stand still, made bread and quail rain from the sky, and parted the sea. God demonstrated His power over all the earth, which as the Creator, rightly belongs to Him. He created everything out of nothing and therefore is in control of all that He created--living creatures, inanimate objects, believers, and unbelievers. Only the creator of heaven, earth, and mankind can be the source of true hope.

- ⇒ ***What are some other biblical examples of awesome deeds performed by God over His creation?***
- ⇒ ***What are some awesome parts of God’s creation you have experienced personally?***

⇒ ***What do these reveal about God's character and why is this cause for joy?***

It was only by God's grace that Israel was the beneficiary of His awesome deeds. They did nothing to deserve God's protection or favor but were chosen by Him despite their imperfections to be a light to the rest of the world. These miracles revealed God's character to the surrounding nations, which distinguished Him even more from their idols. His power over creation, regardless of where the Israelites camped or lived, inspired awe and fear to those who did not know Him. In addition to the nations close by, David understood that creation reveals God to the ends of the earth. This promise was ultimately fulfilled in Christ's coming, when the good news of God's redemptive plan was revealed in full. It also looks forward to the spread of the gospel to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8).

⇒ ***How is Christ the ultimate hope for the entire world?***

***Psalm 65:9-13*** You visit the earth and water it; you greatly enrich it; the river of God is full of water; you provide their grain, for so you have prepared it. **10** You water its furrows abundantly, settling its ridges, softening it with showers, and blessing its growth. **11** You crown the year with your bounty, your wagon tracks overflow with abundance. **12** The pastures of the wilderness overflow, the hills gird themselves with joy. **13** the meadows clothe themselves with flocks, the valleys deck themselves with grain, they shout and sing together for joy.

David continued to praise God for the way He provided abundantly during harvest. David emphasized God's goodness and generosity by using words like enrich, full, abundant, blessing, bounty, and overflow. This is not just a harvest that meets the basic need to sustain life. It is a harvest year defined by copious blessings. So great are the blessings that it is as if nature itself is joining David in worshipping God.

⇒ ***How does creation show us God's abundant grace and goodness?***

⇒ ***How have you been blessed by God's creation?***

God's goodness was not confined to the physical provision of food in biblical times. The word "visit" in verse 9 is the same word used in Ruth 1:6, which is translated there as "paid attention." Through the use of this phrase we learn that God is attentive to His people, too. He fearfully and wonderfully made us and knows every hair on our head (Psalm 139:14, Matthew 10:29-32). We can be confident that just as God visits and provides for the earth, He will do the same for us.

There is also an emphasis on water in these verses. Water is essential for life. God's provision of water identifies Him as the source and sustainer of life. He is the living water who sustains us to the end (John 4:10; 7:37, 1 Corinthians 1:8).

⇒ ***Think of a time when God provided for you abundantly. Share that experience and describe how it grew your understanding of God's grace.***

As beneficiaries of God's blessings through nature, we should express our gratitude and esteem by being good stewards of the earth. God has given us dominion over the earth, but this should lead us toward praise, not toward waste or disregard (Genesis 9:1-3; John 6:12; Revelation 11:18). Creation is united like a voiceless choir, shouting for joy to the God of the universe. May we join in the song of celebration (Luke 19:37-40)!

⇒ *Why is it important to be a good steward of creation?*

## TRANSFORM

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**1. Make personal application:** As creator and provider, God is set apart from any other idol that claims to hear or satisfy us. Despite our imperfection, God has shown us grace by atoning for our sins, inviting us into His presence, and pouring out abundant blessing on our lives. Through Jesus' sacrifice, we can draw near to our maker and sustainer of life, growing in our knowledge and love for Him. Dwelling in God's presence should increase gratitude and praise in our lives. Our response should be thanksgiving, followed up by caring well for the world He has given us, and sharing the good news of God's grace with others.

- ⇒ *Think about when God first revealed Himself to you. How has He proved to be the hope of salvation in your life?*
- ⇒ *How does knowing that God pays attention to you impact your view of yourself?*
- ⇒ *We know that nature can reveal God's character to unbelievers, but we also know God has given us a unique responsibility to share the gospel. Who is one person in your life that you can pray for to know God? What action can you take this week to be faithful to share the hope you have in Christ with others?*

**2. Pray:** Praise God for His character revealed in this passage: His grace, abundance, goodness, and faithfulness. Thank Him for the multitude of blessings in your life. Be specific with your gratitude. Admit your dependence on Him as the sustainer of life. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you respond to His grace by increasing your thankfulness, stewarding His creation well, and sharing the hope of Christ to the ends of the earth.

## STUDY

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Resources used, compiled from, and quoted:

- *Wiersbe Old Testament Bible Commentary (2007), pages 946-947.*
- *New International Version Life Application Study Bible (1997), page 972.*
- *Christian Standard Study Bible (2017), pages. 872-873.*
- *English Standard Version Study Bible (2008), page. 1126.*
- *Holman Old Testament Commentary, Psalms 1-75 (2004), pages 327-329.*
- *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary (2015), pages 1636, 1701-1702.*