

*Lutheran Woman's Quarterly Winter 2015 Bible Study****How Great Thou Art!****Leader's Notes and Bible Passages*

(Please do NOT use the "if time permits" sections when your study session time is limited. These sections could possibly be done by the participant in private.)

What one hymn is a favorite of yours? Why?

Answers will vary, but encourage everyone to share. Make it clear that everything confided within the group stays within the group. The leader should give an example of her own to begin discussion.

When I was young, I would accompany my father as he led worship in nursing homes on Sunday afternoons. As a young pianist, I was there to offer musical support for the service. He would periodically ask for suggestions from the group on what song to sing. I could predict with certainty that one of those hymns would be "How Great Thou Art!" (even before it became part of our Lutheran hymnody). Often poetry and song combine to make a meaningful hymn. Why do you suppose that this once relatively obscure Swedish poem by minister Carl Boberg, partnered with a traditional Swedish folk tune, is now a favorite of many? Look it up in *Lutheran Service Book* 801 for the words.

Answers will vary. Have copies of the LSB available or the words to the hymn available for each participant for use throughout this study.

During this Bible study, we will look at the timeless truth that our Lord – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – is truly great. We will rejoice in our loving God's greatness and praise Him for the great things He has done for us.

Opening Prayer: Dear Father, We thank You for creating us and the awesome world where we live. We are sorry for the times we have sinned against You and have separated ourselves from You. We have marred that perfect creation that You called "very good." Thank You for Your great love for us in sending Jesus to be our Savior from sin. We praise You for Your Word and Sacraments. Thank You for sending Your Holy Spirit who enables us to share the Good News of Jesus with those in our lives, in our communities, and even into the world. Bless our study of Your Word. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

How Great is our God!

What do the following passages reveal about the greatness of our God?

Have each participant read one of the passages indicated throughout the study – there are many passages – tell them ahead of time what order you will progress around the circle so they have their passage prepared. Suggested answers are in red in the Bible verses.

Deuteronomy 7:21

²¹ You shall not be in dread of them, for the Lord your God is in your midst, a great and awesome God.

2 Samuel 7:20-22

²⁰ And what more can David say to you? For you know your servant, O Lord God!

²¹ Because of your promise, and according to your own heart, you have brought about all this greatness, to make your servant know it. ²² Therefore you are great, O LORD God. For there is none like you, and there is no God besides you, according to all that we have heard with our ears.

1 Chronicles 16:25: 29:10-13

16: ²⁵ For great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised, and he is to be feared above all gods.

29: ¹⁰ Therefore David blessed the Lord in the presence of all the assembly. And David said: "Blessed are you, O Lord, the God of Israel our father, forever and ever. ¹¹ Yours, O Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, for all that is in the heavens and in the earth is yours. Yours is the kingdom, O Lord, and you are exalted as head above all. ¹² Both riches and honor come from you, and you rule over all. In your hand are power and might, and in your hand it is to make great and to give strength to all. ¹³ And now we thank you, our God, and praise your glorious name.

Psalm 48:1; 95:3; 99:2

48: ¹Great is the Lord and greatly to be praised in the city of our God!

95: ³For the Lord is a great God, and a great King above all gods.

99: ²The Lord is great in Zion; he is exalted over all the peoples.

Psalm 145:3

³Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised, and his greatness is unsearchable.

In the first verse of "How Great Thou Art," the author pens the words: "O Lord my God, when I in awesome wonder ..." The word "awesome" is used (or misused) frequently in today's jargon and can be synonymous with the word "great." For example, we might have an awesome experience, an awesome car, or even an awesome outfit. In the Bible, the word awesome is used over 30 times. Most of the time, and perhaps all the time, it is used in connection with God: Who He is or what He has done, has made, or will do for His people. In **Deuteronomy 10:17a**, what words or phrases are used to describe God?

¹⁷ For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God ...

Faith Talk: Share with a partner or the small group how you would describe your great God. Be specific. See **Psalm 68:35** for additional help.

Answers will vary, but encourage all to participate. The leader should give an example of her own to begin discussion.

³⁵Awesome is God from his sanctuary; the God of Israel—he is the one who gives power and strength to his people. Blessed be God!

Great Things He Has Done!

Many Scripture passages connect the greatness of God with what He has done. Read the following examples. Identify what great things God has done in these verses:

Genesis 1:1, 31a

¹In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. ³¹And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good.

Deuteronomy 7:6-10; 17-21

⁶"For you are a people holy to the Lord your God. The Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth. ⁷It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the Lord set his love on you and chose you, for you were the fewest of all peoples, ⁸but it is because the Lord loves you and is keeping the oath that he swore to your fathers, that the Lord has brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. ⁹Know therefore that the Lord your God is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments, to a thousand generations, ¹⁰and repays to their face those who hate him, by destroying them. He will not be slack with one who hates him. He will repay him to his face.

¹⁷"If you say in your heart, 'These nations are greater than I. How can I dispossess them?' ¹⁸you shall not be afraid of them but you shall remember what the Lord your God did to Pharaoh and to all Egypt, ¹⁹the great trials that your eyes saw, the signs, the wonders, the mighty hand, and the outstretched arm, by which the Lord your God brought you out. So will the Lord your God do to all the peoples of whom you are afraid.

²⁰Moreover, the Lord your God will send hornets among them, until those who are left

and hide themselves from you are destroyed. ²¹ You shall not be in dread of them, for the Lord your God is in your midst, a great and awesome God.

1 Chronicles 16:8-9; 12-22

⁸ Oh give thanks to the Lord; call upon his name; make known his deeds among the peoples! ⁹ Sing to him, sing praises to him; tell of all his wondrous works!
¹² Remember the wondrous works that he has done, his miracles and the judgments he uttered, ¹³ O offspring of Israel his servant, children of Jacob, his chosen ones! ¹⁴ He is the Lord our God; his judgments are in all the earth. ¹⁵ Remember his covenant forever, the word that he commanded, for a thousand generations, ¹⁶ the covenant that he made with Abraham, his sworn promise to Isaac, ¹⁷ which he confirmed to Jacob as a statute, to Israel as an everlasting covenant, ¹⁸ saying, "To you I will give the land of Canaan, as your portion for an inheritance." ¹⁹ When you were few in number, of little account, and sojourners in it, ²⁰ wandering from nation to nation, from one kingdom to another people, ²¹ he allowed no one to oppress them; he rebuked kings on their account, ²² saying, "Touch not my anointed ones, do my prophets no harm!"

Psalm 92

¹It is good to give thanks to the Lord, to sing praises to your name, O Most High; ² to declare your steadfast love in the morning, and your faithfulness by night, ³ to the music of the lute and the harp, to the melody of the lyre. ⁴ For you, O Lord, have made me glad by your work; at the works of your hands I sing for joy. ⁵ How great are your works, O Lord! Your thoughts are very deep! ⁶ The stupid man cannot know; the fool cannot understand this: ⁷ that though the wicked sprout like grass and all evildoers flourish, they are doomed to destruction forever; ⁸ but you, O Lord, are on high forever. ⁹ For behold, your enemies, O Lord, for behold, your enemies shall perish; all evildoers shall be scattered. ¹⁰ But you have exalted my horn like that of the wild ox; you have poured over me fresh oil. ¹¹ My eyes have seen the downfall of my enemies; my ears have heard the doom of my evil assailants. ¹² The righteous flourish like the palm tree and grow like a cedar in Lebanon. ¹³ They are planted in the house of the Lord; they flourish in the courts of our God. ¹⁴ They still bear fruit in old age; they are ever full of sap and green, ¹⁵ to declare that the Lord is upright; he is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in him.

Psalm 118:1

¹Oh give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; for his steadfast love endures forever!

Revelation 15:3-4

³ And they sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, "Great and amazing are your deeds, O Lord God the Almighty! Just and true are your ways, O King of the nations! ⁴ Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify your name? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship you, for your righteous acts have been revealed."

If time permits, share with a partner or the small group, your favorite place in God's creation and why.

Answers will vary, but encourage all to participate. The leader should give an example of her own to begin discussion.

The third verse of the hymn "How Great Thou Art" begins with these words, "But when I think that God, His Son not sparing ..." This verse is pivotal as it tells the Good News of the great act of our loving Father in sending His Son Jesus to live a perfect life, suffer, and die to free us from our bondage to sin. Identify phrases in the following Bible verses that speak of this salvation:

Psalm 40:11-12; 16-17

¹¹ As for you, O Lord, you will not restrain your mercy from me; your steadfast love and your faithfulness will ever preserve me! ¹² For evils have encompassed me beyond number; my iniquities have overtaken me, and I cannot see; they are more than the hairs of my head; my heart fails me.
¹⁶ But may all who seek you rejoice and be glad in you; may those who love your salvation say continually, "Great is the Lord!" ¹⁷ As for me, I am poor and needy, but the

**Lord takes thought for me.
You are my help and my deliverer; do not delay, O my God!**

Psalm 145:8

⁸The Lord is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.

Isaiah 53:5-6

⁵But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed. ⁶All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

Luke 1:31-33

³¹“And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. ³²He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, ³³and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.”

John 15:13

¹³Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.

Ephesians 2:1-10

¹And you were dead in the trespasses and sins ²in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— ³among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. ⁴But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, ⁵even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— ⁶and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, ⁷so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. ⁸For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁹not a result of works, so that no one may boast. ¹⁰For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

Titus 2:11-14

¹¹For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, ¹²training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, ¹³waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, ¹⁴who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.

1 John 4:4

⁴Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.

Our great Lord and Savior did not stay dead, but arose, so that we who believe in Him will be raised to new and eternal life in heaven with Him. The fourth hymn verse of “How Great Thou Art” continues with these words: “When Christ shall come with shout of acclamation and take me home, what joy shall fill my heart ...” Read **Ephesians 1:15-23**, **1 Thessalonians 4:16-17** and **1 Peter 1:3**. How do these verses describe the Christ’s resurrection from the dead ... and yours?

Ephesians 1:15-23: ¹⁵For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, ¹⁶I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, ¹⁷that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, ¹⁸having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, ¹⁹and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might ²⁰that he worked in Christ when he raised

him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, ²¹ far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. ²² And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, ²³ which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

1 Thessalonians 4:16-17: ¹⁶ For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷ Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord.

1 Peter 1:3: ³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

Faith Talk: Share with a partner or the small group the importance of knowing about the greatness of Jesus' resurrection in your daily life.

Answers will vary, but encourage all to participate. The leader should give an example of her own to begin discussion.

How does the Good News of Jesus – His life, death, and resurrection – as well as the certainty of your own resurrection because of Jesus, motivate your actions?

Answers will vary, but could include: Because of Jesus' resurrection, by the power of the Spirit I can believe in my resurrection, too. I can live a life full of hope and joy. It is a contagious joy that I am motivated by the Gospel to share with those around me.

What gifts does the Holy Spirit give to His Church to give us faith and to strengthen and nurture that faith?

Means of Grace = God's Word and Sacraments (Holy Baptism and Holy Communion).

Then Sings My Soul!

"Then sings my soul, my Savior God to Thee. How great Thou art, how great Thou art!" This certainly sums up the Christian's response to the great things God has done! Each verse of the hymn ends with this refrain. How do the following Scripture passages reaffirm this hymn phrase?

1 Chronicles 16:8-9, 24-36

⁸ Oh give thanks to the Lord; call upon his name; make known his deeds among the peoples! ⁹ Sing to him, sing praises to him; tell of all his wondrous works!
²⁴ Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous works among all the peoples!
²⁵ For great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised, and he is to be feared above all gods.
²⁶ For all the gods of the peoples are worthless idols, but the Lord made the heavens.
²⁷ Splendor and majesty are before him; strength and joy are in his place. ²⁸ Ascribe to the Lord, O families of the peoples, ascribe to the Lord glory and strength!
²⁹ Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name; bring an offering and come before him! Worship the Lord in the splendor of holiness; ³⁰ tremble before him, all the earth; yes, the world is established; it shall never be moved. ³¹ Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice, and let them say among the nations, "The Lord reigns!" ³² Let the sea roar, and all that fills it; let the field exult, and everything in it! ³³ Then shall the trees of the forest sing for joy before the Lord, for he comes to judge the earth. ³⁴ Oh give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; for his steadfast love endures forever! ³⁵ Say also: "Save us, O God of our salvation, and gather and deliver us from among the nations, that we may give thanks to your holy name and glory in your praise. ³⁶ Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, from everlasting to everlasting!" Then all the people said, "Amen!" and praised the Lord.

Psalm 40:16

¹⁶ But may all who seek you rejoice and be glad in you; may those who love your salvation say continually, "Great is the Lord!"

Psalm 92:1-4

¹It is good to give thanks to the Lord, to sing praises to your name, O Most High; ²to declare your steadfast love in the morning, and your faithfulness by night, ³to the music of the lute and the harp, to the melody of the lyre. ⁴For you, O Lord, have made me glad by your work; at the works of your hands I sing for joy.

Psalm 145:1-3

¹I will extol you, my God and King, and bless your name forever and ever. ²Every day I will bless you and praise your name forever and ever. ³Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised, and his greatness is unsearchable.

Psalm 66:1-4

¹Shout for joy to God, all the earth; ²sing the glory of his name; give to him glorious praise! ³Say to God, "How awesome are your deeds! So great is your power that your enemies come cringing to you. ⁴All the earth worships you and sings praises to you; they sing praises to your name.

Faith Talk: Share with the small group one great thing that the Lord has done for you.

Faith Walk:

1. Sing the hymns heartily during your worship services this month. Think about the words and thank God for giving this gift of music to you.
2. By the power of the Spirit, rejoice in your salvation in Christ and share the joy of your salvation with a special woman in your life.
3. Use a Bible concordance and meditate on the many Scripture verses that contain the words "great" and "awesome."
4. Memorize the words to the hymn, "How Great Thou Art," during the next month.
5. Read Psalm 136 for a praise account of the great things God has done.
6. Make a list of the great things God has done in your life.

Closing Prayer (from Psalm 145 and Jude 24-25):

Leader: I will extol You, my God and King,

Group: And bless Your name forever and ever.

Leader: Every day I will bless You

Group: And praise Your name forever and ever.

Leader: Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised.

Group: I will declare Your greatness.

Leader: Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of His glory with *great* joy, to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority,

Group: Before all time and now and forever. Amen.

Closing Song (sing together): "How Great Thou Art" (LSB #801).

Suggested resource: Prior to this study, for an interesting and scientific resource, view the DVD presentation, "How Great Is Our God" by Louie Giglio (available for purchase and also on YouTube).