

CENTRAL QUESTION

How is it possible to stand in worship, sing the right songs, and bow at the right moments — and still be far from God?

I. THE SHOUT — Come and Sing (Psalm 95:1-5)

Psalm 95:1-5 BSB

¹ Come, let us sing for joy to the LORD; let us shout to the Rock of our salvation!

² Let us enter His presence with thanksgiving; let us make a joyful noise to Him in song.

³ For the LORD is a great God, a great King above all gods.

⁴ In His hand are the depths of the earth, and the mountain peaks belong to Him.

⁵ The sea is His, for He made it, and His hands formed the

dry land.

Key Insight: The psalm opens with full-throated, energetic worship. But notice — the reasons given aren't emotional, they're theological. God is the rock of salvation. He is a great King above all gods. The depths of the earth are in His hand. The sea is His. The mountains are His. This isn't hype working itself up. This is declaration anchored in who God actually is.

Key Truth: Worship that lasts is built on who God IS, not on how we feel in the moment.

II. THE BOW — Come and Belong (Psalm 95:6-7a)

Psalm 95:6-7 BSB

⁶ O come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the LORD our Maker.

⁷ For He is our God, and we are the people of His pasture, the sheep under His care...

Key Insight: The shift from shouting in verses 1-5 to kneeling in verses 6-7a is deliberate. The first call was about God's greatness — His cosmic authority. This one is about relationship. "He is our God. We are the people of his

pasture. We are the sheep of his hand." This is shepherd language — Psalm 23 language — intimate, dependent, known. The same God who holds the mountains holds you by name.

Key Truth: God is not only great — He is close. Worship is not just declaration of His power, it is surrender to His nearness.

III. THE TURN — A Voice in the Middle of the Song (Psalm 95:7b-11)

Psalm 95:7-11 BSB

⁷ ...Today, if you hear His voice,

⁸ do not harden your hearts as you did at Meribah, in the day at Massah in the wilderness,

⁹ where your fathers tested and tried Me, though they had seen My work.

¹⁰ For forty years I was angry with that generation, and I said, “They are a people whose hearts go astray, and they have not known My ways.”

¹¹ So I swore on oath in My anger, “They shall never enter My

rest.”

Key Insight: This is the structural ambush of the psalm. You are in the middle of a worship service — singing, kneeling, declaring God's greatness — and God interrupts with a warning. Not to outsiders. Not to people who have walked away. To the worshipers. The same people being invited to sing and bow are being warned not to harden their hearts.

The Callus Illustration:

A callus doesn't form from a single incident. It forms from repeated friction in the same spot over time. Your body builds it as a protective response — and the result is that you stop feeling what you used to feel there because the skin has thickened specifically to prevent it. Here's what makes this theologically significant: a callus isn't punishment. It's self-protection. The heart hardens the same way — not in one dramatic act of rebellion, but as a slow, quiet response to repeated friction with God. Every time something gets hard and you pull back instead of pressing in, the layer gets a little thicker. Every time God doesn't move on your timeline and you distance yourself from prayer, a little thicker. Every time you sit in a service and let the words wash over you without letting them in, a little thicker. You don't wake up one day with a hard heart. You build it. Slowly. Without fully realizing it. Which is exactly what Hebrews 3:13 says — you get hardened by the

deceitfulness of sin. You don't see it happening.

The Meribah Scene Exodus 17:1-7:

Now look at what a fully developed hardened heart looks like.

Israel is in the wilderness. They are exhausted. They are thirsty. Their children are crying. Their livestock are dying. And these are not strangers to God's provision — these are people who watched the Red Sea split with their own eyes. Who ate bread that fell from the sky every morning. Who followed a pillar of fire through the darkness every night. They have seen His work. The psalm says so explicitly — *"though they had seen my work."*

And they look at Moses and say: *"Is the LORD among us or not?"*

That is Meribah. That is what the process produces at full development. Not a person who never knew God — a person surrounded by evidence of God's faithfulness, standing in the middle of His provision, and still choosing accusation over trust.

Building intensity: Every time something got hard and they chose complaint over trust — the heart got a little harder. Every time God provided and they forgot — a little harder.

Every time they stood at a fork between faith and fear and chose fear — a little harder. Until they were standing in the wilderness with His fingerprints all over their lives asking whether He was even there.

Key Truth: A hardened heart isn't built in a single dramatic moment. It is the accumulated result of choosing — quietly, repeatedly, incrementally — to test God rather than trust Him every time something gets hard. And the most dangerous place a hardened heart can hide is inside a worship service.

IV. THE WORD TODAY — The Window Is Open (Hebrews 3:7–4:11)

Hebrews 3:12–13 BSB

¹² See to it, brothers, that none of you has a wicked heart of unbelief that turns away from the living God.

¹³ But exhort one another daily, as long as it is called today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness.

Key Insight: The author of Hebrews quotes Psalm 95 directly and drives the "today" into the present moment. The promise of entering God's rest still stands — and so does the

warning. There is a soul-rest, a Sabbath rest, available through full surrender to Christ. It is available today. And it is possible to be in this building, singing these songs, and still be standing outside of it.

Key Truth: "Today" is not a calendar date. It is a window. And the warning of Hebrews is simply this — windows close. While you can still hear His voice, today is the day that matters.

V. THE ROCK — Good News for Thirsty People (1 Corinthians 10:4 / John 7:37-38)

John 7:37-38 BSB

³⁷ On the last and greatest day of the feast, Jesus stood up and called out in a loud voice, “If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink.

³⁸ Whoever believes in Me, as the Scripture has said: ‘Streams of living water will flow from within him.’ ”

Key Insight: Go back to Meribah. Israel was dying of thirst. They were accusing God of abandoning them. And what did God do? He didn't argue with them. He didn't lecture them about their ingratitude. He told Moses to strike the rock —

and water poured out of it. He answered their accusation with provision. He met their thirst even while they were questioning Him.

Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 10:4 that the rock was Christ. The rock that absorbed Moses' strike at the moment of Israel's greatest accusation — that was Jesus. He was struck so that people who didn't deserve water could drink anyway.

Then centuries later, Jesus stood at the Feast of Tabernacles — where priests ceremonially poured out water every single day as a reminder of Meribah — and He cried out. Not announced. *Cried out.* With urgency. *"If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink."*

He was standing there saying: I am the rock. I have already been struck. The water is already flowing. Meribah's question — "Is the LORD among us or not?" — I answered that question on a cross. The only remaining question is whether you will come and drink or keep standing in the wilderness demanding that I prove myself to you first.

[Preaching note: This is your highest intensity moment. Voice up on the cry of John 7. Then begin to bring it down into the close — quiet, direct, personal.]

Key Truth: The same God who met Israel's accusation with provision instead of punishment is still standing in this room

tonight. The rock has already been struck. The water is already flowing. Whatever the condition of your heart when you walked in — hard, thirsty, exhausted, accusatory — He is not here to condemn that. He is here saying come and drink.

CLOSE — Today

You came in here tonight. You sang. You may have meant every word — or you may have gone through the motions and only you know which. God is not asking about last week's surrender or next week's good intentions.

He is asking about tonight.

This moment.

While you can still hear His voice.

That is what "today" means. Not guilt. Not fear. Just the simple, urgent reality that the window is open right now and Jesus is standing at the feast crying out to thirsty people. The rock has been struck. The water is flowing.

Today is the day to stop testing and start drinking.

KEY TAKEAWAY:

The psalm doesn't ask whether you showed up. It asks

whether you heard. You can be in the room, singing the songs, bowing at the right moments, and walk out unchanged because your heart was closed the entire time. The warning of Psalm 95 is not for people who have given up on God. It is for people who are still coming — who have quietly learned to go through the motions of worship without actually trusting the God they are worshiping. But the good news is that the same God who answered Meribah's accusation with water is standing here tonight saying the same thing He said at the feast. The rock has already been struck. Come and drink.

FOR FURTHER REFLECTION:

1. Are there areas in your life where you are going through the motions of faith without genuinely trusting God?
2. Where in your life has the callus been forming — what repeated friction have you been pulling back from instead of pressing into?
3. Is there a situation where, like Israel at Meribah, you are demanding proof from God instead of resting in what He has already shown you?
4. What would it mean for you personally to enter God's rest today — not someday, not after things get better, but today?

5. Who in your life needs you to "exhort them daily" (Hebrews 3:13) so their heart doesn't quietly harden without anyone noticing?

SCRIPTURE REFERENCES FOR FURTHER STUDY:

Psalm 95 | Exodus 17:1-7 | Hebrews 3:7-4:11 | 1 Corinthians 10:1-4 | John 7:37-38 | Psalm 23:1-4 | Psalm 78:17-22