

Read Psalm 145: Leader's Guide

1. The essential aspect of praise is commending something of worth and value that you've experienced firsthand. What are the many ways we in Toronto culturally express our commendation and praise?

This question is meant to warm up the discussion. The most obvious way we in Toronto commend and give praise is through social media. We post videos and photos, we write reviews, we plan elaborate events to celebrate and gather.

2. The other essential aspect of praise is recommending something of worth and value that you've experienced firsthand to others. Praise begins in commendation; praise is completed by recommendation. What is it about the Gospel, particularly how you've experienced the Gospel, that we are recommending to others?

This is opportunity for others to share their personal story and experience about how the Gospel changed their lives. Lead by example and share your own story with the group. Give space for others to freely share as much or as little as they are comfortable. This exercise of commending to one another the Good News and how we have all been uniquely impacted by Jesus is vital to our praise of God.

3. We need to use words to bear witness to the Gospel just as an eyewitness uses words to testify in court. Spend some time with your small group to share some ways to describe the Gospel in three-four sentences (there is no one perfect way to fully explain the Gospel!)

This exercise can be quite tricky and intense for your small group to do. As a leader, try it yourself first, and let others give their shot. Always be encouraging to anyone who tries. Don't ever try to "correct" someone. Different people will have different takes on the Gospel. Ideally, everyone can share their thoughts without judgement. Beware of others who are nitpickers for theological nuance and accuracy. If anything, while there is no one perfect or correct way to describe the Gospel, the primary focus should be Jesus Christ: His life, ministry, death, and resurrection. The Gospel is about any of the following and much more: forgiveness of sins, healing, transformation, an abundant life, peace, joy, love, social justice, reconciliation, etc.

4. Our bearing witness to the Gospel depends on how we undergo suffering amidst the pandemic in front of our neighbours and friends. Spend some time with your small group to come up with realistic ideas to safely and wisely bear witness to others the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

It's important to remind the group that it's not our job as Christians to bring people to saving faith. Only God can do that. We are called to commend Jesus to others and not to convert others. There are only a few ways we can bear witness during a pandemic. We must first and foremost consider the safety of other people's health. We must consider being responsible with our evangelism. And the most effective ways we can bear witness is to serve the needs of others above our own, to check in with people, to

ask questions, to listen, to intentionally establish and maintain friendship for the sake of spiritual conversations in the future.