

***“You are My God...
...and I will give You thanks!”***

***Week 4
Leader’s Guide***

Central Verse: *“Open for me the gates of righteousness; I will enter and give thanks to the Lord.”* Psalm 118:19

Target/Goal/Focus: If we are going to have success as stewards (cf. Psalm 118:25), the placing of ourselves beneath the Means of Grace of Word and Sacraments will be the key! That is how the Lord will “grant us success.” (Psalm 118:25)

1. True or False. God wants to give His gifts to us and be our God. **This is most certainly true! His desire to do this and be this is solely due to His mercy – there is nothing in us deserving of having God be our God or give us His gifts. No, this statement is true only because of what the mercy of God is – “His faithfulness to covenant promise.” And the primary gifts He desires to give to us are the gifts we receive in worship through the Means of Grace.**

2. Are you right-handed? What do you think is the significance of the attention given to what God has done for us with His right hand? Cf. Psalm 118:15-16; Psalm 110:1. **God’s right hand is His “hand of favor and blessing.” The three-fold repetition of “the Lord’s right hand” emphasizes (1) that He has done it without any help or contribution from us and (2) the extravagant or generous nature of His blessing. He’s not just done “small things.” Rather, He has done “mighty things!”**

3. There are several verses in Psalm 118 which point us to Christ and what He has done for us. Look up the following to see what portion of Psalm 118 is being directly connected to Jesus:
 - Matthew 21:42; Mark 12:10-11; Luke 20:17 quote Psalm 118: _____
 - Matthew 21:9; 23:39; Mark 11:9-10; Luke 13:35; 19:38; John 12:13 quote Psalm 118: _____

4. True or False. The only way we have access to God and His grace is through Christ. **Jesus is God’s answer to the plea in verse 19 that the Lord would “open the gates of righteousness...so that “we will enter and give thanks to the Lord.”**

5. Read Hebrews 10:19-25. What hope and assurance do these words give us? What privilege do we have? How does this all come together to impact how we live each day? What happens when we meet together? **We have the hope and the assurance that our sins have been forgiven. This gives us the privilege of being able to draw near to God. The good news of forgiveness opens the door for us “toward love and good deeds.” We encourage one another even as we are encouraged. This encouragement comes from God to us through His Word and through His Sacraments.**

6. Do you recall your days of confirmation instruction? One of the questions we study as we go through Luther’s Catechism is this one (#315): “For what purpose, then, do we approach the Lord’s Table?” The answer to that question is: “We approach the Lord’s Table – (a) Chiefly to receive forgiveness of our sins and thus to be strengthened in our faith in our Lord Jesus Christ; (b) To obtain strength for a holier life; and (c) To bear witness that we are of one faith with those who commune with us.” How do these reasons relate back to the central theme of stewardship defined as “living out my faith in Christ” and the basic question, “How can I live for Christ today?” **When we receive the forgiveness of our sins, our hearts are filled with gratitude toward God (cf. Psalm 118:28). Our spiritual life is invigorated – this gives us both the strength and the willingness to serve our God. Cf. 2 Corinthians 5:15, 17.**

7. Of all of the commitments we make when it comes to stewardship (living out our faith in Christ), why is the commitment to worship, to be a regular guest at the Lord’s Table, and to read and study God’s Word, the most important commitment we can make? **Our lives flow from His grace. We depend on His grace. Without His grace we can do nothing (cf. John 15:5). But, with His grace – “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” (Phil. 4:13)**

8. What is your plan for “Living each day for the Lord”? Write down what the critical components will be for you. Compare what you have written with Acts 2:42-47. What was their plan? Were they able to live each day for the Lord? What success did God give to them? **My plan should focus on my stewardship/use of the Means of Grace. That was the plan of the early Christians. They were able to live for the Lord, as shown especially in their care for others as well as in their attitude (vs. 46-47). And God did grant them success (vs. 47)! Here is a good quote from Matthew Henry and his commentary on Psalm 118: “Let God be served with joyfulness and gladness of heart, and let the voice of that rejoicing be heard daily in our families, to the glory of God and the encouragement of others... It is not worthwhile to live for any other purpose than to declare the works of God, for his honor and the encouragement of others to serve him and trust in him.” (Volume III – Psalms to Isaiah)**