Glad to Go Up: Psalm 122

PSALM 122 (BSB) · SMALL-GROUP LESSON · DIGDEEPER.AI

The Big Idea

The best thing that ever happened to you is that somebody said 'come with us to worship,' and now you get to be the person who says it to somebody else.

Opening Lines

Ask the room to finish this sentence out loud: 'I was glad when someone said to me, let's go...' — and see what people fill in. Vacation, a good meal, an old friend calling. Then read verse 1 and let them notice that David's gladness was aimed at a building full of worship, and it started with an invitation from other people.

Before You Teach

- Goal: Get every person to feel the gladness of verse 1 as their own — the relief of arriving at God's house after a long climb — and then to name one person they could invite up the road with them.
- If you're short on time, cut: Cut the deep dive on the thrones of David in verse 5 if time is short; the historical background on the twelve tribes converging matters more to the room's takeaway than the throne detail.
- Where the moment lives: It lives in the shift from 'I go to church' to 'I am the one who says let us go.' The moment someone names a person who's been coming alone, the psalm has landed.
- Your prep: Read the psalm out loud three times before Sunday until you can hear the pilgrim's breathless arrival at the gate. Know which line you'll leave hanging in silence.

Run It In Your Setting

The same lesson, sequenced three ways. Pick the one that fits your group and your clock.

CLASSROOM · ~20 PEOPLE · 45 MINUTES

Classroom opening — the 'let's go...' fill-in-the-blank (5 min). Read Psalm 122 aloud, teach samach with the step through the gate (8 min). Historical background: tribes converging, temple and throne (7 min). Questions 1, 2, and 5 in pairs then shared out (18 min). Land the big idea, name commitments out loud, close in prayer over the names (7 min). Transformation happens at question 2 when people name who invited them. Cut the throne detail in the background first.

SMALL GROUP · ~8 PEOPLE · 60 MINUTES

Small-group opening — 'when were you genuinely glad to go?' (8 min). Read the psalm, teach samach (10 min). Work questions 1 through 4 slowly with real silence (28 min).

Catch-the-fire modeling folds into question 2. Land big idea, go around naming one person by name, prayer over those names (14 min). Transformation lives in the moment someone names a person coming alone. If short, cut question 3 on unity.

COFFEE · 2-3 FRIENDS · 30 MINUTES

Coffee opening — 'when's the last time you were glad, not just present?' (5 min). Read the psalm together once (3 min). Straight to questions 2 and 4, honest and unhurried (17 min). Each person names the one message they'll send this week and prays a sentence over the other's name (5 min). Transformation is the honest confession that worship has become duty. Cut the background entirely if needed — the invitation question is the whole point.

One Thing Deeply

This is a habit for every lesson you'll ever teach — this week we drill it deliberately. In week 1 you practiced going first and going real, and in week 2 you practiced holding silence. Now: pick ONE thing in the passage and go deep on it instead of covering everything. A short psalm tempts you to touch all nine verses evenly and leave nothing behind. Resist. This week, choose the gladness of verse 1 as your one thing and let everything else orbit it. Don't explain the songs of ascents, the tribes, the thrones, AND the prayer for peace with equal weight. Go deep on one and let the rest serve it. People remember one thing driven home; they forget six things brushed past.

Why This Passage Matters

Most people in your room have a low-grade guilt about worship. They show up, they go through the motions, and somewhere in the back of their mind is a nagging sense that they should want it more than they do. Then along comes David, and the very first thing out of his mouth is gladness. Not duty. Not 'I made myself go.' Glad. And notice why he was glad: not because he generated some spiritual feeling on his own, but because other people said to him, 'let us go.' The joy of worship in this psalm is contagious and communal. Somebody carried him into it. That's the door your room needs opened. Because if worship is something you have to manufacture alone, most people will quietly give up. But if it's something you get pulled into by people who love you — a family cresting the hill and seeing the walls — then it's within reach of every tired person sitting in front of you. And here's what makes you privileged to teach this: your feet, and theirs, are already standing in the city that will not be shaken. You get to tell people that the gate they feared they'd be kept out of has been thrown open. Say that with a straight face and mean it.

Catch the Fire First

Before you ask anyone else to do it, do the exercise yourself in front of them. Say out loud the name of the person who first said 'let's go' to you — the friend, parent, coworker, or stranger who invited you into worship and made it feel like gladness instead of homework.

Name them by name to the room. Then name the one person you personally are going to text this week to say 'sit with me Sunday.' Don't describe the assignment abstractly and then hand it off. Model it warm and specific, and the room will follow you into it instead of watching from the curb.

Bring Your Own Story

- PROMPT: The first time someone invited you to worship and it felt like relief, not obligation — who said 'let us go,' and what were you carrying up the road?
- PROMPT: A time you noticed someone sitting alone at church week after week, and either did or didn't say something.
- PROMPT: A gathering of people you'd normally never be in a room with, held together only by shared worship — the 'tribes converging' feeling.
- SAMPLE (polished vs. real): Polished — 'I've always understood church to be about community.' Real — 'For two years I sat in the back and left before the last song so I wouldn't have to talk to anyone. Then a guy I barely knew said come sit up front with us, and I stopped dreading Sundays.'
- GUARDRAIL: Tell it real, not raw — one true moment, not a full confession; week 1's drill has the full coaching.

Three Ways to Open

CLASSROOM: "Ask everyone to finish out loud: 'I was glad when someone said to me, let's go...' Take five or six answers fast — vacation, dinner, a road trip. Then read verse 1 and point out that David's gladness landed on a building full of worship, and it started because somebody invited him."

A shared fill-in-the-blank lowers the entry cost and gets voices in the room before content starts.

SMALL GROUP: "Ask: 'Who first made worship feel like something you wanted to do rather than had to do?' Let people name the person. Then read the psalm and show them David is remembering exactly that — the voice that said 'let us go to the house of the LORD.'"

In a smaller room you can go straight to the personal question the psalm is actually about.

COFFEE: "Ask: 'Be honest — when's the last time you were genuinely glad to go to church, not just present?' Sit with the honesty of it, then read verse 1 slowly and ask what David had that they might be missing."

Two or three friends can hold a longer silence and a more honest confession.

Teaching the Word

Teach the Hebrew word samach — 'I was glad.' It's not a quiet, internal contentment. It's a loud, physical, celebratory gladness — the word used for feasts, for harvest, for a

wedding. Here's the performable image: don't stand still when you read verse 1. Take a step, the way a pilgrim takes the last step through the gate after days on the road, and let your whole face change. That's samach — the relief and joy of arriving, not the grim satisfaction of attendance. The gladness isn't about the walking. It's about the destination and the people who pulled you toward it. Then read the line you want them to carry home, and stop talking: 'I was glad when they said to me, Let us go to the house of the LORD.' Let it sit.

Discussion Questions

1. When David says 'I was glad,' what do you think he was actually feeling in that moment — and how is that different from how most of us feel about worship?

Coaching note: Let them contrast honestly. Don't rush to fix the gap between David's gladness and their duty; naming the gap is the work.

If it stalls: Simple yes or no: is going to church usually something you look forward to, or something you talk yourself into? No wrong answer here.

2. David's gladness started because someone else said 'let us go.' Who first said that to you — who pulled you into worship?

Coaching note: This is the heart question. Give real silence. When someone names a person, ask what that person did that made the difference.

If it stalls: Was there one specific person — a parent, friend, coworker — who first brought you to church? Just say their name if you can.

3. The psalm describes the tribes 'united together,' rivals converging on one city. Where do you feel that unity at church, and where do you feel the rivalries instead?

Coaching note: People may name real tension. Don't let it become gossip; steer toward the longing for unity, not a complaint session.

If it stalls: Is there someone at church you've quietly grown cool toward? You don't have to name them out loud — just notice if there is.

4. David turns his love for the city into words: 'Peace be within you.' When did someone bless you like that, with no request attached — and when did you last do it for someone?

Coaching note: Watch for the person who realizes they only ever contact church people when they need something. Let that land gently.

If it stalls: When's the last time someone texted you just to bless you, nothing asked in return? How did it feel?

5. Hebrews says your feet are already standing in the heavenly Jerusalem, in Christ. If that's true, what should change about how you show up this Sunday?

Coaching note: Land the gospel here. The gate is already open. Push for one concrete change, not a general resolution.

If it stalls: If you really believed church wasn't a duty but a gate God threw open for you, what's one thing you'd do differently this week?

Questions You May Hear

"What is a 'song of ascents'?"

It's a pilgrim song, sung by Israelites as they climbed the road up to Jerusalem for the appointed feasts three times a year. 'Ascent' is literal — Jerusalem sits high, and they were going up to it.

"Why Jerusalem specifically? Why did all the tribes have to go there?"

Because the LORD chose it. It held the two things that held the nation together — the temple, where sacrifice covered sin, and the throne of David, the seat of the king's justice. Worship and justice met in one city.

"What are the 'thrones of judgment' in verse 5?"

The seat of the king's justice — David set the throne of his house in Jerusalem after he captured it. It means the city was where righteous rule was administered, not just where worship happened.

"Are we supposed to pray for the modern political city of Jerusalem?"

David wasn't praying for real estate; he was praying that the place where God met His people and justice was administered would stand secure. The New Testament shows the true and permanent Jerusalem is the city Christ opened, where His people gather in Him.

For Experienced Leaders

- If someone opens a real wound while you're on the unity question — a marriage cracking, a diagnosis — stop and give it weight: 'That's heavy, and I'm glad you said it.' Then warm and out loud: 'I want to give this the time it deserves — can you and I talk right after?' Protects them and the room, and then actually stay after and text the next day.
- When you ask 'who first said let us go to you,' resist filling the silence with your own answer again. You modeled it in Catch the Fire; now let them do the work.
- Don't over-teach the songs of ascents or the thrones. This week's drill is one thing deeply — the gladness of verse 1 is your one thing. Let the background serve it and then get out of the way.

Landing the Lesson

Commitments: Go around and have each person say out loud one name — the person they'll text this week to say 'sit with me Sunday' or simply 'peace to you.' Names, not intentions.

Close by praying out loud over the actual names people just said — the person they'll invite, the one they've grown cool toward and want to bless. Don't reach for a written prayer; saying their real words back to God is the whole point.

If you run out of time: If the room lands hard on question 2 — who first said 'let us go' to you — stay there. That's the psalm. You don't have to reach question 5 to have taught this well.

Midweek follow-up: Midweek, text the group: 'Did you send the message? Who did you reach out to?' Let them report the small thing they actually did.

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Handout

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During the lesson:

- I was glad when someone said to me, let's go _____ (your honest answer):
- The person who first made worship feel like gladness for me was:
- One person at church who has been coming alone, or growing distant, that I could reach out to:
- Write a one-line blessing you could actually send someone this week ('peace to you and your household…'):
- If I really believed the gate was already open to me in Christ, one thing I'd do differently this Sunday:

Take-home actions:

- Be the one who says 'let us go': text someone from church you don't know well and ask to sit together Sunday or grab coffee first.
- Pray tonight, by name, for one church member you've quietly disagreed with or grown cool toward — ask God to bless them specifically.
- Send one message today that blesses a brother or sister with peace and asks nothing back.

Your feet are already standing in the city that will not be shaken. Christ threw the gate open.