

Teach Us to Pray, Teacher's Guide

Lesson 4: Adoration: Hallowing God's Name

Psalm 145

Teaching Aim (Teacher Orientation)

Psalm 145 anchors a truth easily lost in a study about prayer: that the first work of prayer is not asking but adoring. Doctrinally, this lesson is about the character of God, the proper object of all worship. David praises God for his greatness (vv. 3-6), his goodness and mercy (vv. 8-9), his everlasting reign (v. 13), his faithful provision (vv. 14-16), and his righteousness and nearness (vv. 17-18). The teacher's task is to help the class see and savor the God these verses describe, so that adoration becomes a genuine response of the heart rather than a religious duty. A right view of God is the foundation on which every other kind of prayer is built.

One phrase rewards careful handling. "Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom" (v. 13) celebrates God's eternal, unbroken reign over all things. This is the God who rules now and always, not a king waiting for some future earthly throne. It harmonizes with the New Testament truth that Christ reigns at the right hand of the Father in the present. Adoration rests on the fact that God is already and forever King. Also note "the Lord is near to all who call on him in truth" (v. 18): God draws near to genuine worship, not to empty words. Our praise must be of God as he truly is, grounded in his revelation, not a sentimental projection of our own making.

The formational aim is to cultivate worshipers. Many believers have never learned to adore God for his own sake; their prayers are almost entirely petition. This is not because they are wicked but because no one taught them, and because adoration runs against our self-centered grain. As you teach, model praise: linger over the attributes, say them back to God in the room, help the class taste what it is to delight in God. The goal is that students leave not merely informed about God's character but moved to bless his name, and that they begin a daily habit of adoration that will steady and enrich the rest of their prayers.

Question 1

Student Question:

David opens, "I will extol you, my God and King, and bless your name forever and ever" (v. 1), and the whole psalm is praise without a single request. What is adoration, and why does Scripture so often place the praise of God for who he is at the very foundation of prayer?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Define adoration simply: it is praising God for who he is, apart from what we want from him. David's psalm is the perfect teacher here, because from beginning to end it asks for nothing. It

only extols. Help the class feel how unusual that is for us, and how healthy. Adoration is prayer that has forgotten itself in the greatness of God.

Show why Scripture puts praise at the foundation of prayer. The model prayer begins “hallowed be your name” before “give us this day.” The reason is theological: God is the center, not us. When we begin with adoration, we put reality in its right order, God on the throne and ourselves before him, and every later request finds its proper place.

Note David’s resolve: “every day I will bless you” (v. 2). Adoration is not reserved for mountaintop moments; it is a daily practice, a discipline of deliberately turning the heart toward God’s worth. Feelings of praise often follow the practice rather than precede it.

Make the pastoral point that adoration is for our transformation, not God’s information. God does not need our praise to feel secure. We need to give it, because in praising God we are reoriented, humbled, and gladdened. We become, in worship, what we were made to be.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Adoration as praising God for who he is, apart from what we want
- Praise as the proper foundation and starting point of prayer (“hallowed be your name”)
- Adoration as a daily, deliberate practice, not only a spontaneous feeling
- Worship for our transformation, not for God’s benefit
- God, not self, as the rightful center of prayer

Discussion Prompts

- What is the difference between thanking God for what he does and adoring him for who he is?
- Why does it matter where we begin our prayers?
- What might change in you if you blessed God’s name every day, as David resolved to do?

Question 2

Student Question:

Be honest about the makeup of your prayers. Is praise actually present in them, or have your prayers become mostly a list of needs? What would it look like this week to begin your prayers, as David does, by simply adoring God before asking him for anything?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This question invites honest self-assessment about the ratio of asking to adoring in our prayers. Most will admit that requests dominate. There is no shame in bringing requests to God, but a prayer life with almost no praise has quietly made self the center. The aim is gentle reorientation.

Give a concrete starting point. Suggest that this week students begin each time of prayer by naming, out loud or in writing, two or three things about God they admire, before any request. Even a couple of minutes of deliberate adoration reshapes the tone of everything that follows.

Encourage them to use Scripture as fuel. Psalm 145 itself, or Psalm 103, can be prayed back to God phrase by phrase when their own words run dry. The point is not eloquence but attention: actually looking at God long enough to be moved.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The honest ratio of petition to praise in our prayers
- Gentle reorientation rather than guilt over a request-heavy prayer life
- Beginning prayer with deliberate adoration
- Using the Psalms as fuel for praise when words run dry

Discussion Prompts

- What does the balance of asking and praising in your prayers reveal about your heart?
- What would help you begin your prayers with adoration this week?
- How could a psalm like this one give you words when your own run out?

Question 3

Student Question:

David says, "Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised, and his greatness is unsearchable" (v. 3), then heaps up words for God's majesty and mighty deeds (vv. 4-6). What does it mean that God's greatness is "unsearchable," and how should the sheer greatness of God shape the way we come to him in prayer?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Open up the greatness of God from verses 3-6. David calls God's greatness "unsearchable," literally beyond finding out. However much we come to know of God, there is always infinitely more. This is not frustrating but glorious: we worship a God we will never exhaust, never master, never outgrow. Eternity will not be long enough to reach the bottom of him.

Notice how David handles greatness he cannot fully grasp: he rehearses God's mighty works and tells them to the next generation (vv. 4-6). When we cannot comprehend God in the abstract, we can remember what he has done, in creation, in redemption, in our own lives, and let his deeds preach his greatness to us.

Apply the greatness of God to prayer. A small view of God produces small, anxious, faithless prayers. A large view of God produces bold, trusting, expectant prayer. The same request feels

entirely different depending on the size of the God we bring it to. Adoring God's greatness is therefore not a detour from real prayer; it is preparation for it.

Guard against domesticating God. Our age prefers a manageable deity who exists to meet our needs. Psalm 145 will not allow it. The God here is the unsearchably great King, and the only fitting posture before him is awe. Reverence is not the enemy of intimacy; it is what keeps intimacy from curdling into presumption.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The unsearchable greatness of God, never to be exhausted
- Remembering God's mighty works as a way to grasp his greatness (vv. 4-6)
- A large view of God producing bold, faith-filled prayer
- Reverence and awe as the fitting posture before God
- Resisting the urge to domesticate God into a manageable helper

Discussion Prompts

- What does it do to your worship to know God's greatness can never be exhausted?
- How does the size of the God you picture affect the way you pray?
- What are some of God's "mighty works" you could rehearse to fuel your awe?

Question 4

Student Question:

It is easy to carry around a small, manageable picture of God that we never quite examine. Where has your view of God shrunk, so that he feels barely larger than your problems? How might deliberately dwelling on his greatness begin to restore a right sense of awe?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This question names a quiet problem: our working picture of God shrinks over time until he seems barely larger than our troubles. Help students recognize the symptoms, prayer that feels pointless, worry that will not lift, a sense that God is distant or small. Often the issue is not unbelief but a deflated vision of God.

Trace where the shrinking comes from: familiarity, busyness, disappointment, a steady diet of small thoughts about God and large thoughts about ourselves. The remedy is not to try harder to feel awe but to look again at who God actually is, which is exactly what this psalm helps us do.

Prescribe a practice. Encourage students to spend a few minutes this week deliberately dwelling on one of God's attributes from Psalm 145, asking him to restore their sense of his greatness. Awe is usually recovered by attention, by looking long enough to see.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The tendency of our view of God to shrink over time
- Symptoms of a deflated vision of God in our prayer lives
- Recovering awe through attention to who God is
- Letting Scripture re-enlarge our picture of God

Discussion Prompts

- Where has your picture of God grown too small?
- What everyday things tend to shrink your sense of God's greatness?
- What attribute of God could you dwell on this week to recover awe?

Question 5

Student Question:

At the center of the psalm David declares, "The Lord is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. The Lord is good to all, and his mercy is over all that he has made" (vv. 8-9). Why does David praise God not only for his greatness but for his goodness and character, and how do these two together give us solid ground for both reverence and trust?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Move to the heart of the psalm, verses 8-9, where David praises not only God's greatness but his goodness: gracious, merciful, slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love, good to all. This is crucial. A God who is merely great but not good would be terrifying. A God who is good but not great would be unable to help. Psalm 145 holds both, and so must our worship.

Linger on "steadfast love," the great Old Testament word for God's covenant loyalty, his committed, unbreakable love for his people. This is not a fickle affection but a settled disposition of the divine heart. We do not have to earn it or fear losing it on a bad day; it is who God is.

Show how greatness and goodness together ground both reverence and trust. Because God is great, we revere him; because he is good, we trust him. Worship that has only awe becomes cold; worship that has only warmth becomes shallow. The full character of God, great and good, produces a worship that is both reverent and intimate, which is exactly the balance the whole study is after.

Apply it to prayer. We bring our requests to a God who is both able and willing, powerful enough to act and good enough to want our good. That combination is the secret of confident prayer. We are not bargaining with a reluctant power; we are trusting a good and mighty Father.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- God's goodness and character: gracious, merciful, slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love (vv. 8-9)
- The covenant faithfulness of God's steadfast love, not a fickle affection
- Greatness and goodness together grounding reverence and trust
- Worship that is both reverent and intimate
- Confident prayer resting on a God both able and willing to do us good

Discussion Prompts

- Why do we need to know God is good and not only great?
- What does "steadfast love" tell you about how God feels toward his people?
- How does holding God's greatness and goodness together shape the way you pray?

Question 6

Student Question:

It is one thing to praise God's goodness when life is sweet, and another when it is hard. Think of a difficult area of your life right now. What would it look like to praise God for his steadfast love and goodness in the middle of that, not as denial, but as an act of trust in who he is?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This question asks students to praise God's goodness in the middle of hardship, which is one of the costliest and most faith-building acts of worship. Be careful and tender here; do not ask anyone to pretend their pain away or to call evil good. Praising God in hardship is not denial; it is the deliberate choice to anchor the heart in God's character when circumstances are shouting the opposite.

Distinguish praising God in suffering from praising God for evil itself. We do not thank God that something terrible happened; we worship God for who he remains, good, faithful, near, even when we cannot trace his hand. This is the worship of Job, who fell down and worshiped in his loss, and of the psalmists who praised through tears.

Invite a concrete, gentle step: choose one hard area and speak one true sentence of praise to God about his steadfast love over it this week. Often that single act begins to lift the eyes and steady the heart, not because the trouble has changed, but because the worshiper has turned to face the God who has not.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Praising God's goodness in hardship as an act of trust, not denial
- The difference between worshipping God in suffering and thanking him for evil
- Anchoring the heart in God's character when circumstances contradict it
- Worship as a deliberate turning of the eyes toward God

Discussion Prompts

- What makes it hard to praise God when life is painful?
- What is the difference between praising God in a trial and pretending it does not hurt?
- What true word of praise could you offer God in a hard area this week?

Question 7

Student Question:

David proclaims, “Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and your dominion endures throughout all generations” (v. 13), and then describes a God who upholds the falling and gives food in due season (vv. 14-16). What does this everlasting reign and faithful provision tell us about the God we are praising, and how does adoring God as the reigning, providing King strengthen our prayers?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Take up verse 13 and the verses around it. “Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom” celebrates that God’s reign has no beginning and no end and is never interrupted. Make clear this is God’s eternal, present rule over all things, the same reign the New Testament shows fulfilled in Christ, who sits enthroned now. We are not praising a king-in-waiting; we adore the God who reigns and always has.

Connect the reign to the care. David moves immediately from God’s everlasting kingdom to God upholding all who are falling, raising up those bowed down, giving them their food in due season, and satisfying the desire of every living thing (vv. 14-16). The King is not remote. His reign expresses itself in tender, faithful provision for his creatures. Sovereignty and gentleness meet in this God.

Apply it to prayer. When we adore God as the reigning, providing King, our prayers gain backbone. We are asking the One who actually runs the universe and who delights to feed the hungry and lift the fallen. This is the antidote to prayers that are timid because we doubt God’s power or his care. Psalm 145 assures us of both.

Resist two distortions. Do not let the everlasting kingdom be pushed off into a merely future hope, as if God’s reign were not yet real; it is fully real now. And do not let God’s sovereignty become cold; here it is the sovereignty of a King who opens his hand. Adore both the throne and the open hand.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- God’s everlasting, present reign over all things (v. 13)
- The harmony of God’s eternal kingship with Christ’s present reign (against a merely future kingdom)

- Sovereignty expressed in tender provision: upholding the falling, feeding the hungry (vv. 14-16)
- Bold prayer grounded in the power and care of the reigning King
- Holding God's sovereignty and gentleness together

Discussion Prompts

- What does it mean to you that God's reign is everlasting and never interrupted?
- How does seeing God as both King and provider change the way you ask him for things?
- Why does it matter that God's kingdom is a present reality and not only a future hope?

Question 8

Student Question:

David sees God's hand opening to "satisfy the desire of every living thing" (v. 16). Where are you most prone to anxiety about provision or control? How could praising God for his faithful care become a practical antidote to that worry this week?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This question turns God's provision toward our anxieties. Verse 16 pictures God opening his hand to satisfy every living thing. Most of us, however, live with a low hum of worry about provision or a tight grip of control over our circumstances. Help students locate where that worry or control is strongest for them.

Offer praise as a practical antidote. Anxiety shrinks when we remember the One who feeds the sparrows and opens his hand to all. Deliberately praising God for his faithful past provision is one of the most effective ways to quiet a fearful heart, because it preaches God's reliability back to us.

Prescribe a step: this week, when worry about a need rises, turn it into adoration by recalling and praising a specific way God has provided before. The practice trains the heart to meet anxiety with worship rather than with more anxiety.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- God's faithful provision as the antidote to anxiety (v. 16)
- Worry and control as the typical forms our distrust takes
- Praising past provision to quiet present fear
- Turning anxious moments into acts of adoration

Discussion Prompts

- Where are you most anxious about provision or most tempted to control outcomes?
- How could remembering God's past faithfulness calm that worry?

- What is one way you will turn anxiety into praise this week?

Question 9

Student Question:

Near the end David says, “The Lord is righteous in all his ways and kind in all his works. The Lord is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth” (vv. 17-18). What does it mean that God is near to those who call on him “in truth,” and how does this guard our adoration from becoming empty flattery or vague spirituality rather than the worship of God as he actually is?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This is the doctrinal high point of the lesson, and it concerns the integrity of our worship. David says God is “righteous in all his ways and kind in all his works” and that he is “near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth” (vv. 17-18). The phrase “in truth” is the key. God draws near to genuine, truthful worship, not to empty words or mere religious noise.

Explain what calling on God “in truth” means. It means worshiping God as he actually is, according to his own revelation, with a sincere heart, rather than flattering a god of our own imagining. Adoration is not telling God whatever sounds pious; it is responding rightly to the true God who has made himself known. This guards our praise from two errors: hollow, going-through-the-motions worship, and vague spirituality that adores a comfortable deity who does not exist.

Tie this to God’s righteousness and kindness in the same verses. We adore a God who is morally perfect in all he does. This means our worship cannot pick and choose, praising his love while resenting his holiness or his justice. To call on God in truth is to honor the whole of his revealed character, even the parts that humble or unsettle us. True adoration submits to the real God rather than editing him down to our preferences.

Bring it to the heart and to the prayer life. Worship in truth is also worship from the heart, not just the lips (recall Jesus’ warning about honoring God with the lips while the heart is far away). Encourage the class toward sincerity: better a few honest words of praise to the true God than many polished words to a god we have invented. And take comfort: this God who must be worshiped in truth is also near, near to all who genuinely call on him. Truthful worship is not a barrier that keeps us at a distance; it is the doorway into his nearness.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Calling on God “in truth”: worshiping him as he actually is, sincerely and according to his revelation (v. 18)
- A guard against empty, going-through-the-motions worship
- A guard against vague spirituality that adores a god of our own making

- Honoring the whole revealed character of God, including his righteousness and justice (v. 17)
- Worship from the heart, not merely the lips (Isaiah 29:13; Matthew 15:8-9)
- God's nearness to all who genuinely call on him as the reward of truthful worship

Discussion Prompts

- What does it mean to call on God "in truth," and why does it matter?
- How is worshipping the true God different from praising a god we find comfortable?
- Why is sincere, truthful praise the doorway into God's nearness rather than a barrier?

Question 10

Student Question:

Look back across Psalm 145 as a whole, with its sweep from God's greatness to his goodness, his everlasting reign, his provision, and his nearness. Name one truth about God in this psalm that most moves you to worship, and one specific way you will build adoration into your prayers, so that you become a person who, like David, blesses God's name every day.

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The capstone gathers the whole psalm and asks for a personal response. Trace the sweep one more time with the class: God's greatness (vv. 1-6), his goodness and steadfast love (vv. 7-9), his everlasting reign and faithful provision (vv. 10-16), and his righteousness and nearness (vv. 17-21). It is a panorama of the God we are made to adore.

Press for both a truth and a practice. Ask each student to name the one truth about God that most stirs worship in them, and then a specific way they will build adoration into their prayers, a daily minute of praise, praying a psalm, keeping a list of God's attributes to rehearse. The goal is a habit, not a single good feeling.

Close by adoring God together. Spend the final minutes of class simply praising God aloud, perhaps praying portions of Psalm 145 back to him. Let the class taste what the whole lesson has been about, so they leave not just having studied adoration but having actually adored.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Synthesis of Psalm 145: greatness, goodness, everlasting reign, provision, nearness
- Worship as the fitting response to the full character of God
- Building a sustainable daily habit of adoration
- Spiritual formation: becoming a person who blesses God's name every day

Discussion Prompts

- Which truth about God in this psalm most moves you to worship?

- What specific habit of adoration will you start this week?
- How can the class encourage one another to become people of praise?