

# Up to Minneapolis

A Study for the Ride to Real. Present. God.

*This study is designed to be done on your way to the Gathering. It could be done at church before you leave, at the airport as you wait for a flight, or overnight in a hotel on the way to Minnesota. All leader's notes are in red font.*

## YOUR TRAVEL PLAYLIST

You're at the airport. You're on your bus. You're crammed into a 15-passenger van. By now, surely you or someone in your group has had their earbuds in. Clearly, you have the best soundtrack for this trip. So, let's hear it...

What's playing in your head? What music do you plan on listening to during this trip?

*Invite youth to share their music selections and playlists.*

A big part of traveling is travel music. It can make the trip seem so much faster. (Ever notice how in the movies, the characters start a road trip, one chorus of "Life Is a Highway!" plays, and BAM...they're there!?) We can't guarantee your trip to Minneapolis will go that quickly, but let's talk a little more about road trip playlists.

## SCRIPTURE'S TRAVEL PLAYLIST

Did you know there is a road trip "playlist" in the Bible?

This week at the Gathering, we will be taking a look at the Psalms. Psalms is a book in the Old Testament filled with 150 songs that God's people have been praying and singing for thousands of years. Within this book there is a particular set of Psalms that form a smaller collection that was used by God's people as they traveled.

This playlist is called the "Psalms of Ascent." It is a collection of 15 songs (Psalms 120-134) God's people would sing as they traveled to Jerusalem for religious events and festivals. Traveling to Jerusalem was a BIG deal for them, and the "Psalms of Ascents" were a special part of this trip.

Why are these called the Psalms of "Ascent"?

When you ascend, you go up. As God's people traveled to Jerusalem, regardless of their geographic position, they were always traveling UP.

UP...because Jerusalem was built on a hill.

UP...because this was a trip full of prayer and worship.

UP...because they were about to dwell with God, for the temple was in Jerusalem.

On their Jerusalem journey, God's people believed they were traveling UP—above the mundane things of life, above the struggles, above the difficulties—UP to a Jerusalem experience!

*For scriptural references of this kind of language include 2 Kings 23:2, Isaiah 2:3, Luke 2:22, Matthew 20:18.*

As we are traveling to Minneapolis, many of us are traveling UP on the map. (Remember, if you pass the North Pole, you've gone

too far!) But all of us are headed UP to a spiritually rich, impactful, and worshipful experience with God.

So, on our "ascent" to Minneapolis, let's take a look at one of the songs on Scripture's travel playlist: Psalm 122.

*Read Psalm 122 in its entirety. (Questions to follow.)*

## ON OUR WAY UP: (PSALM 122:1-2)

vs 1 I was glad when they said to me, "Let us go to the house of the LORD!"

vs 2 Our feet have been standing within your gates, O Jerusalem!

Remember, this Psalm was written for people to sing as they traveled to a big, spiritual experience. You might have noticed that the voice here is pretty excited.

What are you excited about experiencing in at the Gathering?

*Encourage the students to share their thoughts, even nervous energy about the Gathering. You might ask first-time attenders to share their thoughts first.*

You might also notice that the voice here is not traveling alone. Just like you, they are traveling with a group.

What do you hope your group gets out of this experience?

*Encourage a discussion about the group's experience, not just individuals.*

## THINK OUTSIDE YOUR BUS (PSALM 122:3-5)

vs 3 Jerusalem—built as a city that is bound firmly together,

vs 4 to which the tribes go up, the tribes of the LORD, as was decreed for Israel, to give thanks to the name of the LORD.

vs 5 There thrones for judgment were set, the thrones of the house of David.

You are not traveling alone. And your group isn't traveling alone. All kinds of people from all kinds of places and kinds of backgrounds are heading UP to Minneapolis. Together we will gather in U.S. Bank Stadium. Together we will hear impactful speakers. Together we will explore the Scriptures, serve those in need, play epic games, and sing-so-loud-we-lose-our-voices at concerts.



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Look again at Psalm 22:4. Why did God gather together the people of Israel?

*See 122:4b. “To give thanks to the name of the LORD.” With these words God invites us to show gratitude for His blessings to us with humble hearts.*

What might we give thanks to God for in Minneapolis? What might it look like for you to give thanks to the Lord?

*Encourage youth to provide their own answers here.*

*Ultimately, we thank God for the forgiveness, life, and salvation that is ours in Christ. But also for the gift of community, his creation, the chance to gather with other youth, etc.*

*We thank God by praising his name, by serving other, by forgiving as we’ve been forgiven, etc.*

## PRAYERS ASCENDING: PSALM 122:6-9

- vs 6 Pray for the peace of Jerusalem! “May they be secure who love you!
- vs 7 Peace be within your walls and security within your towers!”
- vs 8 For my brothers and companions’ sake I will say, “Peace be within you!”
- vs 9 For the sake of the house of the LORD our God, I will seek your good.

Trips to places like Jerusalem for the people of Israel, and Minneapolis for us, can truly be impactful, “mountain-top” experiences. They can bring us above the mundane, above the struggles and difficulties. But they’re not meant for us to forget our difficulties and act like they aren’t there.

In Psalm 122:6-9, there’s one word that gets repeated three times. Did you catch what it was?

*Peace*

Ironically, as we go UP to Minneapolis, God comes DOWN to us. He comes DOWN by becoming one of us in Jesus. He comes DOWN through simple things like words and promises together with water and bread and wine. He comes DOWN to give us peace in his Son. He joins us in our struggles, sustains us through good times and bad, and sends us to share this peace with others.

He also invites us to give this peace to others. Think for a moment about what you might give to others this week. Can you think of a way in which you might give God’s peace to others?

*This is a chance for you, as the leader, to flip the script on expectations. Instead of focusing only on what youth with GET from the Gathering, invite them to consider what they might GIVE to each other, to other youth groups, to workers in hotels and restaurants, etc.*

It’s possible that you are going through some type of struggle these days, and that you need some peace. Perhaps it is a big deal. Or maybe it is relatively small. Either way, let’s talk to God about it right now.

Prayer was an important part of the ascent to Jerusalem for God’s people of old. It’s the same for us today. Prayer will be a big part of this Gathering. Let’s pray for everything we’re going to experience this week. You’re going to have a chance to offer up specific prayers (silently) for yourself, for our group, and all the youth coming to the Gathering.

*Read the prayer aloud, giving pause for the marked portions.*

## PRAYER:

Heavenly Father, you have promised to be with us always for our good. You sent your Son, Jesus Christ to bring us peace with you and with each other. When we were baptized, you sent your Spirit into our hearts. It’s you—Father, Son, and Spirit—who we are worshiping and celebrating this week at the Gathering.

But God, we have some questions. We have some issues. Things aren’t perfect. In fact, God, sometimes we have concerns that feel bigger than worship services, or concerts, or Bible studies, or even prayers. Here are some real struggles we have going on our lives right now. **[Silently offer a prayer for yourself.]** We pray that you would speak to this struggle this week through your Word.

But the Gathering isn’t just about me. It’s about our whole group. God, we pray that you would use the Gathering to strengthen our group’s community. In fact, God, here is one way we ask you to work in our group this week. **[Silently offer a prayer for your youth group.]** Use this week to help us love and forgive one another as you love and forgive us.

And it’s not just about our youth group. God, there are thousands of people coming to Minneapolis with us. They also need Jesus. They also need peace. They need you to speak to their issues. In fact, here is one way we pray you would bless everyone who attends the Gathering.

**[Silently offer a prayer for the Gathering participants.]**

Keep us safe this week. Strengthen our faith. Encourage us through your Word. Give us peace that can only come from a you, our Real. Present. God.

Finally, we know, Father, that there are many people in this city who do not know you or believe in your Son. We pray for these people whom you love and desire to save. Help us collectively as your church to witness to them in word and deed. Open their hearts and minds to trust in Jesus, and strengthen the church in this city to welcome them into their congregations. **[Silently offer a prayer for all the non-Christians in the Twin Cities.]**

Amen.

## CONCLUSION

*End by reading Psalm 122 together in unison.*