



LET'S GO TO CHURCH



Psalm 122

PREVIEW

Church. It's a sacred place of refuge and holiness where we give glory and praise to God. It's where redemption and deliverance live. It's God's house where His peaceful, life-giving Spirit is ever present. It's no wonder David wrote about how glad he was to go there! We are so incredibly blessed that He has given us an open-ended invitation to come to His house anytime we want. What an honor! Nonetheless, things in life can cause us to forget how much of an honor it truly is. Let's take a few moments to remember together.

PRAISE

Psalm 122 tells of the excitement shared by the people of God when they came together to worship Him. As they entered Jerusalem, they came with thanksgiving and praise to bless His name. In the same spirit, we should rejoice with the body of Christ every time we step into His presence. Speak the triumph of God's people as the Israelites did: "Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem." Reaching the gates of Jerusalem was a testament of the journey many Israelites had to make. So, as we cross over from our process into the fulfillment of our promises, let us give thanks for everything God has brought us through.

PARABLE

All the tribes of Israel would travel great lengths for no other reason than simply to gather together to worship the Lord. Although the somewhat arduous trek to Jerusalem was required of them by their religious laws, they made the journey with gladness and selflessness in their hearts. Whatever inconvenience they may have experienced was overlooked because they understood the value of the destination.

Let's compare that to God's people (us) today. Every week, we have the same opportunity to connect with God and our fellow believers. We have greater access to His power with far fewer obstacles keeping us from our house of worship than the Israelites faced. Yet we rarely exude the same kind of thankfulness as we enter into His gates. What was once seen as a great privilege to God's people, we now too often take for granted or view as a drudgery.

PRESENT

The Israelites were a people whose culture revolved around the things of God. They spent their lives studying His Word and testifying of His goodness. They were intentional about remembering His provision, reflecting on stories of past victories, and rejoicing over their many blessings. Because of their purposeful efforts in acknowledging the Lord, the Israelites truly understood who He was. And to know Him was to love Him. Through this understanding, they were able to worship out of love instead of obligation. It was a joy for them to get together to praise

their Deliverer even though it meant sacrificing some things to get there. It was where they felt safe and found their strength, and that was of much greater worth to them than anything they had to give up in the process.

We need to take on the perspective of the Israelites. We need to stop dwelling on the inconveniences of the process and start focusing on the value of the destination. Any of the time, energy, or emotion we expend serving our church and worshiping our Savior is nothing in comparison to the blessings we receive when we're there.

PRACTICE

In our culture today, business is the norm. In the midst of unending to-do lists, finding time for church can feel like just another thing to add on to our overwhelming schedule. After a while, spending time in His presence too easily gets pushed aside to make room for the things we deem more pressing. Eventually, we can find ourselves becoming more and more distant not only from God, but from who He has called us to be.

So how can we combat this?

Simple: We make Him first priority, always. We seek Him out and learn who He is. We fall in love with our Creator. Once we discover our own deep love for the Lord, we will find that we not only enjoy going to His house, we hunger for it. We crave whatever gets us closer to Him and helps us find more of Him.

What can you change in your life to make the things of God the most important priority?

PRAY

Lord, I thank You for allowing me the privilege to come into Your Holy Place to freely worship You. I'm so grateful to have a church family that I can turn to for support and encouragement. I ask that You would sustain my joy in worship no matter what season of life I'm in or how busy I may become. Let my love for You and Your house always outweigh the weight of sacrifice.

PLUS

Our attitude toward God directs our view of worship. We may find worship a chore if we have distanced ourselves from God, but we find gladness, as David did, when going to church with grateful hearts and with the proper perspective. As we enter a new week full of challenges and stressors, let's remember that going to church is not an extra task burdening us; it's where we go to lay our burdens down.