

Blessed to Bless

Psalm 67 - NCBC, December 26, 2021

Main Point: **God blesses you for the sake of His praise among all people.**

- The Prayer for God's blessing (1)
 - Seeking God's mercy
 - Seeking God's friendship
 - Seeking God's provision
- The Purpose for God's blessing (2-5)
 - God aims to be known by all people
 - God aims to be enjoyed by all people
 - God aims to be feared by all people
- The Promise of God's blessing (6-7)
 - God never fails
 - God never forsakes

Application: **Reconnect God's blessings in your life to God's purpose for your life.**

- Pray that God will cause you to know, enjoy, and fear Him more
- Redirect God's blessings to you towards God's purpose for you
- Confidently trust God while you sacrificially risk everything for His glory

Opening Announcements:

- **Add an Adult Discipleship Elective to your routine at 9:30am each Sunday morning!** It's not too late to join one of our excellent equipping classes, and the New Year offers a great opportunity to get connected. Learn more at <https://myncbc.org/connect/adults/adult-discipleship-electives/> and plan to join us next Sunday at 9:30am!

<<We Three Kings of Orient Are>>



Guide us to thy perfect light. Jesus is the light of the world, and it is a great privilege to gather this morning all together as one church family to celebrate and worship our God of Light.

Today we close out 2021 by preaching from a favorite Psalm. So please open your Bible to **Psalm 67**.



If you don't have a Bible today, simply raise your hand and we'd be delighted to give you one.

Ever since I heard David Platt preach **Psalm 67** at the Sing! Conference a couple of years ago, I've been eager for an opportunity to study and preach this psalm myself.

Psalm 67 has quickly become one of my favorite psalms, and I believe it has the power to change how we think about our lives, and how we practically live out our lives. I'm convinced that **Psalm 67** will increase your joy and satisfaction in life if you embrace its message today.



Psalm 67 is often titled the “Missionary Psalm,” because its chorus swells with the longing for every people group on the earth to be glad in God.

Therefore, it is very appropriate for us to consider **Psalm 67** in this season. We've just celebrated Christmas, and there's not a more missions-oriented holiday than Christmas. For Christmas celebrates God sending His Son into a hostile and wicked world for the sake of His glory through the rescue of sinners. Christmas reveals that our God is a Missionary God!

But on this last Sunday of 2021, as we anticipate a fresh start in the new year, **Psalm 67** also provides God's people with a timely reminder of our life's purpose. God saved us for the sake of His glory! God isn't a heavenly butler that exists for our sake. God saved us so that we

might now live our lives for the glory of the One who died and rose again on our behalf!¹

Psalm 67 therefore reorients our perspective and our purpose right in time for all the self-examination that rightly accompanies a new year.

I'm praying God will use **Psalm 67** today to help all of us reconnect God's purpose to God's blessings that we have all received from Him.

So if you're able, please stand in honor of the public reading of God's Word, as I read **Psalm 67** from the **English Standard Translation**.

To the choirmaster: with stringed instruments. A Psalm. A Song.

¹ May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face to shine upon us, Selah

² that your way may be known on earth, your saving power among all nations.

³ Let the peoples praise you, O God; let all the peoples praise you!

⁴ Let the nations be glad and sing for joy, for you judge the peoples with equity and guide the nations upon earth. Selah

⁵ Let the peoples praise you, O God; let all the peoples praise you!

⁶ The earth has yielded its increase; God, our God, shall bless us.

¹ 2 Corinthians 5:15

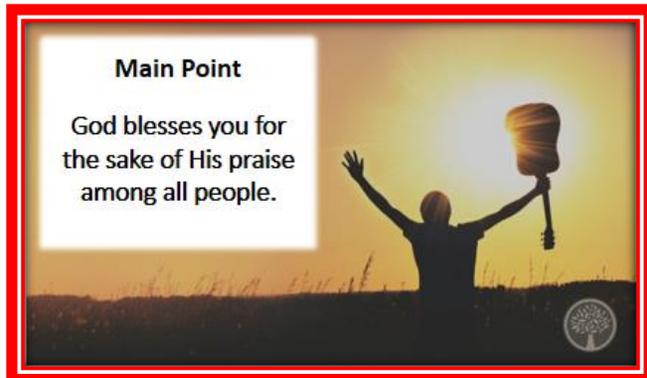
*⁷ God shall bless us;
let all the ends of the earth fear him!*

This is the word of our Lord. You may be seated.

Let's Pray.

Psalm 67 is a prayer captivated by a singular purpose and fueled by faith in God's promise.

Its main point is simple yet life-changing:



God blesses you for the sake of His praise among all people. God blesses *His* people for the sake of His praise among *all* people.

Don't miss this. All of us have received many blessings from our God. But God has a purpose for giving us such undeserved favor. **Psalm 67** teaches us that the reason God blesses me and you with so much extravagant grace

is so that all the people groups of the world will praise Him! The blessings God gives to His people are always connected to God's missionary purpose...so that all the peoples from all nations would better praise God... because of how He has blessed us.

Now this often-forgotten truth is actually a theme we find throughout Scripture. Ponder this for a moment:

In **Genesis 12**, God promises to bless Abraham...so that, in Abraham "all the families of the earth shall be blessed."² In **Genesis 26** God promises to bless Isaac so that "all the nations of the earth shall be blessed."³

In **Genesis 28** God promises to bless a single man named Jacob with many children, so that "in you and in your offspring shall all the families of the earth be blessed."⁴

In **Exodus 14**, God blesses His people with deliverance from Pharaoh, so that... all the Egyptians shall know that Yahweh is God.⁵ In **Deuteronomy 4**, God blesses His people with the law, so that the peoples of the land will marvel at Israel's God.⁶

In **1 Kings 10** we see the Gentile Queen of Sheba responding to God's extravagant blessings to Solomon by blessing and praising God herself.⁷

² Genesis 12:1-3

³ Genesis 26:4

⁴ Genesis 28:14

⁵ Exodus 14:4, 18

⁶ Deuteronomy 4:5-6

⁷ 1 Kings 10:9

King David acknowledged in **Psalm 23** that God leads him in paths of righteousness... for His name's sake.⁸ In **Psalm 25**, David seeks the blessing of forgiveness... for the sake of God's Name.⁹

Are you catching this pattern? The reason God gives *His people* supernatural blessings is always for the sake of His own glory and praise from *all peoples*.

The prophet **Ezekiel** makes this explicit in **chapter 36**, when God says, *"It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act, but for the sake of my holy name which you have profaned among the nations to which you came."*¹⁰ God blesses His people with a purpose, and the purpose for our blessed condition has to do with God's glory among all nations on this planet!

This theme of God's people receiving supernatural blessing from God so that unbelievers would eventually have reason to praise God is also in the New Testament.

After all, what is the greatest blessing God has ever given His people? The Holy Spirit, right? The greatest blessing God has ever given us is Himself. But **Acts 1** connects this blessing to our purpose of living as God's witnesses to the end of the earth.¹¹

Paul agrees in **Galatians chapter 1** when he testifies how God revealed Jesus to him all so that Jesus would be preached to the Gentiles.¹²

In other words, all of human history is leading to a future climax, pictured in **Revelation 7**, when people from every tribe and language and nation will be praising God forever and ever because of how God has blessed His people.¹³

So don't miss this. God has a purpose for blessing you that is even greater than your own need. God always blesses you for the sake of His greater praise among all people. God's divine favor in our lives is connected to something far greater than just us... God blesses us so that more unbelievers will eventually praise His Name forever, and His glory will be increased!

This is absolutely marvelous, isn't it? This is a priority-shifting, paradox-changing truth for us to grasp this morning. Because we are all prone to disconnect God's blessings in our lives from God's purpose for our lives. But once you understand the prayer of **Psalm 67**, it changes everything.

So let's begin by considering,

⁸ Psalm 23:3

⁹ Psalm 25:11

¹⁰ Ezekiel 36:22, 32

¹¹ Acts 1:8; c.f. John 15:26-27

¹² Galatians 1:15-16

¹³ Revelation 7:9-10



The Prayer for God's blessing in **verse 1**.

Here an anonymous author¹⁴ prays for God to bless His people. The prayer in **verse 1** is based on the High Priestly Prayer found in **Numbers chapter 6**.



In **Numbers 6**, God taught Aaron and his sons to pray this prayer of blessing over God's people, saying,

¹⁴ Psalms 66 and 67 are not attributed to any specific author and are the only anonymous psalms in Book 2 (Psalms 42-72). The only anonymous psalms prior to this are Psalm 1, 2, and 33. Several commentators believe the setting for this psalm may be in the time of Hezekiah, and since Hezekiah

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The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; the LORD lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace.¹⁵

But carefully notice two differences between the prayers in **Numbers 6** and **Psalm 67**. Notice that in the High Priestly Prayer in **Numbers 6**, God is referred to by His Name *Yahweh* – LORD in all title caps, the name that emphasizes His eternal covenant-keeping faithfulness to Israel. But in **Psalm 67** all six references to God use the name *Elohim*, translated “God” in English, which is His most generic name used universally by all nations.

Also notice that in **Numbers 6**, the prayer is directed at God's people using a singular “you” pronoun, while in **Psalm 67** the author uses the pronoun “us” in **verses 1, 6, and 7** in order to identify himself *with* those who receive the blessing.

These clues hint that **Psalm 67** is seeking a universal blessing that extends beyond the borders of God's chosen people. So let's examine exactly what blessing the psalmist is praying for.

After all, we all want God to bless us, right? When you pray, what do you pray for? What blessing do you most desire from God?

In **verse 1** we find the psalmist,

wrote a psalm then (Isaiah 38:9-20), some speculate that perhaps Hezekiah is the author of Psalms 66 and 67?

¹⁵ Numbers 6:24-26



Seeking God's mercy

May God be gracious to us and bless us...

“Gracious” simply refers to favor, compassion, or mercy. May God bless us with a favor and grace that we do not deserve and could never earn.

When we pray for God's blessing, we acknowledge we don't deserve favor from a holy God that we have sinfully rebelled against. So we seek God's mercy.

Then I love the next phrase, *And may God ...make his face to shine upon us...*

What does that mean? That's not a phrase we use much anymore...¹⁶ so perhaps we relate better to the phrase, “may God smile upon us”?

Because a shining face is a smiling face...the opposite of an angry or scowling face, or a face turned away in disgust or indifference.

¹⁶ Although it's a common phrase in Scripture: Psalm 4:6, 29:11, 31:16, 80:3, 80:7, 80:19, 119:135; Daniel 9:17; etc.

Write this down. To ask God to “cause His face to shine upon us” is,



Seeking God's friendship

God, please bless us with a favorable personal relationship with you. What a prayer for God's people to pray! Lord, please smile upon us, and give us greater communion and relational intimacy with you!

Church, most often when we talk about God blessing us, we refer to material possessions, or physical health, or getting a good job, or having a bountiful harvest, etc.

And although material blessings are indeed a part of this prayer... they are only the smallest part of it. For while physical riches are indeed from God,¹⁷ we must remember Jesus' warning, “*What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul?*”¹⁸

The highest blessing we could ever receive from God is His favorable personal friendship. And if this spiritual

¹⁷ 1 Samuel 2:7-8; 1 Chronicles 29:12; Psalm 75:7; Romans 11:36

¹⁸ Mark 8:36

blessing of friendship with God is not underneath all our material blessings and earthly happiness, then all our earthly comforts and riches will only be deceptive insulation from the highest blessing, which is to know God and be in a favorable friendship with Him.

So dear church, join with the psalmist and ask God to bless you with His mercy and His friendship and then also



Seek God's provision

After all, in **verse 6** the psalmist rejoices that *The earth has yielded its increase*, and then connects the bountiful harvest with God's blessing of His people.

So whenever we seek God's mercy, God's friendship, and God's provision, we are praying for God's blessings.

Now, when you see the word "Selah" like at the end of **verse 1**, it's a call to pause, meditate, and let it soak it.

So when's the last time you asked God to bless you or His people? How do you define God's blessings? And is it selfish to ask God to bless us?

Well, of course that depends on,



The Purpose for God's blessing, doesn't it?

And that's where the largest section of this Psalm puts its focus. What is God's purpose for blessing His people with mercy, friendship, and abundant provision? What motivates God to bless His people with such extravagant favor?

The answer is found in **verses 2-5**.

May God be gracious to us and bless us and make His face to shine upon us,

So that... underline or circle the word "that"... so that Your way may be known on earth, your saving power among all the nations.

Don't miss this church. The reason God blesses His people is because,



God aims to be known by all people.

Notice His purpose for blessing us is bigger than us. God blesses us so that His way and His saving power may be known across all the nations on the earth. Before all the peoples will praise God like the chorus in **verses 3 and 5** celebrates, they must know God and His saving power at work in their own lives.

Notice there's 10 references in **Psalms 67** to "the peoples", "all nations", "All the ends of the earth," etc.¹⁹ Clearly God intends for His ways and saving power to be known by all people groups everywhere on earth!

Today there are at least 11,000 different people groups in the world.²⁰ But over 6,000 of these ethnic groups, consisting of ~ 2 billion people, have not yet heard of the saving power of our God.

¹⁹ There are a total of 10 references to the Gentile peoples of the earth in these 7 verses: "On earth", "all nations" (2); "the peoples", "all the peoples" (3); "the nations", "the peoples", "the nations upon earth" (4); "the peoples", "all the peoples" (5); "all the ends of the earth" (7).

²⁰

Let that sink in for a moment. Today there are 2 billion people living on this planet who have never heard the gospel of salvation through faith alone in Christ alone. These 6,000 people groups haven't heard the gospel and then rejected it. No. They have not yet even heard that God has made a way for their sins to be forgiven through the finished work of Jesus on their behalf!

Don't miss this, loved ones. The reason God has so blessed us is so people everywhere can know God's ways and His saving power like we do.

God calls every Christian to live in the world, among the world, so that the world will have a constant clear witness of His grace and power.²¹ God purposefully blesses His people with His saving power so that the nations will get a clear visual of who He is, and how marvelous is His grace. God purposefully pours out His mercy and spiritual intimacy and provision upon Christians so that non-Christians will begin to experience God's favor through God's people, and thereby be brought into a saving knowledge of God themselves.

So is it possible, New Castle, that one reason why there are still 2 billion people living on this planet who have not yet even heard about Jesus is because we have disconnected God's blessings from God's purpose?

https://joshuaproject.net/resources/articles/how_many_people_groups_are_t_here

²¹ John 17:15, 18, 21, 23; Romans 15:15-16; 2 Corinthians 2:14-16, 5:15, 20; 1 Peter 2:9-10

Are we hoarding God's grace for ourselves? Have we forgotten that God intends for all the peoples to know about Him as a result of all that He has given to us?

God blesses you for the sake of His praise among all people. **Verses 3 and 5** repeat this refrain,

Let the peoples praise You, O God; let all the peoples praise You!

Pastor John Piper writes about these verses:

"Worship, therefore, is the fuel and goal of missions. ... In missions we simply aim to bring the nations into the white-hot enjoyment of God's glory. The goal of missions is the gladness of the peoples in the greatness of God."²²

Verse 4 is bracketed by this chorus of praise and is therefore receives the logical emphasis in the author's argument.

The primary purpose for God's blessings to us is found in **verse 4**:

Let the nations be glad and sing for joy, for You judge the peoples with equity and guide the nations upon the earth.

In other words, the reason God so richly blesses us is that,



God aims to be enjoyed by all people.

Look at **verse 4**. God doesn't just want people to know about Him; God wants people everywhere to enjoy Him.²³ Not to hoard His grace, but to experience great satisfaction in sharing His grace and exalting His glory.²⁴

Now, this is so radically God-centered that it can be offensive. After all, if you ask Christians today, "what is the message of Christianity?" most would reply, "God loves me."

And while that's of course true, according to **Psalms 67**, that's incomplete. The message of biblical Christianity is that "God loves me so that... He would be better praised by all peoples!" God's glory is always the foundation for God's love. Remember **Ezekiel 36**. We are not at the center of God's universe. God loves us only because that is how He chooses to exalt Himself!

But, you ask, doesn't this make God selfish and self-absorbed? Well... think carefully about this: Since God

²² *Let the Nations be Glad*, John Piper, 17.

²³ C.f. Psalm 69:32; 70:4; 97:1

²⁴ I.e. 2 Corinthians 9:12; c.f. Acts 20:35; Luke 6:38; Hebrews 13:16

is the absolute perfection of all that is good, who else would we want God to exalt? And if our greatest enjoyment comes from enjoying God Himself more than His gifts, then why would we question God's love when He aims to be enjoyed by all people?

You see, the fact that God lives for His own glory doesn't minimize the power of His love for us; instead it actually magnifies the beauty of His love for sinners. God does indeed love you deeply. His love is extreme, extravagant, and supernatural! And it is God's sincere loving passion for undeserving sinners like us that increases His eternal glory and praise forever!

So make no mistake about this church. The reason God has given us so much actually has far more to do with Him, than it does with us. God's blessings to you, are not fundamentally about you. No. Instead God intends for His blessings to *spread* through you. God gave you salvation so that others might know of His saving power. God blessed you with wealth ... for we are among the richest Christians in the history of the world...all so that others would worship Him, not so that we could increase our standard of living and coast in comfort until heaven.

God has blessed you and me so that He would be enjoyed by all 11,000 people groups on the earth. He deserves worship from more than just 5,000 people groups, doesn't He?

After all, **verse 4** reminds us that our God is a righteous Judge, and He is the Sovereign King who guides and rules over all nations. He aims to be worshipped!

Verse 7 ends, *Let all the ends of the earth fear Him!*



In other words, God blesses you and me with so much extravagant blessing all **because He aims to be feared by all people.**

He is the righteous judge who has the power to destroy both soul and body in hell.²⁵ Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne and rules over every person He has created.²⁶

So why does God bless His people today? Because we need it? Because He loves us? Yes, and Yes...but even beyond that... God's ultimate purpose for blessing us is that He would be known, enjoyed, and feared by all 11,000 people groups on this planet today.

Now in **verses 6 and 7**, this purposeful prayer ends with,

²⁵ Matthew 10:28
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²⁶ Revelation 7:9-12



The Promise of God's blessing.

Verse 6 says,

The earth has yielded its increase... which is a celebration of God's faithful provision in the harvest.

While there is some question about the grammatical verb tense in **verse 6**, most scholars believe it is best to take it in the future tense, like, "*Then the land will yield its harvest, and God our God will bless us.*"

In other words, the psalmist is expressing confidence here in the faithful character of God Himself. He prays for God's blessings, because He knows God's blessings are connected to God's purpose, and He's confident that,



God never fails

Church... Jesus promised to build His church.²⁷ Jesus promised to bring in all the Gentile sheep,²⁸ to gather for Himself a worshipping community from every nation, and peoples and languages²⁹ before time will come to an end.

God will not fail in His purpose for giving His church such abundant blessings.

That's why the Psalmist can conclude this prayer with such confidence, saying,

God, our God, shall bless us. God shall bless us!

²⁷ Matthew 16:18

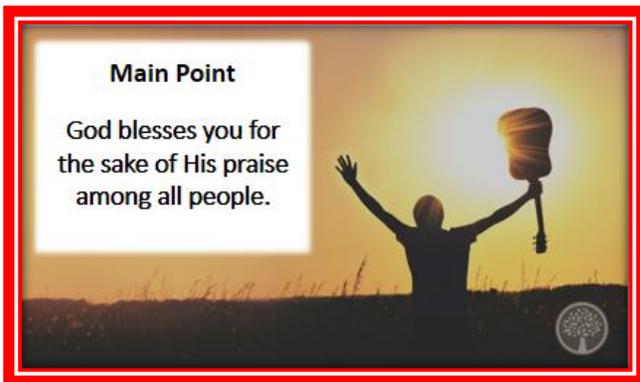
²⁸ John 10:16

²⁹ Revelation 7:9



For God never **forsakes** His children.³⁰ He will continue to pour out His mercy, His friendship, and His provision for His children. His glory depends on it.

So let the promise of God's blessing empower your prayer that God would indeed pour out more of His favor upon His church today, all so that He might receive greater worship and praise from all the nations of the world.



After all, God blesses you for the sake of His praise among all people. Every time God blesses you its an opportunity to witness to unbelievers. God has given us

everything we have so we might make His glory known among the nations.

So we must repent today of disconnecting God's blessings in our lives from God's purpose for our lives.



Once we understand the powerful purpose and promise of **Psalm 67**, we should reconnect God's blessings in our life to God's purpose for our life. We must stop hoarding God's grace, and living as if we are the center of God's universe.

Once you understand that the purpose of your life to spread of the glory of God through you to others, then you will first,

³⁰ Hebrews 13:5-6



Pray that God will cause you to know, enjoy, and fear Him more yourself.

After all, God intends for your knowledge of God to spread to others. God intends for your enjoyment of God to be contagious. It is your worship of God that will compel your sacrificial witness for Him as you fast, give, and go so that others might know the same saving power that you have first experienced.

Unfortunately, too many of us are ignorant about God and the depths of His grace. Too many are bored with Christianity, or unmoved and casual in His presence. Such Christianity always falls short of God's glorious purpose for our lives. So repent of your ignorance, your boredom, or your indifference with our Holy God!

Pray like Moses in **Exodus 33** that God will show You more of His glory, and cause all of His goodness to pass before you!³¹ For only after you begin to see God as your Gracious Savior, and Righteous Judge, and Sovereign King will you then,

³¹ Exodus 33:13-34:9



Redirect God's blessings to you towards God's purpose of causing the nations to be glad in God.

I love how John Piper speaks to this when he says,

"If God wants His goods to get to the nations, then He will fill the truck that's driving towards the nations. He will bless the church that's pouring itself out for unreached peoples of the world. And this blessing is not payment for a service rendered; it's power and joy for a mission to accomplish. When we move toward the unreached peoples, we are not earning God's blessings, we are leaping into the river of blessings that is already flowing to the nations."³²

So church... let's pray, let's give, let's go, and let's sacrificially reorient our lives for the sake of God's glory among all peoples. And as we do, let's expect the blessings of God to follow the purposes of God.

³² <https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/let-the-nations-be-glad>



Confidently trust God while you sacrificially risk everything for His glory

Our lives are short, and we are stewards of all of God's blessings. God has mercifully given us His Spirit, His Friendship, and all that we need for life and godliness.³³ God has promised that He will be with us until the end of the age.³⁴ We have nothing to fear, except self-centeredness which would try to disconnect God's blessings from God's purposes in our lives.

Church we have been blessed to bless.



May we never forget that God blesses us for the sake of His praise among all peoples.

³³ 2 Peter 1:3-4
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Let's pray.

<<O for a Thousand Tongues>>

Next Week: Communion & we begin a January's sermon series on *Spiritual Disciplines!*

Let's pray our benediction together as we dismiss.



Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, who alone does wondrous things. Blessed be His glorious name forever; may the whole earth be filled with His glory! Amen and Amen! Psalm 72:18-19



³⁴ Matthew 28:18-20

Recommended Resources on Blessed to Bless:

- Genesis 12:1-3
- Exodus 19:5-6; 33:12-23
- Numbers 6:22-27
- Deuteronomy 28:1-6
- Ezekiel 36:22-23
- Matthew 5:8
- 1 Peter 2:9-10
- 1 John 3:2
- Revelation 22:4

- <https://www.desiringgod.org/labs/god-blesses-you-to-bless-the-world>
- <https://radical.net/sermon/the-ultimate-disconnect-2/>
- <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/video/what-does-christmas-have-to-do-with-missions/>
- https://drbarrick.org/files/studynotes/Psalms/Ps_067.pdf

- *Let the Nations Be Glad*, John Piper
- *Something Needs to Change*, David Platt
- *A Quest for More*, Paul Tripp

Growing Deeper: Life Group Questions

1. Review Psalm 67:1-2. Why does God bless His people? Look up the following verses and discuss how this logic encompasses the entire biblical story: Genesis 12:1-3, 26:4, 28:14; Exodus 14:4,18; Deuteronomy 4:5-8; Daniel 3:28-29; 1 Kings 10:1-9; Psalm 23:3; Isaiah 43:1-7; Ezekiel 36:22-23; Galatians 1:15-16.
2. Review Psalm 67:2. What hinders us from knowing God's way and His saving power?
3. Review Psalm 67:4. Do you enjoy God? Why or why not? How can you take steps towards delighting in Him?
4. Read Psalm 67 aloud. What implications does this psalm have for how you live? What in your life needs to change as a result of this psalm?
5. What does Psalm 67 teach us about who God is? How should this realization affect how we view the blessings God has given to us and the purpose that He has for us?
6. What is your favorite takeaway from Psalm 67?