

SOUND MIND BIBLE STUDY.com

HARD FOUGHT HALLELUJAHS SESSIONS

Hard Fought Praise: The Cost of Worship

With Content Creator & Founder: Misty Craig



“FOR WHEN I AM WEAK, THEN I AM STRONG”

KEY THEME

“Worship isn’t about how we feel; it’s about who God is.”

DISCLAIMERS

Acknowledging the difficulty of trials is essential. Hardship and pain are real, and it is natural to struggle with them. Faith does not eliminate struggles but offers strength and the assurance of God’s presence through them.

DIRECTION

Faith, like gold, is refined through fire. Trials are not meant to destroy, but to build perseverance, reliance on God, and spiritual maturity.

Embrace perseverance, trusting in God’s refining work and His presence in all circumstances.

MARCH 21, 2025

OPENING PRAYER

Heavenly Father,

I come before You, fully aware of how much I need You. I stand on Your faithfulness, knowing that You have given me a sound mind—not a spirit of fear, but clarity, strength, and wisdom.

Today, I open my heart to listen. I will feast on every word You speak. You are my fortress, my refuge, and my God, and I will stand in the authority You have given me.

When I speak the name of Jesus, I know that all darkness must flee. You have saved me, healed me, delivered me—Your blood washes over me and makes me new.

Lord, awaken my soul. Let Your Holy Spirit fall on me and burn like a refining fire. Not my will, but Yours be done. Lead me, shape me, set me free.

You are the anchor of my soul, keeping me from drifting. You are the light in my storm, always pointing me home.

I surrender. My hands, my feet, my tears—they are Yours. I give up control over my body, my mind, and my soul. I trust You, because You know what I've been through.

Lord, help me to stand strong, never letting my enemies get the best of me, never letting fear hold me down. You are my armor, my shelter—I seek Your will, not my own. I surrender all my wants to You, because Your Kingdom is all I desire.

You are my freedom from chains and my healing from pain. You have called my name, and everything has changed.

So today, I step into a new day—I rise from the dust and walk forward in faith.

And when people ask me how I did it, I will say,

"God taught me."

When they ask how I'm winning, I will say,

"God taught me."

When they ask why I am different, I will say,

"God taught me."

Because I am a bold lion, and my lungs will always sing Your praises with gratitude.

Amen.

WELCOME

First, a heartfelt **thank you** to **Yolanda** for graciously opening your shop to us tonight. Your generosity has created a warm, peaceful space where we can gather, reflect, and grow in faith together. Your kindness is a true blessing, and we are so grateful for your support in making this evening possible!

The inspiration for this Bible study, *Hard-Fought Hallelujahs*, comes from a song that deeply moved me—**Brandon Lake's "Hard Fought Hallelujah."** This song captures the raw, honest journey of wrestling with pain and hardship while still choosing to lift up praise to God. It speaks to those moments when faith is tested, when hallelujahs don't come easily, and when worship feels more like a battle than a celebration.

When I first heard this song, it resonated with me because I've been there—**in the moments when praising God felt less like a response and more like a fight.** Times when life felt heavy, when darkness seemed to close in, yet somehow, turning to God brought peace, strength, and hope. It reminded me that God doesn't use trials to harm us, but to **refine us**—just as gold is purified in fire.

That realization is what led to tonight's study. I wanted to create a space where we could come together, share our own **hard-fought hallelujahs**, and explore how faith doesn't weaken under trials—it grows stronger. The lyrics "*I've wrestled with the darkness, but I'm tryin' to reach for the light*" capture the very heart of what we'll be diving into—**acknowledging our struggles while seeking God's truth and light.**

So, as we begin tonight, I encourage you to come as you are—whether your faith feels strong or fragile, whether you're in a season of rejoicing or wrestling. **Your hallelujah matters, no matter how hard-fought it may be.**

Let's step into this space with open hearts, ready to encounter God in a new way. Because **our praise—born from the fire—is precious, powerful, and never wasted.**

EXPLANATION OF OPEN BIBLE STUDY

Before we begin, I want to take a moment to explain an important aspect of tonight's gathering. **This Bible study is an *open Bible study*, which means that everything shared here—our reflections, testimonies, and insights—can be freely spoken about outside of these doors.**

This openness is intentional. Our goal is to not only grow together in faith but also to encourage others with what we learn and experience here tonight. Your words, your stories, and your hallelujahs can inspire someone else who may be facing their own trials. Sharing how God is working in your life could be the light someone needs in their darkness.

While we are mindful to be respectful and thoughtful, we are also committed to ensuring that this space fosters a spirit of trust, honesty, and connection. By keeping this an open study, we invite God to use our words far beyond this room to impact lives and glorify Him.

So, as we dive into tonight's study, know that your voice matters—not just to those of us here tonight, but to anyone who might benefit from the truths we uncover and the testimonies we share. Let's be bold in sharing our stories and our faith, knowing they have the potential to shine God's light into the lives of others.

HARD FOUGHT HALLELUJAHS JOURNAL

This journal isn't just for tonight—it's meant to travel with us as we continue hosting more *Hard Fought Hallelujah* Bible studies. Each time we gather, the journal will be passed around, allowing new people to add their praises, testimonies, and reflections. As it travels, the journal will grow into a powerful collection of stories, showing how God has worked in the lives of many. It's a reminder that while we all go through our own fires, God is with us, carrying us through and refining us along the way. By sharing your experiences tonight, you're contributing to something that will inspire and encourage others who may read it in the future. Each entry will become part of a living testimony—a tangible way to show that God's love and faithfulness extend across time, places, and people.

So, as this journal moves forward, know that your words are part of a journey of faith, hope, and praise that will continue to grow and glorify God in the days to come.

ABOUT SOUND MIND BIBLE STUDY

The one thing God has deeply impressed upon my heart is the importance of having a **sound mind in the spirit of fear**. I know what it feels like to battle doubt, to wrestle with anxiety, and to face seasons where fear tries to take hold. But I also know the power of **God's truth** to renew the mind and bring peace in the storm.

Last spring, I felt led to start **Sound Mind Bible Study** as a way to share this truth and teach others what God has taught me. With my father-in-law's blessing, I had the opportunity to **travel back to Van Buren, Arkansas, my hometown, to host several study sessions**. Returning home to pour into others what God has poured into me was a powerful and humbling experience.

I've lived in many places since my time in Arkansas—from **North Carolina, where my son was born, to Texas, Alabama, and Savannah, Georgia, where my daughters were born**. My journey has been shaped by **faith, family, and military life**—22 years married to my high school sweetheart, navigating the unpredictability of deployments, moves, and challenges. *We are both still alive and haven't killed each other. Plotted, but not killed.* 😊

Professionally, I've spent **25 years designing websites for small businesses and churches**. Recently, I stepped out in faith and launched my own web design company, turning my love for **graphic design** into something meaningful.

But behind the creativity, behind the moves and milestones, have been battles—**arrows shot in my direction that could have broken me**. Yet, I stand here today because of **God's faithfulness**. Every struggle has become a testimony. Every trial has refined my hallelujah.

SoundMindBibleStudy.com is more than a Bible study—it's a **place of renewal, healing, and transformation**. It's about **breaking free from fear, stepping into God's peace, and walking in the confidence that His Word gives us a sound mind**.

No matter what season you're in, no matter the struggles you've faced, **this study is for you**. Because God's truth isn't just something to read—it's something to **live**. And together, we're going to do just that.

MY THANKFUL JOURNAL

There are several versions of me in this book. I love looking back through it because it reminds me—God has never left me, and He’s not going to start now. So, it’s not just a journal; it’s kind of like a testimony in the making.

REVIEW

Opening Reflection

Read aloud:

"I'll bring my storm-tossed, torn-sail, story-to-tell hallelujah."

We all carry stories shaped by both joy and pain—stories that are sometimes difficult to tell. Many of us have faced trauma, loss, or heartbreak so deep that the only way to cope was to **compartmentalize**—to mentally and emotionally separate our pain from our day-to-day lives just to function.

Compartmentalization can feel like survival... and often, it is.

But over time, this coping mechanism can harden into emotional detachment, numbness, or perfectionism.

- We **detach** from others and even from ourselves, unable to feel deeply or trust fully.
- We **throw ourselves into work, church, or caretaking** as a distraction, hoping that busyness will keep the pain buried.
- We avoid vulnerability, fear intimacy, and build emotional walls so high, even God seems far away.
- Sometimes, we convince ourselves that our pain “wasn’t that bad,” or that “other people have it worse”—and so we stay silent.

But here’s the powerful truth:

Even when we’ve locked our hurt in hidden corners, **God has never turned away.** He sees every compartment we’ve created—and He gently knocks, not to shame us, but to **bring light into the rooms we’ve closed off.**

Compartmentalization may have protected us for a season, but healing begins when we invite God into the whole story—not just the polished parts.

When we bring our “storm-tossed, torn-sail, story-to-tell hallelujah,” we’re not glorifying our pain—we’re glorifying the God who met us in it.

We’re saying:

“Even in my numbness, He was near.”

“Even when I built walls, He waited.”

“Even in the silence, He spoke love.”

Today, we begin stepping into that next brave act of faith: **telling the truth of our story**, not just for ourselves, but to encourage someone else, and to declare that **God is faithful—even when life is not easy or complete.**

Bridging Sessions 1 & 2 into Session 3: The Courage to Share Our Stories

As we step into this next session, let's take a moment to reflect on the journey we've been walking together. This study has been more than just words on a page—it's been deeply personal, spiritually refining, and, at times, challenging.

We started by learning about **worship in suffering**—how praise isn't just for the easy days. Then, we wrestled with **faith in the fire**, realizing that God is present even in our darkest moments. And now, we arrive here: the courage to share our stories.

Session 1: The Cost of Worship – Hard-Fought Praise

Think back to our first session. We talked about **what it means to worship when life is falling apart.**

We often associate worship with joy—singing, celebration, lifting our hands in gratitude. But what happens when worship feels like the last thing we want to do? When life feels broken, and praise feels more like a sacrifice than a song?

That's where **hard-fought praise** comes in. True worship isn't about how we feel—it's about **who God is.**

📖 **James 1:2-4** tells us that trials produce perseverance and deepen our faith.

📖 **Isaiah 43:2** reminds us that when we walk through fire, God doesn't leave us—He walks through it with us.

Many of us know what it's like to worship **through pain**—to stand before God with trembling hands and a weary heart, whispering, "You are still good."

And if you've ever done that, you know this truth: **God meets us in those moments in a way that no mountain-top experience ever could.**

Session 2: Wrestling with Darkness – Faith in the Fire

Then we moved into **faith in the fire**—the reality that faith is not the absence of struggle. In fact, **struggle refines us**.

We talked about how trials shape us, how suffering is not meaningless, and how even in the darkest moments, God is still present.

📖 **James 1:2-4** told us again: faith matures in the fire.

📖 **Revelation 12:11** reminded us that victory comes through the **blood of the Lamb** and the **power of our testimony**.

But this session wasn't just about abstract concepts—it was personal.

I shared some of my own journey...

- **Walking through deep physical, emotional, and spiritual battles.**

There were seasons where my own body felt like the enemy—doctors searching for answers, symptoms that no one could explain, nights filled with exhaustion and fear. I would cry out, “God, where are You in this?” And yet, through every unanswered question, **He reminded me that my strength was never in my body—it was in His grace.**

- **Losing my son, Elijah.**

There is no grief like the loss of a child. No words can capture the depth of that pain. I wrestled with God in ways I never thought I would—*Why, Lord? How do I go on?* The grief was overwhelming, but in my **darkest days, God showed me that He wasn't distant.** He was there, grieving with me, holding me when I couldn't stand.

These moments shaped me, and maybe you have your own battles—your own **wrestling with God** in the fire.

That's why this truth matters: **Faith doesn't mean having all the answers. Faith means holding on even when we don't understand.**

Session 3: The Courage to Share Our Stories

So, here we are now. We've talked about **worship in suffering** and **faith in the fire**. Now, we step into **telling our story**.

Because **your testimony—your real, raw, unfinished testimony—has power.**

Some of us are still in the fire.

Some of us are still healing.

Some of us are still waiting for answers.

But **every story, no matter how broken, is a testimony of God's grace.**

So as we enter this next session, let's be bold.

Let's bring our **storm-tossed, torn-sail, story-to-tell hallelujahs** before the Lord. Because when we share our stories, **we declare victory—over fear, over doubt, and over silence.**

THIS IS

MY STORY TO TELL

Tonight, I will be speaking on two deeply personal topics that have shaped my journey of faith.

First, I will share a brief glimpse into my life—some of the experiences, challenges, and moments that have shaped who I am today. It's not the whole story, but a window into how God has been present through every season.

Second, I will share the eulogy of my grandfather—my hard-fought hallelujah. His passing was a moment of deep grief, yet through that loss, I discovered a worship that isn't based on circumstances but on trust. This eulogy is more than just a farewell; it is a testimony of God's presence in sorrow and a declaration that even in loss, He is still good. Through these two stories, I pray you'll see that even in brokenness, our testimonies can shine with the hope and power of God's grace.

- A photo that says a million words
- Eulogy

WRAPPING IT UP

Closing Session 3: "It Is Well" Hallelujah

We've walked through Bob's story tonight—a life once marked by quiet faithfulness, later redeemed by God's undeniable grace. His journey, even in his final moments, reminds us that no story is too far gone, no heart too hard, and no time too late for God to step in.

But now, we take the next step in *our* journey.

- We have learned to worship in the storm.
- We have faced the refining fire of trials.
- Now, we step into the courage to share our story—not just for our healing, but to bring hope to others.

The Power of Your Testimony

📖 *Revelation 12:11* – "They triumphed over him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony."

📖 *2 Corinthians 12:9-10* – "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness."

Your testimony is not just your own—it is a **bridge** between pain and healing, not only for you but for others who need to hear it.

A Story Still Being Written

Some of us are still wrestling with unanswered prayers.

Some are still carrying grief and loss.

Some are still walking through fire.

Yet, in telling our stories, we declare **victory**—over fear, over doubt, and over silence.

OPEN FLOOR

But before we close, let's take a moment to hear *your* stories.

Does anyone have a testimony or a praise they would like to share?

I want to take a moment to open the floor for anyone who feels led to share their testimony or a word of praise. Whether it's a small blessing or a life-changing moment, your story could be exactly what someone else needs to hear today.

Don't worry about it being perfect or profound—every testimony is a testament to God's goodness, no matter how simple it may seem. Let's celebrate what He's doing in our lives and encourage one another in faith.

BECAUSE "IT IS WELL"

Even when the suffering stretched on for years, I didn't bury my hallelujah. Even when the doctors had no answers, I clung to the only One who did. Even when I was too weak to stand, too broken to fight, I lifted my hallelujah with trembling hands.

I know what it feels like to compartmentalize—to lock pain away just to make it through another day. I know the exhaustion of carrying burdens too heavy to share, of hiding behind busyness and strength, hoping it will be enough to outrun the hurt.

But here's what I've learned: Even when hope seemed lost, even when I fought just to believe, I was never alone. God was in the locked places. He was in the broken places. He was in the moments when I thought my silence was safer than my surrender.

And that's why I can say with confidence: *My hallelujah still stands.* Not because the pain disappeared, not because the battle suddenly ended, but because I found a truth unshaken by storms—**God is still good.**

So no matter what comes next, no matter what I face, my hallelujah remains—scarred, battered, but victorious. Because healing didn't come from pretending I was okay. It came when I let God into the whole story—not just the polished parts.

Because it was fought for. Because it was worth it. Because every hallelujah—especially the hard-fought ones—testifies to His faithfulness.

SMBS CLOSING PRAYER

I need God.

I'm stand on His faithfulness.

He has given me a sound mind
for the spirit of fear

And A sound mind so that I can see clearly

I will listen,

I will feast on every word

the Lord speaks to me,

He is my fortress and my God,

I will stand in authority

When I speak the name of Jesus

all this darkness will flee

He saved, healed, delivered me,

Jesus' blood washes over me

He commands my soul to awake, arise

I've asked the Holy Spirit

to fall on me and to burn like a fire

I've asked God's will be done for His kingdom

I prayed that the spirit lead me now as one,

set me free

He is the anchor of my soul

that keep me from drifting on my own

He is the light inside my storms

that keeps pointing me home

The Lord is my hands, my feet, my tears

I give up all control to Him.

Control over my body, my mind and my soul.

God knows what I've been through

I've asked the Lord to help me to never

let my enemies ever get the best of me

And to never let fear hold me down

He is my armor and my shelter

I seek His will, Not my own

I surrender all my wants to the Lord

I want to walk His ways

His kingdom is all I want to seek

He gives me freedom from my chains

and healing from my pain

Everything's been changed,

Because He calls my name

I am always praying that God

will continue to help me,

step into a new day,

so I can rise up

from the dust and walk away

AGAIN...

He has given me a sound mind

for discernment

and for the spirit of fear

He has given me a sound mind

so that I can see clearly

When I am asked, how I did it, I will say, "God taught me"

When I am asked, how I'm winning', I will say, "God taught me"

When I am asked, why I'm different, I'll say, "God taught me"

I am a bold lion and my lungs will always sing
His praises with gratitude.

Amen

SPECIAL PRAYER REQUEST