

I AM - The Greatest Battle of Your Life

Unit 5: Accountability

Lesson 7: Praise God

The Cave of Wisdom

The Cave Opening: The Burning Bush - Let your light shine!

Welcome back to the cave of “Open Mouth”. I could easily add “insert foot” to our cave topic. That describes well what God sees when we praise ourselves for the actions we take in life. God places opportunities in our path for us to develop the Dream he has for us. We should praise God for the opportunity to serve him. But many people choose to brag on themselves and lift themselves up for others to see. In our lesson today we see that God wants us to let our light shine before others so that they will praise God for the good things we do.

Said another way, we are to act in a manner that gets others to praise God because of what we have done. Jude gives us examples of how not to act: grumbling, faultfinding, boasting, flattering others for own advantage, and following our own bad desires.

Do you recognize any of these attitudes? Have you grumbled or complained to your parents recently because you had to do some work around the house? Have you bragged to a friend about winning a match or accomplishing

something at school? Have you ever been nice to someone so they would do something for you or hang out with you? When did you last pick on a sibling for doing something incorrectly? Have you ever been angry at someone and yelled at them? Have you ever spread gossip about someone, true or not? All of these are examples of “Open Mouth” darkness in the cave. They do not shine light for God before others.

The Circle of Fire: Praise God instead of Grumbling. A mouth that is busy praising cannot at the same time be grumbling!

Scripture: Jude 1:16; John 12:1-6; Matthew 5:14-16; Psalm 34:1

Jude ¹⁶ Those people complain. They find fault with others. They follow their own evil longings. They brag about themselves. They praise others to help themselves.

John 12: ⁴But one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, who was later to betray him, objected, ⁵"Why wasn't this perfume sold and the money given to the poor? It was worth a year's wages.

Matthew 5: ¹⁴"You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. ¹⁶In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.

Biblical Characters: Judas Iscariot and Jude

In our scripture from the book of John, we see the true character of Judas even before the betrayal. Judas grumbled and complained about the “waste” of expensive perfume used by Mary to wipe the feet of Jesus. Judas failed to see the opportunity Mary had seen and acted upon. The master was worth much more to her than the perfume. Mary took accountability as we are to do and acted on her understanding of the opportunity placed before her.

Jude, a half brother of Jesus, did not open his letter to other believers as a brother of Jesus; rather he introduces himself as a brother of James and a servant of Jesus. This is our proper place in relationship to Jesus as well: to be his servant. If this is true, then we can complete the accountability steps we have learned by “Praising God”. Jesus pointed the way to our final action step in Matthew 5:16 “let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.”

In each of our lessons in this unit, we have seen that the individuals did not praise themselves for the actions they undertook, but rather praised God for the opportunity to be his servant. Jude points out that we are not to be like those who “boast about themselves.” Instead, we are to “keep ourselves in God’s love”. How can we do this? Jude tells us

to “Be merciful to those who doubt”. That is the reason we choose to take “accountability”. It is not our goal to praise ourselves, but to show mercy to others, just as Jesus showed mercy to us on the cross.

Act the part of Judas and complain about the frivolous waste of perfume on Jesus when it could have been given to the disciples for use with the poor (and his own use). This is a direct look at the dark side of the heart of Judas. He did not care for the poor, but rather for his own benefit. Purchase round candy and wrap in gold and silver foil. Put in a small sack and hang around your neck. Pull out the “coins” during your act and talk about how much could have been bought for the disciples (and your) needs.

Expect the class members to recognize candy and grab for it. Use this moment to teach about the desire for material items, in this example candy, causing us to be distracted from God’s dream for us. Judas allowed material things to blind him to the truth of the Messiah.

Show the video: “Judas Iscariot”.

Act the part of Jude and talk about those who brag about themselves, grumble, and find fault. “I was eager to share with you our salvation stories, but instead I must warn you about those in your company who make the saving grace of our Lord Jesus a license to do anything they desire. I urge you to battle against their teachings!”

Modern Character(s): Praise to God is often expressed in song. King David wrote much of the book of Psalms as music. Today we have many musicians who sing and play praises to God, many based on Psalms. One selected for this praise lesson is Paul Baloché and his song “Rise Up and Praise Him”. Show the video of this song in Appendix 2, Unit 5.

Other videos of praise music include:

“Sing to the Lord a New Song” in Appendix 2, Unit 5, Praise God, Sing to the Lord.

The Cave Dark Side Journey: Mouth Open, insert foot. Before you speak, pause and think about what you are about to say. Does it really need to be said? Will it cause injury? Does it show love?

The Tribe: God has ordained praise for him. Have members sing the Doxology and discuss the meaning. “Praise God from whom all blessings flow; Praise Him all creatures here below; Praise Him above, ye heavenly hosts; Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.”

Show the video: “Doxology with Sign Language” in Appendix 2, Unit 5, Praise God, Sing to the Lord.

Show “The Grumblers” videos in Appendix 2, Unit 5, Praise God, The Grumblers. Have the group sing the song. Lyrics are included in Appendix 2.

Craft: “Praise Coasters” See Appendix 8 Craft for instructions and material.

Recreation Activity: “Open Mouth Toss” – Use a 4’x4’ sheet of plywood to construct an “Open Mouth” target. Cut out five circles or ovals and draw mouth around the openings. Divide the group into two teams. Have teams rotate tossing a bag at the “Open Mouths”. Points are scored when bag goes through a hole. Use bean bags, tennis balls or similar objects for bag toss. To really make this a wild celebration, give each team a dozen balls of different colors (i.e. one team yellow, the other team red) and have them all throw at once. Have them make noise with their gragger the number of times a ball went through a hole.

Open mouth clipart is provided in Appendix 6 Recreation.

Psalm 33

- ¹ Sing joyfully to the LORD, you righteous;
it is fitting for the upright to praise him.
- ² Praise the LORD with the harp;
make music to him on the ten-stringed lyre.
- ³ Sing to him a new song;
play skillfully, and shout for joy.
- ⁴ For the word of the LORD is right and true;
he is faithful in all he does.