

Praise, Prayer, and Prophecy

Lessons from the Psalms *Book One (Psalms 1-41)*

Student Workbook

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Lessons from The Psalms

Book One (Psalms 1-41)

Table of Contents

Lesson 1: Introduction, Outline, Authors, and Characteristics of Psalms

Lesson 2: Psalms 1, 2 & 3

Lesson 3: Psalms 4, 5, 6 & 7

Lesson 4: Psalms 8, 9, & 10

Lesson 5: Psalms 11, 12, 13, & 14

Lesson 6: Psalms 15, 16, 17, & 18

Lesson 7: Psalms 19, 20, & 21

Lesson 8: Psalms 22, 23, & 24

Lesson 9: Psalms 25, 26, & 27

Lesson 10: Psalms 28, 29, & 30

Lesson 11: Psalms 31, 32, & 33

Lesson 12: Psalms 34, 35, 36, & 37

Lesson 13: Psalms 38, 39, 40, & 41

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*Orville Vaughn
December, 2017*

Psalms

Lesson 1

Introduction

“Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.”

Psalm 119:105

Lesson Goal:

To understand the nature of the Psalms, the authors, the arrangement, and characteristics of Hebrew poetry

Text:

Psalms

Commentary:

The book of Psalms is the longest book in the Bible and the most read. It is one of five books of wisdom (or poetry) which are found in the middle of the Holy Scriptures. These are timeless books (Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon) that are not speaking to one specific covenant or period of time but contain truths that are applicable to all times and ages (from Genesis through Revelation). They pertain to life *“under the sun”* (Ecclesiastes 1:9).

Job: Handling Suffering and Injustice

Psalms: Praising and Trusting God

Proverbs: Truths for living everyday

Ecclesiastes: Finding Meaning and Purpose in Your Life

Song of Solomon: The Love Between a Man and a Woman

The book of Psalms is composed of 150 individual Psalms and is divided into 5 books or sections:

Book 1: Psalms 1-41

Book 2: Psalms 42-72

Book 3: Psalms 73-89

Book 4: Psalms 90-106

Book 5: Psalms 107-150

“It is uncertain why Psalms is divided into five books. Some sources, including Jewish Midrash traditions, suggest the five-fold division is based on the five books of the Torah (Genesis to Deuteronomy). The division of the Psalms is not based on authorship or chronology, as several authors composed Psalms, and their individual songs are mixed throughout the various collections.

David is listed as the author of 73 psalms, Asaph of 12, and the sons of Korah of 11. Other psalms were written by Solomon, Heman the Ezrahite, Ethan the Ezrahite, and Moses (Psalm 90). The earliest extant copy of Psalms is from the Dead Sea Scrolls from about the first century AD. That

copy shows that the division into five books extends to at least that time and certainly earlier.

It is most likely that Ezra and/or other Jewish religious leaders compiled the Psalms into their existing order during Ezra's lifetime in the fourth century BC. Interestingly, the Psalms was one of the most popular writings among the Dead Sea Scrolls, with thirty scrolls of all or parts of the book included. Overall, Psalms is the book of the Old Testament with the most Hebrew manuscripts available for research, indicating its enduring popularity among both Jews and Christians.

Each of these five books or sections of Psalms ends with a doxology or a song of praise. The final verse of each concluding psalm includes either "Praise the Lord!" or "Amen." For example, the final verse of Psalm 41 ends this way: "*Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, / from everlasting to everlasting. / Amen and Amen.*" Psalm 150, the final Psalm, serves as the fitting final doxology, concluding with the words, "*Let everything that has breath praise the Lord. / Praise the Lord.*"¹

THE WORD "PSALM"

- From the Greek word "Psalmos" and the Hebrew word "Mizmor" which means to "pluck" such as plucking the strings of a musical instrument. "Psalms are songs for the lyre, and therefore lyric poems in the strictest sense... The lyric is the earliest kind of poetry in general, and the Hebrew poetry, the oldest example of antiquity that has come down to us, is therefore lyric."²
- The titles "Psalmos" and "Mizmor" are applied to most of the Psalms but not to all of them since not all of the Psalms were meant to be sung.

THE AUTHORS OF THE PSALMS

- The oldest Psalm in the book of Psalms is Psalm 90
 - Written by Moses and dated between 1450-1400 BC
- David was the author of 73 Psalms. This represents almost half of the 150 Psalms.
- Asaph either wrote or performed 12 of the Psalms
- The sons of Korah either wrote or performed 11 of the Psalms
- Solomon wrote 2 of the Psalms (72 & 127)
- Hemen wrote Psalm 88
- Ethan wrote Psalm 89
- The writers of 49 of the Psalms are not known. They remain anonymous

TYPES OF PSALMS

- Didactic – Psalms of teaching or instruction.
- Liturgical – Responsive readings, and for use in special services
- Meditation and Reflection – The ancient Hebrews were given to meditation. This spirit of meditation finds expression in many of the psalms
- Praise and Devotion
- Prayer and Petition

- **Additional Groupings**

- Acrostic – “A verse or arrangement of words in which certain letters in each line, such as the first or last, when taken in order spell out a word, motto, etc.”³
- Ethical – “Psalms teaching moral and ethical principles
- Hallelujah – A group of psalms beginning or ending with “praise Jehovah or “hallelujah.
- Historical – Psalms that review the history of the people or some period e.g. Psalm 105 and Psalm 106.
- Imprecatory – To invoke evil upon enemies; hence, to curse e.g. Psalm 69.
- Messianic – Those psalms pertaining especially to the coming Messiah. For example: Psalms 2, 22, 45, 69.
- Penitential – “Sorry or ashamed for having done wrong and willing to atone; repentant.”³ For example: Psalm 51
- Songs of Ascents – “The most probable explanation of the meaning of the expression is that these 15 psalms were sung by bands of pilgrims on their way to the yearly feasts in Jerusalem.”⁴ Psalms 120-134
- Suffering – Many of the psalms are psalms of suffering.
- Thanksgiving – Expressions of grateful praise to Jehovah, and thanksgiving to Him for deliverance, greatness, etc.

Questions for Discussion:

1. What is your favorite Psalm?
2. Did Christ ever mention the Psalms?
3. Do you see any application today for Christians from the book of Psalms?
4. How many of the Psalms were written by David?
 - a. 0
 - b. 11
 - c. 73
 - d. 100
5. The Psalms are one of five books in the Bible often described as the books of wisdom or poetry. What are the other four books?

6. Are there any Messianic psalms (psalms that pertaining to the coming of the savior)? If so, name some of them.
7. Which psalm did Moses write?
8. What does the Greek word “Psalmos” mean?
9. David wrote many thoughtful and very emotionally moving psalms. He was also a mighty warrior who killed thousands in battle. Compare and contrast these two sides of David. Are they compatible? Are they in conflict?
10. What would you like to learn from a study of the Psalms?

Making Application

This week choose one of the psalms of praise and spend time meditating on its words (for example: Psalm 134 or Psalms 145, 146, 147, 148, 149,150). Read it every day and offer a prayer to God every day composed only of praise. Draw closer to God and He will draw closer to you (James 4:8).

Psalms

Lesson 2

Psalms 1, 2 & 3

*“For the Lord knows the way of the righteous,
but the way of the ungodly shall perish.”*

Psalm 1:6

Lesson Goal:

To better understand these psalms: the author (if known), the type of psalm, the meaning and message.

Text:

Psalms 1, 2, & 3

Psalm 1

- Author: Unknown
- Date: Unknown
- Type: Didactic
 - A psalm of instruction, teaching
- Message: The happy man. The righteous and the wicked contrasted. Conflict within the individual

Commentary:

Notice the progression of evil: walks, stands, sits. It is easy to get caught up in the things of the world and unrighteousness but be careful when you find yourself lingering at its door. Before you know it, you will find yourself sitting and partaking of its evil fruit. In contrast, the righteous man finds great delight in God’s word and Godly things. He lingers (or meditates) over the scriptures. And what is the result? He gains strength! In fact, he gains so much strength, the psalmist says it’s like a tree planted by waters. His source of strength and nourishment is never far away; it is close by. And, in the end, he prospers and grows even stronger.

STOP AND THINK: Where am I planted? By the waters of life or by the door of evil?

Questions for Discussion:

1. What is the primary message of this psalm?
2. Explain the analogy of a tree planted by rivers of water.
3. Where in the New Testament are the ungodly described as chaff?

Psalm 2

- Author: Unnamed in the psalm; ascribed to David in Acts 4:25
- Date: Unknown
- Type: Messianic
 - The reign of Jehovah's anointed.
- Message: God will establish a kingdom that will be ruled by His Son (the Messiah) and this kingdom will be greater than all the kingdoms of men. God rules over the kingdoms of men (see Daniel 2:44-45; 4:17, 25, 32; 5:21).

Commentary:

When left to himself, without God's direction, man's thoughts are evil. In fact, he starts thinking so highly of himself that he thinks he can break God's bonds and be mightier than God his creator. Many kings or leaders of great nations have thought themselves mightier than God. Power has a way of corrupting and even those who start humble may become arrogant (remember King Saul, 1 Samuel 15:17-23). This psalm reminds us that God rules in the kingdom of men, He is mightier than men, and ultimately His kingdom will destroy all the kingdoms of men. See Daniel 2:44; 4:17, 25, 32; 5:21

Questions for Discussion:

1. What is the primary message of this psalm?
2. Where in the New Testament is a portion of psalm 2:7 quoted? "*...You are My Son, today I have begotten You?*"
3. What is happening in Acts 4:23-31 and why would the apostles quote from Psalm 2 at this time?
4. In whom should we trust? (hint: look at the inscription on any U.S. coin)
 - a. Kings or rulers of nations?
 - b. God
 - c. Our own wisdom and understanding (Proverbs 3:5)
 - d. Our best friend

Psalm 3

- Author: David
- Date: Thought to have been written just before the battle with Absalom (2 Samuel 18).
- Type: Trust
 - A morning prayer of trust in God
- Message: Total trust in God even in the darkest times.

Commentary:

David laments his present distress but takes comfort in knowing that God is “*a shield for me, my glory and the One who lifts up my head.*” No matter our situation, God is never far from us if we lift up our head and look to Him. This psalm is a good reminder every morning before we begin our hectic day that “*I lay down and slept; I awoke, for the Lord sustained me.*” Whatever lies before us today our strength, our confidence, our trust is in our God. Just as He has kept us safe through the night He will be by our side today regardless of the enemies we may face.

Questions for Discussion:

1. Who wrote this psalm?
2. What is setting (context) for the psalm when the psalm was written i.e. what was going on in the writer’s life?
3. What did you learn from this psalm?

Making Application

Consider creating your own notebook that will accompany this study of the psalms. Your notebook may contain:

- Your own brief outline of the psalm
- Key points that caught your attention
- A note to commit this psalm to memory
- Etc.

Psalms

Lesson 3

Psalms 4, 5, 6 & 7

“Give ear to my words, O Lord, consider my meditation.”

Psalm 5:1

Lesson Goal:

To better understand these psalms: the author (if known), the type of psalm, the meaning and message.

Text:

Psalms 4, 5, 6 & 7

Psalm 4

- Author: David
- Date: During David’s lifetime (ca. 1040-970 BC)
- Type: Trust
 - An evening prayer of trust in God. This psalm (an evening prayer) is a companion to psalm 3 (a morning prayer)
- Message: Safety in God.

Commentary:

In his distress, David first of all calls on God to deliver him and be merciful. Then David addresses those who are troubling him. This is the sequence we all should follow when we are facing difficulties: first of all talk to God; then take action. Too often we jump into action without first consulting God. I am reminded of Nehemiah when he approached the Persian king to ask permission and the king’s blessing to return to Jerusalem to rebuild the walls of the city (Nehemiah 2:4). When the king asked Nehemiah his request, before he responded, it says *“So I prayed to the God of heaven.”* This may have been the world’s shortest prayer. The king was waiting for an answer but Nehemiah wanted God to help him with the answer. It is wise to always talk to God first. After addressing the issue, David is at peace. He says *“You have put gladness in my heart...I will both lie down in peace, and sleep; for you alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety.”* There is no peace and no security outside of God. David knew this well.

Psalms 3 and 4 are considered to be companion psalms. One was a morning prayer and one was an evening prayer. Both were penned by David. Note the similarity of phrases found in both psalms: *“Many are they who say of me...”* (3:1-2). *“There are many who say...”* (4:6).

Questions for Discussion:

1. What are some things you have learned from this psalm?

2. Verse 4 of this psalm is quoted by Paul in Ephesians 4:26. Compare the two passages.
3. Compare Ecclesiastes 5:12 and Psalm 127:1-2 with Psalm 4:8

Psalm 5

- Author: David
- Date: Unknown
- Type: Prayer
 - Prayer for protection from the wicked.
- Message: God is my refuge, and my King.

Commentary:

David comes to God with his concerns. He bares his heart knowing that God hears him. *“Give heed to my words... consider my meditation... give heed to my voice... my voice You shall hear.”* Beginning in verse 8 he lays his request or petition before God: *“...because of my enemies... there is no faithfulness in their mouth.”* Notice the brutally descriptive words David uses: *“Their inward part is destruction; their throat is an open tomb.”* David also recognizes that, no matter how much they have hurt him, his enemies’ greatest sin is against God. *“They have rebelled against You.”* He ends this psalm by expressing total confidence in God. *“For You O Lord, will bless the righteous; with favor You will surround him as with a shield.”*

Questions for Discussion:

1. What are some things you have learned from this psalm?
2. Compare the end of verse 10 *“For they have rebelled against You”* with Genesis 39:9 and Psalm 51:4
3. What do you think was the sin of David’s enemies in this psalm?

Psalm 6

- Author: David
- Date: The date is not known but it is possible that Psalms 6, 38, & 51 (psalms of repentance) form a sequence followed by Psalm 32 (forgiveness). These psalms then would follow David’s sin with Bathsheba, his repentance, and God’s forgiveness.

- Type: Penitential
 - A psalm or cry of grief asking for mercy
- Message: Mercy under judgment

Commentary:

David knows he has sinned and is worthy of severe punishment. He pleads for mercy and asks God to delay His judgment “*O Lord, do not rebuke me in Your anger, nor chasten me in Your wrath.*” As parents, we know it is best if we calm down a bit before we punish our children. Punishment and consequences must come but not while we are angry. Of course, God’s judgment is always righteous but David, being a father himself, asks for this one concession from God. Notice that David’s appeal is strictly based upon God’s mercy and longsuffering (“*Be gracious to me... Save me because of Your lovingkindness*”) and is not based upon David’s worthiness. He does not try to justify his actions in any way. He acknowledges his sin and asks for God’s mercy. No one can doubt the sincerity of David’s repentance when we read verse 6 “*I am weary with my groaning; every night I make my bed swim with my tears.*” Notice also the tremendous relief that comes when David knows that God hears him (verses 8 – 10). We need not groan all night lamenting our sins. If we confess our sins, God is faithful to forgive our sins (1 John 1:9).

Questions for Discussion:

1. What are some things you have learned from this psalm?
2. David, in this psalm, describes the deep grief that comes with sin and nowhere does he claim that he is worthy or deserving to be forgiven. Talk about this.
3. Compare verses 8-9 with 1 John 1:9.

Psalm 7

- Author: David
- Date: Unknown but the superscription “A Meditation of David, which he sang to the Lord concerning the words of Cush, a Benjamite” seems to indicate that this psalm concerns one of the servants (and kinsman) of King Saul who was a talebearer and trouble maker (see 1 Samuel 26:18-19).
- Type: Prayer
 - A prayer for protection
- Message: The cry of the righteous (while Psalm 6 is the cry of a sinner; Psalm 7 is the cry of the righteous).

Commentary:

David pleads his case before God in verses 1-8. He is being unjustly accused of some great wrong and he asks God to “*Judge me, O Lord, according to my righteousness, and according to my integrity within me.*” David knows that he is innocent and his confidence is in God’s

righteousness. *“For the righteous God tests the hearts and minds. My defense is of God, who saves the upright in heart. God is a just judge.”* David also knows that, in the end, he will be vindicated. The wicked will fall into his own trap and *“His trouble shall return upon his own head.”* God’s justice will prevail in God’s time.

Questions for Discussion:

1. Have you ever been unjustly accused? What is the best way to handle that?
2. Why does the evil that wicked people plan for others often come back on their own heads (verses 14-16)?
3. Where does David put his trust (verse 17)? Why?

Making Application

In these psalms, David was facing various trials and issues. Some of them were his fault (Psalm 6) and some of them were not his fault. Regardless of the situation, David went to God with his problems. Where do you go? Do you simply keep it all inside and hope to somehow conquer your problems on your own? That rarely works and almost always leads to more problems. Learn from the great and humble King David. Humble yourself and go to God. Just as He did with King David, God will help you too. There is no problem too great for Him. Find peace. Find purpose. Find hope. Talk to God.

Psalms
Lesson 4
Psalms 8, 9, & 10

*“Why do the wicked renounce God?
He has said in his heart, You will not require an account”*

Psalm 10:13

Lesson Goal:

To better understand these psalms: the author (if known), the type of psalm, the meaning and message.

Text:

Psalms 8, 9, & 10

Psalm 8

- Author: David
- Date: During David’s lifetime (ca. 1040-970 BC)
- Type: Praise
- Message: This psalm shows man’s littleness and God’s greatness

Commentary:

This is such a majestic and beautiful psalm. David says when he goes out at night and looks at the heavens that God has created, he cannot help but consider the smallness of man *“what is man that You are mindful of him?”* Who are we that God would crown us (make us royalty) with glory and honor? What have we done or could we ever do to deserve such blessings? David gives all of the credit to God. Man has done none of this on his own.

- “You are mindful of him (man).”
- “You visit him (man).”
- “You have made him (man) a little lower than the angels.”
- “You have crowned him (man) with glory and honor.”
- “You have made him (man) to have dominion over he works of Your hands.”
- “You have put all things under his (man) feet.”

“O Jehovah, our Lord, How excellent is thy name in all the earth!”

Questions for Discussion:

1. Have you ever been able to view the heavens on a dark night? How would you describe your feelings at that moment?

2. How would you describe mankind in relation to God?

3. In Matthew 21: 14-16 Jesus quotes part of Psalm 8:2. What prompted Him to quote this psalm (what was happening)?

Psalm 9

- Author: David
- Date: During David's lifetime (ca. 1040-970 BC)
- Type: Thanksgiving and Praise
- Message: Judgment against the nations

Commentary:

In verses 1 & 2, David describes what he will do:

- give thanks
- tell of all Your wonders
- be glad and exult in You
- sing praise to Your name

In verses 4 & 5 he describes what God has done:

- You have maintained my just cause
- You have sat on the throne judging righteously
- You have rebuked the nations
- You have destroyed the wicked
- You have blotted out their name forever.

We have our work and God has His work. Sometimes we confuse the two. David never had this problem. His job was to praise, exult, be glad and thankful. The power to overcome his enemies resided with God and David trusted God to deliver him. David also had confidence in God to destroy the wicked (vs. 6-8) and be a refuge for the weary and oppressed (vs. 9-12). After praising God and extoling His righteousness, David makes his request in verses 13. He asks God to deliver him from his enemies. *"Consider my trouble from those who hate me."* When we are in need of God's help, it is good to follow David's example and first of all praise God and thank God before we petition His help. David concludes this psalm lamenting the wickedness of the nations and, even though they (the wicked) seem to be winning, in the end God will be victorious. *"The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God."*

Questions for Discussion:

1. What is the message in verses 15 & 16? Have you ever seen this happen?
2. Verse 12 says that God avenges blood (the shedding of innocent blood) and He does not forget the cry of the afflicted. Compare this passage in Psalms with Revelation 6:9-11.
3. Compare verse 8 with Acts 17:31

Psalm 10

- Author: Anonymous
- Date: Unknown
- Type: Prayer
- Message: A prayer for the overthrow of the wicked (judgment against Israel). In Romans 3:14, Paul quotes verse 7 of this psalm when referring to the wickedness of Israel.

Commentary:

The psalmist implores God to intervene and stop the corrupt acts going on in Israel. He begins the psalm by wondering out loud why God allows such wickedness to go unpunished. Has God removed Himself from the land so that He no longer sees or is concerned? We know this is not the case. *“Behold, the Lord’s hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; nor His ear heavy that it cannot hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you... (Isaiah 59:1-2).* The plea of the psalmist is for justice and justice will prevail but it will prevail in God’s good time.

The psalmist could have been writing about the wickedness in the world today (in the 21st century). Things have not changed.

- “The wicked boasts of his heart’s desire...”
- The wicked, in his pride does not seek God.
- “All his thoughts are, ‘There is no God.’”
- “His mouth is full of cursing and deceit and oppression.”
- “His eyes are secretly fixed on the helpless.”

When we see all of the evil and injustice in the world, we can become very depressed but we must remember that God is still in control. The psalmist concludes his prayer on a positive note.

- “But You have seen...”
- “You are the helper of the fatherless.”
- “The Lord is King forever and ever...”
- “You have heard the desire of the humble.”

Justice and righteousness will prevail but we must wait and put our trust in God.

“But those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint” (Isaiah 40:31).

Questions for Discussion:

1. Why does God allow wicked men to prosper?

2. Why do the wicked renounce (or turn their backs on) God? See verse 13. Will God require an account?

3. Compare James 1:27 with Psalm 10:8,14,17, & 18. What is pure and undefiled religion before God?

4. Do false teachers (often in the form of popular religious leaders) today “murder the innocent” (vs. 8) spiritually?

Making Application

Each of these three psalms has a different nature: one is a psalm of praise, one is a psalm of thanksgiving, and one is a psalm of prayer. During the coming week, write a short psalm of either praise, thanksgiving, or prayer. The length and words are not so important. The expressions of your heart are most important. It is important that we express our thoughts to God. The more we do it, the more comfortable we will be doing it. Write a psalm this week.

Psalms
Lesson 5
Psalms 11, 12, 13, & 14

“The fool has said in his heart, ‘There is no God.’”

Psalm 14:1

Lesson Goal:

To better understand these psalms: the author (if known), the type of psalm, the meaning and message.

Text:

Psalms 11,12,13, & 14

Psalm 11

- Author: David
- Date: Unknown but thought to be as David is pursued by either Saul or Absalom.
- Type: Trust
- Message: Jehovah is man’s refuge and defense

Commentary:

David is urged by his friends to flee from his adversary but David is not one to quit. He questions their advice *“How can you say to my soul, ‘Flee as a bird to your mountain?’”* David’s answer is that he will put his trust in the Lord. Yes, the wicked are ready to attack and they will attack the heart of the righteous to try to destroy their foundation of faith in God. But, they will not be successful because *“Jehovah is in His holy temple.”* He sits upon His throne and rules over the kingdoms of men. Trust in Him. His eyes behold all that happens and He allows his righteous to be tested so that they might become stronger but He will not leave them nor forsake them. *“For the Lord is righteous, He loves righteousness; His countenance beholds the upright.”* As for the wicked... *“Fire and brimstone and a burning wind will be the portion of their cup.”*

Questions for Discussion:

1. In his darkest hour, where did David put his trust?

2. Compare the end of verse 5 and the beginning of verse 6 (*“His eyelids test the sons of men. The Lord tests the righteous”*) with James 1:2-3 and James 1:12. What are the similarities?

3. Why does the Lord test the righteous but not the wicked (see Hebrews 12:5-11)?

Psalm 12

- Author: David
- Date: During David's lifetime (ca. 1040-970 BC)
- Type: Lament and Supplication
- Message: Contrast between the words of man and the word of God.

Commentary:

David begins this psalm with a desperate cry for help. He laments that righteous and godly men are becoming very rare. "...*the faithful disappear from the sons of men.*" He sees this in their speech. They lie to each other. They speak flattering words to one person and then turn around (with a wicked heart) and speak something else behind their back. We would call them two-faced. There is no truth or kindness or love in their speech. It is hateful, shameful, boastful, and self-centered. Does this sound familiar? How often do we witness similar behavior today? Where is the humble and kind man or woman? We too can lament that we live in a time when lies are too common and honesty is too rare.

Beginning in verse 6, David reminds us that God's words are not like man's words. They are pure, tested over time and proven to be steadfast. There is nothing corrupt or impure in God's words (like silver purified seven times). Furthermore, in contrast to man's empty boasting, God always keeps His word. "*You shall keep them, O Lord. You shall preserve them from this generation forever.*" Who will you trust with your life and your soul: the lies of men or the faithful words of God? The choice should be obvious.

Questions for Discussion:

1. Lying has become common in our society. What is God's view about lying? Find some verses that show what God thinks about lying. You might want to start with Revelation 21:8 and Proverbs 6:16-19.

2. Compare Psalm 12:3-4 with James 3:3-12.

3. Does God want flattering words or an obedient heart?

Psalm 13

- Author: David
- Date: Most likely when David was being pursued by Saul.
- Type: Prayer
- Message: Prayer for help in desperate times.

Commentary:

As in Psalm 12, David begins this psalm with a desperate cry for help. The difference between the two psalms is that this psalm is much more personal. He is no longer wondering why God allows the wicked to go unpunished or why men are becoming worse and worse. He now fears for his own life and pleads with God to intervene and deliver him from his enemies “*How long will You hide Your face from me.*” “*How long will my enemy be exalted over me?*” While his cry is desperate, he ends the psalm with confidence that God will provide. “*But I have trusted in Your mercy; My heart shall rejoice in Your salvation.*” David’s faith in God, even in the bleakest times, is a towering example for all of us. Oh to have even a tenth of the faith of David!

Questions for Discussion:

1. What are some things you have learned from this psalm?

2. The hard times you face may not be an enemy in battle (such as David faced) but it might be: health related, job related, or? List some of the enemies that have been at your door (and maybe still are). Can God deliver you from these enemies? Can you say with David “*I will sing to the Lord, because he has dealt bountifully with me?*”

Psalm 14

- Author: David
- Date: During David’s lifetime (ca. 1040-970 BC)
- Type: Didactic (folly and wickedness)
- Message: Folly of the godless, and God’s final triumph

Commentary:

The first sentence of this psalm is often quoted. Note that the fool may not say with his lips “there is no God.” In fact, the fool may openly confess God with his mouth but, in his heart he denies the existence of God. And, it is the heart that contains our true beliefs and values. “*Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life*” (Proverbs 4:23). In this psalm, David laments the sorry state of mankind. “*There is none who does good.*” David also cannot help but wonder just what are the wicked thinking when they oppress the poor (vs.4). Don’t they realize that God is the refuge of the poor? If they (the wicked) had any understanding they would call upon the Lord and not oppress the poor and afflicted. Salvation will come out of God’s holy temple and those who are downtrodden (captive) will triumph and be glad.

Questions for Discussion:

1. Compare verses 2 & 3 with Romans 3:10-12.

2. Why do you think people say “there is no God.” Why is this a foolish thought?

Making Application

In Psalms 11, 12, & 13 David laments the prevalence of wickedness. In Psalm 14 he determines that sin is universal and concludes that “*There is none who does good...*” This is exactly the point the Apostle Paul makes in Romans 3:23 when he says that “*all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.*” We live in a very sinful and wicked time but so did David. Our attitude needs to be the same as his in all of these psalms. When all around us is falling apart, when even our friends betray us, we must trust in God. Determine this week and going forward to find peace in God and His word. The storm is raging but the shelter He provides is steadfast and sure.

Psalms
Lesson 6
Psalms 15, 16, 17, & 18

*“I have set the Lord always before me;
because He is at my right hand I shall not be moved”*

Psalm 16:8

Lesson Goal:

To better understand these psalms: the author (if known), the type of psalm, the meaning and message.

Text:

Psalms 15, 16, 17, & 18

Psalm 15

- Author: David
- Date: During David’s lifetime (ca. 1040-970 BC)
- Type: Zion
- Message: The description of a righteous man (a Zion dweller)

Commentary:

In verse 1, David asks two rhetorical questions: “*who may abide in your tent?*” “*who may dwell on Your holy hill?*” He knows the answers to these questions and proceeds to answer them in verses 2 through 5. The questions are important questions. What kind of person does God expect me to be? What traits or characteristics should I have if I want to be with God? David lists 5 positive characteristics one must have and 5 things one must not do.

Things one must do:

- Walk with integrity
- Work righteousness
- Speak the truth in your heart
- Despise vile persons and honor those who fear the Lord
- Swear to your own hurt and do not change

Things one must not do:

- Do not slander with your tongue
- Do no evil to your neighbor
- Do not receive a reproach against your friend
- Do not put out your money at interest
- Do not take a bribe against the innocent

Another way to look at this psalm is as host and guest. God is the host and we are His guests. What must we do to qualify to be welcomed into His residence?

Questions for Discussion:

1. What does it mean “*he swears to his own hurt and does not change*” (verse 4)?
2. Christ taught that the greatest commandment was to “*love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind*” and the second commandment was to “*love your neighbor as yourself.*” (Matthew 22:37-39). Do you see these two commandments in this psalm? If so, in what way?
3. What are some things you have learned from this psalm?

Psalm 16

- Author: David
- Date: During David’s lifetime (ca. 1040-970 BC)
- Type: Messianic
 - Michtam means “a golden poem”
- Message: Refuge in Jehovah

Commentary:

Both Peter and Paul quote from this psalm to prove to the Jews that what David foretold about the Messiah had been fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth. As part of his sermon on the day of Pentecost, Peter reminds those present “*Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know – Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death; whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be held by it. For David says concerning Him...*” then Peter quotes Psalm 16:8-11.

Paul, in his powerful sermon to the Jews at Antioch in Pisidia (Acts 13:35-39) quotes Psalm 16:10 to convince them that Jesus, who was crucified, was the Messiah of which David spoke. “*Therefore, He also says in another Psalm ‘you will not allow your holy one to undergo decay.’ For David, after he had served the purpose of God in his own generation, fell asleep, and was laid among his fathers and underwent decay; but He whom God raised did not undergo decay. Therefore, let it be known to you, brethren, that through Him forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, and through Him everyone who believes is freed from all things, from which you could not be freed through the Law of Moses.*”

David, in this psalm, foretold the resurrection of Christ roughly 1000 years before Christ was even born. The psalms are more than poetry, praise and prayer. Many of them (such as Psalm 16) are psalms of prophecy. God inspired and directed the words that David wrote in this psalm.

Questions for Discussion:

1. Psalm 16 is a Messianic Psalm which means it contains prophecy about the coming Messiah (savior of the world). Why were Messianic Psalms important to the Jews? Why are they important to us today?
2. Read verses 7 & 8 again and express your thoughts on the message(s) in these beautiful verses.
3. Verse 11 is also a very beautiful verse (beautiful poetry). What is a key message of this verse?
4. What was the setting for Peter's sermon in Acts 2? To whom was he speaking?
5. What was the setting for Paul's sermon in Acts 13? To whom was he speaking?

Psalm 17

- Author: David
- Date: During David's lifetime (ca. 1040-970 BC)
- Type: Prayer
- Message: Prayer for protection from the wicked

Commentary:

David always found time for prayer. Whether the setting for this psalm was when David was being hunted by Saul or some other occasion when he was being unjustly accused by his enemies, the Lord was never far from his mind or lips. "...give heed to my cry; give ear to my prayer..." "I have called upon You, for You will answer me, O God..." Too often we fail to find the peace that God freely offers. We flee from our enemies; we stumble; we find no rest and we wonder why. David certainly had enemies and much persecution but he did not bear these burdens alone. "...show Your marvelous lovingkindness by Your right hand, O You who save those who trust in You... hide me under the shadow of Your wings from the wicked who oppress me."

David also correctly placed evil with the pursuit of worldly things. "Deliver my life from the wicked... from men of the world who have their portion in this life." When one pursues worldly things, one is easily satisfied: "They are satisfied with children, and leave their abundance to their

babes.” David had much greater aspirations. He pursued heavenly, eternal things and he would not be satisfied until he saw God’s face in righteousness and “*I awake in Your likeness.*” What a lofty and perfect goal.

Questions for Discussion:

1. What specifically does David ask of God in this psalm?
2. What are some things you have learned from this psalm?
3. Contrast the things that wicked men value (and pursue) with the things that godly men value (and pursue). Re. verses 13-15.

Psalm 18

- Author: David
- Date: When the Lord had delivered David from the hand of all his enemies including Saul.
- Type: Praise
- Message: Praise for giving victory.

Commentary:

This psalm is also found in 2 Samuel chapter 22. It is a psalm of praise and thanksgiving to God for all that God had done (and would do) for David. David had many admirable qualities and a couple of them are quite evident in this psalm: he humbled himself before God and gave God the full credit for his victories and his successes; he took the time to thank God (see Luke 17:11-19 and the ten lepers).

Notice the words David used to describe God as he thanked Him and credited Him for all He had done. God was his:

- Strength (verse 1)
- Rock (verses 2, 31, 46)
- Fortress (verse 2)
- Deliverer (verse 2)
- Stay (verse 18)
- Refuge (verse 2)
- Shield (verses 2, 30)
- Horn (verse 2)
- Stronghold (verse 2)

Questions for Discussion:

1. Compare verse 33 with Habakkuk 3:19. What does this mean?
2. Most of the psalms were to be sung. Compare verses 3 and 46 with the words of the song “I will call upon the Lord” (number 63 in our hymnal). What do these words mean to you?
3. Do you see a common theme among the words that David chose to describe God? Do you feel the same way about God today?

Making Application

Life can be difficult. Our problems at times may seem overwhelming. In these trying times it helps to stop and thank God for all that He has done for us and all that He has given to us. David was a thankful man and there is no doubt that this helped him through the difficult times. We should be thankful too. Let’s determine this week to thank God in prayer for His many blessings. It might help to remember the words of an old hymn titled “Count Your Blessings” (number 742 in our hymnal). Let’s determine to be a thankful people. Not just this week but every week.

Psalms
Lesson 7
Psalms 19, 20, & 21

*“Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart
be acceptable in Your sight, O Lord,
my strength and my Redeemer:*

Psalm 19:14

Lesson Goal:

To better understand these psalms: the author (if known), the type of psalm, the meaning and message.

Text:

Psalms 19, 20, & 21

Psalm 19

- Author: David
- Date: During David’s lifetime (ca. 1040-970 BC)
- Type: Praise
- Message: Praise for the works and word of God

Commentary:

This is truly an amazing and powerful psalm. Out of all 150 psalms it is my favorite. The first 6 verses declare the proof of God’s existence through His creation “*There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard*” (see also Romans 1:20). The next 4 verses (7-11) declare God’s existence through His word which is:

- Perfect
- Sure
- Right
- Pure
- Clean
- True
- Righteous

And the final 3 verses (12-14) are as perfect a prayer as can be found in the Bible. All Christians would do well to meditate on these 3 verses every morning.

The faithful gospel preacher Homer Hailey had this to say of Psalm 19.

“The psalm presents God’s two-fold revelation of Himself. It identifies the God of creation and of revelation as one. God speaks to man through creation and through revelation. The psalmist brings together the two in this poem, with a conclusion as to their bearing on the believer. The

one declares His power and divinity (cf. Romans 1:20ff); the other declares His will, love, mercy, goodness to man.”

In his second inaugural speech (March, 1865) President Lincoln quoted the end of verse 9.

“Fondly do we hope, fervently do we pray, that this mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away. Yet, if God wills that it continue until all the wealth piled by the bondsman's two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn with the lash shall be paid by another drawn with the sword, as was said three thousand years ago, so still it must be said *'the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.'*”

Oh, that the leaders of the countries today would know God’s word and look to it for wisdom and guidance in their leadership.

Questions for Discussion:

1. Compare verse 9 with Revelation 16:7 and Revelation 19:2
2. Compare verses 1-6 with Romans 1:18-21
3. For what is David asking in verses 12 & 13?

Psalm 20

- Author: David
- Date: During David’s lifetime (ca. 1040-970 BC)
- Type: Prayer
- Message: A prayer of intercession for the king

Commentary:

The first 5 verses of this psalm are a prayer (in the form of a petition) to God for King David.

- May the Lord answer you in the day of trouble
- May He
 - Send you help
 - Strengthen you
 - Remember your offerings
 - Grant you
 - Fulfill all your purpose
 - Fulfill all your petitions

While it may seem a little strange that David is writing a prayer that someone else will offer... it may be that David asked the people to pray for him and even made specific prayer requests. This is not unusual, to ask others to pray for us, when we are faced with a big or difficult task. The Apostle Paul numerous times asked others to pray for him (Ephesians 6:18-20; Colossians 4:2-4; 2 Thessalonians 3:1-2).

Verses 6-10 express an assurance that their requests have been heard and God will answer them. *“Now I know that the Lord saves His anointed; He will answer him from His holy heaven.”* Unlike the ungodly, who must trust in their own might, the godly put their trust in God.

“Some trust in chariots, and some in horses; but we will remember the name of Jehovah our God.”

Questions for Discussion:

1. What are some things you have learned from this psalm?
2. Compare verse 7 with: Deuteronomy 20:1; Psalm 33:16; and Isaiah 31:1. Have things changed that much? Where should we place our trust today?
3. Should we pray for the leaders of our country? See 1 Timothy 2:1-2.

Psalm 21

- Author: David
- Date: During David’s lifetime (ca. 1040-970 BC)
- Type: Thanksgiving
- Message: This appears to be a companion to psalm 20. Where Psalm 20 petitions God for deliverance in battle, this psalm thanks God for His deliverance.

Commentary:

The first 7 verses of this psalm are a heartfelt “thank you” to God for answered prayer. *“He asked life from You, and You gave it to him...”* *“Honor and majesty You have placed upon him.”* Over and over King David humbled himself and exalted God. Unlike most rulers past and present, David humbled himself before God and, in return, God gave him great honor. We know that God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble (1 Peter 5:5). David may be the greatest example of this. Few, if any, have been given such honor as was given to King David. *“Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time”* (2 Peter 5:6).

The remainder of Psalm 21 (verses 8-13), describe the fate of those who oppose God. *“You shall make them as a fiery oven in the time of Your anger; the Lord shall swallow them up in His wrath...”*

Questions for Discussion:

1. What are some things you have learned from this psalm?
2. Why do you think it is difficult for people with great power to be humble?
3. It has been said that the 3 most powerful words in the English language are: “please” and “thank you.” What do you think? How did David (and the children of Israel) use these three words in psalms 20 & 21?

Making Application

Psalm 19 proclaims the existence of God in two ways: through His creation and through His Word. Take time this week to consider God’s Word (the Bible). Meditate on its wonder and power. In Hebrews 4:12 it is described as *“living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword.”* How is this? In Ephesians 4:17 it is described as *“the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.”* How is this? In 1 Peter 1:24-25 (quoting Isaiah 40) it is said that *“all flesh is as grass and all the glory of man as the flower of the grass. The grass withers, and its flower falls away, but the word of the Lord endures forever.”* After considering these passages in the New Testament, go back and read again Psalm 19:7-11. How would you describe God’s Word?

Psalms

Lesson 8

Psalms 22, 23, & 24

*“The earth is the Lord’s, and all its fullness,
the world and those who dwell therein.”*

Psalm 24:1

Lesson Goal:

To better understand these psalms: the author (if known), the type of psalm, the meaning and message.

Text:

Psalms 22, 23, & 24

Psalm 22

- Author: David
- Date: During David’s lifetime (ca. 1040-970 BC)
- Type: Messianic
- Message: The crucifixion and resurrection of the Savior

Commentary:

Jesus uttered the opening words of this psalm as he neared death on the cross (Matthew 27:46; Mark 15:34). *“My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?”* David, through divine inspiration, penned these words more than a thousand years prior to Christ’s crucifixion. The first 21 verses of this psalm are clearly Messianic and tell of the suffering that our Lord would endure on the cross.

- *“All those who see Me ridicule Me...”*
- *“They gape at Me with their mouths...”*
- *“I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint...”*
- *“They pierced My hands and My feet...”*
- *“They divide My garments among them, and for My clothing they cast lots.”*

The precise wording of this prophecy makes one mindful of a similar Messianic prophecy in Isaiah 53:1-9. It is as though the psalmist David and the prophet Isaiah were standing on Calvary’s hillside and observing something that would not actually occur for hundreds of years. They wrote the words but the message was God-breathed.

The remainder of this psalm (verses 22-31) is a song of praise and rejoicing. Even though Christ was crucified, He was victorious. He who had no sin could not be kept in the grave. He arose the victor over Satan. *“O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?” The sting*

of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Corinthians 15:55-57). Verse 28 appears to be a reference to Daniel 2:44 and verse 29 is similar to Philippians 2:9-11. Every knee shall bow.

Questions for Discussion:

1. Compare verses 27-29 with Revelation 17:14
2. Compare verses 1-21 with Isaiah 53:1-9
3. What are some things you have learned from this psalm?

Psalm 23

- Author: David
- Date: During David’s lifetime (ca. 1040-970 BC)
- Type: God – Shepherd and host
- Message: God’s wondrous care

Commentary:

This is the most read and the most recited of all the psalms. It is a very beautiful psalm but, because the words are so familiar there is a risk of not really listening to them. This is one of the psalms that the reader would do well to read as though they had never heard the words before... to read this psalm as if this was the very first time to read it. Keep it fresh. Marvel anew at the words and message.

This psalm introduces the shepherd theme which is continued in the New Testament with Christ *“I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own”* (John 10:14). In his youth, David had been a shepherd. He knew that a good shepherd would go to any lengths to protect his flock (1 Samuel 17:34-36). With God as his shepherd, David knew that all would be well.

- He finds lush green pastures for me.
- He takes me to quiet waters where I can drink and be refreshed.
- He builds me up when I am weary (restores my soul).
- He leads me in the right ways... far from evil and harm.
- What have I to fear? As long as I stay with you, I will be safe.
-

Note also the phrase *“Your rod and Your staff they comfort me.”* The shepherd typically had one thing that he took with him everywhere he went: his staff. This was a long wooden pole with a large curved hook on one end. The staff had multiple uses. It served as a good walking stick,

since the work of the shepherd required quite a bit of walking. It also was used as a weapon to fight off wild animals that might prey upon the sheep. And, the hook on the end of the staff, was used to gently pull wandering sheep back in line. *“All we like sheep have gone astray...”* (Isaiah 53:6). While very similar to a staff, the rod was slightly different. Typically, the rod had no hook on the end. It was a more universal implement and not designed specifically for tending sheep. Most travelers had a rod (sometimes referred to as a staff – see Luke 9:3) to provide them stability on uneven roads, something to lean on when they rested, and as a weapon for defense against either man or beast. The distinction that seems to be drawn here by David is that the rod would be to fight off adversaries while the staff would keep him safe when he started to wander. He would be protected and comforted by God’s own rod and staff.

In verses 5 & 6, David describes God as a kind and gracious host who has invited him into his house for a feast. His enemies also see God’s care for David and they cannot deny it. God honors the humble shepherd and makes him king *“You anoint my head with oil; my cup runs over.”* David finds peace, safety, and honor in God’s house. We can too. *“In My Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also”* (John 14:2-3).

Questions for Discussion:

1. What does this psalm mean to you?
2. In what ways is Christ our shepherd?
3. In this psalm, David gladly accepted the honor God offered him in the form of a feast. Contrast this with those in Luke 14:15-24.

Psalm 24

- Author: David
- Date: During David’s lifetime (ca. 1040-970 BC)
- Type: Praise
- Message: The King of Glory entering Zion

Commentary:

This psalm of David asks one of the most important questions of all time: who can enter into the presence of God? None of us are worthy (Romans 3:23) and none of us will ever deserve to be in the presence of the Almighty, our Creator. However, if we keep ourselves pure and unspotted from the world (James 1:27) and if we do not allow other things to become our god, we will be

allowed into the presence of the true and living God. *“He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who has not lifted up his soul to an idol, nor sworn deceitfully”* (verse 4). This matches the description given of those who will be with God in heaven in Revelation 21:8, 27; 22:15. Verses 7-10, are a majestic description of God’s triumph and entry into His holy city. The term *“the King of Glory”* is used 5 times in these 4 verses to describe our Lord. He is *“strong and mighty”*, *“mighty in battle”*, and the *“Lord of Hosts.”*

Questions for Discussion:

1. Who may ascend into the hill of the Lord? Who may stand in His holy place?
2. Who owns the earth and those who dwell on it (verse 1)? Why does He own it (verse 2)?
3. Who is the “King of Glory?”

Making Application

Why do sheep need a shepherd? In what ways is Christ our shepherd today? Why do we need a shepherd?

Psalms

Lesson 9

Psalms 25, 26, & 27

*“Show me Your ways, O Lord; teach me Your paths.
Lead me in Your truth and teach me...”*

Psalm 25:4-5

Lesson Goal:

To better understand these psalms: the author (if known), the type of psalm, the meaning and message.

Text:

Psalms 25, 26, & 27

Psalm 25

- Author: David
- Date: During David’s lifetime (ca. 1040-970 BC)
- Type: Prayer
- Message: A prayer for protection and guidance

Commentary:

In the first three verses, David affirms his faith in God. This faith will not cause shame for him or for anyone who truly trusts in God. In contrast, those who rebel against God and seek to harm others, live lives of shame. You may have noticed that when you do right, your conscience is clear; you have nothing to hide but, when you do wrong, you try very hard to hide your deeds and cover them up. They are shameful. *“And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them. For it is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret”* (Ephesians 5:11-12). *“For many walk of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame – who set their minds on earthly things”* (Philippians 3:18-19).

In verse 4, David begins his petition to God: *“Show me Your ways... Teach me Your paths...Lead me in Your truth... Remember, O Lord, Your tender mercies...”* He also petitions God to forgive his youthful sins and asks God to be merciful. In all of this, David is showing humility *“The humble He guides in justice, and the humble he teaches His way”*. He knows that God is far above him and his only hope is to fear Him, praise Him, and obey Him. He concludes the psalm with a final petition (verses 16-22): *“Turn yourself to me and have mercy on me... Bring me out of my distresses!... look on my affliction and my pain... forgive all my sins...Keep my soul and deliver me.”*

Questions for Discussion:

1. David was very humble both as a man and as a king. Do you think that humility is a sign of weakness or strength? Why? If it is a sign of strength, why are many leaders not humble?
2. How does sin cause shame?
3. Compare verse 12 with Proverbs 1:7

Psalm 26

- Author: David
- Date: During David's lifetime (ca. 1040-970 BC)
- Type: Prayer
- Message: A prayer for approval, guidance, and pardon

Commentary:

In verses 1 through 5, David asks for God's approval. David has chosen to live a Godly life. *"I have walked in Your truth."* He has kept himself from evil people. *"I have hated the assembly of evildoers, and will not sit with the wicked."* We too (like any child) look to our heavenly Father for approval when we have made good choices. And, we know that He is pleased when we trust Him and choose good over bad. Because he has chosen to live uprightly, David knows his service to God will be accepted (verses 6-8) and this brings him great joy. As David concludes this psalm, he repeats the phrase he used at the beginning of the psalm: *"I will walk in my integrity."* Sometimes it seems that integrity is a rare commodity these days.

Questions for Discussion:

1. Verse 12 says *"My foot stands in an even place..."* What does this mean? Contrast this with trying to stand in an uneven place.
2. When you were a child, did you look to your parents for approval when you made good choices? How did it make you feel when they were proud of you and your choices?

3. It is easy to get caught up in evil things. All we need to do is hang around the wrong people or linger in the wrong place (not just a physical place but also on the internet). How can we avoid this?
4. Compare and contrast verses 4 & 5 with Psalm 1:1.

Psalm 27

- Author: David
- Date: During David's lifetime (ca. 1040-970 BC)
- Type: Trust
- Message: A fierce trust in Jehovah

Commentary:

It seems we are often faced with big problems in life. It might be health, money, work, family, school or any number of other things. And, very often, the problems seem insurmountable. What will we do? Where will we turn? There seems to be no answer, no help, and no hope. Sadly, for many there is no answer, no help, and no hope because they are facing their problems without God. David, who probably had far more problems than any of us will ever have, didn't have this concern. *"The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?"* David fully and completely trusted in God. His faith was tested many times and he summed it up very well in verse 13 when he said *"I would have lost heart, unless I had believed that I would see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living."* Like David before us, we must hold onto our faith and not lose heart. God hears. God sees. And God will provide.

Questions for Discussion:

1. David fiercely trusted in God with all of his heart. How do you think this helped him when his enemies surrounded him?
2. In many of the psalms that he wrote, David expressed a strong desire to be in the presence of God. He wanted to surround himself with God's goodness (see verse 4). What benefits did David gain from having this kind of attitude? How would this kind of attitude help us today?

3. In verse 14, David says that one must “*wait (or trust) on the Lord.*” The prophet Isaiah used these same words in Isaiah 40:31. What benefit is there for us by waiting (or trusting) in the Lord?

Making Application

Through many of the psalms, God pleads with us to trust Him and wait for Him. He knows our trials and troubles and He has promised that He will never leave us or forsake us. Since God is not physically with us today we must walk by faith and not by sight. We must believe Him completely. We must trust Him unconditionally. We must humble ourselves so that we gladly say “not my will be thy will be done.” Challenge yourself this week to be more humble and to develop a fierce trust in God... our Lord, our Savior, our Rock.

Psalms
Lesson 10
Psalms 28, 29, & 30

*“Weeping may endure for a night,
but joy comes in the morning.”*

Psalm 30:5

Lesson Goal:

To better understand these psalms: the author (if known), the type of psalm, the meaning and message.

Text:

Psalms 28, 29, & 30

Psalm 28

- Author: David
- Date: During David’s lifetime (ca. 1040-970 BC)
- Type: Prayer
- Message: A prayer of thanksgiving and for judgment

Commentary:

The first five verses of this psalm are a cry for judgment against the wicked. *“Give them according to their deeds, and according to the wickedness of their endeavors; give them according to the work of their hands; render to them what they deserve.”* David was a just man. He was *“a man after God’s own heart”* (Acts 13:22) and he constantly sought justice for all. The wicked needed to get what they deserved (justice) and God was the one who could execute this justice. The remainder of the psalm (verses 6-9) are a song of thanksgiving and praise. *“The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusted in Him and I am helped; therefore my heart greatly rejoices, and with my song I will praise Him.”* Just as David was always quick to ask for God’s help and justice, he was also just as quick to thank Him and praise Him. What a powerful example that is for us today.

Questions for Discussion:

1. When David saw wickedness it bothered him. Does it bother us today? Do we pray for justice?

2. In verse 2 David asks God to hear his requests. In verse 6 he thanks God for hearing his requests. What is the lesson for us today?

3. To be a thankful people is to be a happy people. It is very difficult to be happy when one is constantly complaining. What makes you happy? For what are you thankful?

Psalm 29

- Author: David
- Date: During David's lifetime (ca. 1040-970 BC)
- Type: Praise
- Message: Praise for God's holiness and majesty

Commentary:

The phrase "*the voice of the Lord*" appears 7 times in this psalm. When God speaks, things happen. His voice:

1. Thunders
2. Is powerful
3. Is full of majesty
4. Breaks the cedars; splinters the cedars of Lebanon
5. Divides the flames of fire
6. Shakes the wilderness
7. Makes the deer give birth

From the violent storms that shake the earth to the tender birth of a fawn in the forest, God speaks. What does that mean to us? We should recognize His greatness and worship Him and Him alone. "*Give unto the Lord the glory due to His name; Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness*" (verse 2). "*The Lord sits as King forever*" (verse 10). In Him we will find blessings and peace (vs. 11).

Questions for Discussion:

1. How would you describe the power of God?
2. What part of creation (plant life, animal life, mankind, etc.) does God ignore or not understand?
3. Why is He worth of praise and thanksgiving?

Psalm 30

- Author: David
- Date: During David's lifetime (ca. 1040-970 BC)
- Type: Thanksgiving
- Message: Thanksgiving for healing

Commentary:

This is another song of thanksgiving. David was a man who took the time to thank God for answered prayer. He is such a great example for all of us today. In crisis, we may cry out to God for help but, when the crisis passes (or more correctly when God delivers us from the crisis) we too often forget to thank God. Shame on us.

David was gravely ill and cried out to God to heal him. *“O Lord, I cried out to You, and you healed me. O Lord, You brought my soul up from the grave; You have kept me alive...”* David knew that ultimately God was the source of his healing and deliverance. Later, another king of Judah (King Asa) relied solely on his physicians and did not ask for God's help. The result was not good. *“And in the thirty-ninth year of his reign, Asa became diseased in his feet, and his malady was severe; yet in his disease he did not seek the Lord, but the physicians”* (2 Chronicles 16:12). While it is good to go to physicians who are trained in treating diseases, we must realize that the ultimate healing comes from God. The physicians only know what they know. They are not the creator and sustainer of life. God is. Let's never forget this.

When life is dark and times are hard, remember the end of verse 5: *“Weeping may endure for a night but joy comes in the morning.”* Never give up on God. He will never give up on you. In the end, David's mourning was turned into rejoicing. *“You have turned for me my mourning into dancing... O Lord my God, I will give thanks to You forever.”*

Questions for Discussion:

1. Why do you think we sometimes forget to thank God for answered prayer? Are we ungrateful, too busy, or?
2. Do we sometimes (like Asa) think we can handle our problems without God's help? If so, why do we do this?
3. When you are a thankful/grateful person, how does this affect your view of the world around you, the problems you face, etc?

Making Application

My wife Debra, likes to decorate our house with tasteful wall decorations. Many of these will be pictures of places where we have been or inspirational scriptures or pictures of our family. Two of these wall decorations have the simple inscription “Begin each day with a grateful heart.” I really like this daily reminder. It is so easy to start the day grumpy or overwhelmed with the tasks that lie ahead. How refreshing (before you do anything else) to simply stop and thank God for the day and be thankful for all he has done. Try it this week, and next week, and every day after that. Attitude does make a difference.

Psalms

Lesson 11

Psalms 31, 32, & 33

*“I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go;
I will guide you with My eye*

Psalm 32:8

Lesson Goal:

To better understand these psalms: the author (if known), the type of psalm, the meaning and message.

Text:

Psalms 31, 31, & 33

Psalm 31

- Author: David
- Date: During David’s lifetime (ca. 1040-970 BC)
- Type: Praise
- Message: Praise in the midst of complaint

Commentary:

David had many enemies. There always seemed to be someone seeking to depose him, bring him down, or even kill him. He was not free from enemies just because he was God’s anointed. In fact, his faith in God and the resulting favor that God showed him, often was the cause of persecution. Saul was jealous of David. Absalom envied his father’s power and honor. Others mocked him (some openly and some behind his back) while trying to find a chink in his armor; anything to dishonor him. None of us will ever have the glory, honor, and power that the Lord gave to King David, but we will still have enemies. And, often these enemies come from family and friends who are close to us. Satan likes to stir up strife and, if we make a stand for what we believe, others will notice. Some will simply dismiss our faith and go their way. Some will listen to us and want to learn more. But some will resent our stand for the truth because it goes against what they want to do. While our desire is to *“live peaceably with all men”* (Romans 12:18), trials and troubles will come. *“Do not think I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword. For I have come to set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; and a man’s enemies will be those of his own household”* (Matthew 10:34-35).

We need to learn from David’s example and take our problems to God. In this psalm David:

- Prayed for deliverance from his enemies in general (verses 1-5). *“Bow down Your ear to me, deliver me speedily; be my rock of refuge, a fortress of defense to save me.”*
- Thanked God for His care and protection (verses 6-8). *“For You have considered my trouble; You have known my soul in adversities... You have set my feet on a wide place.”*

- Prayed for deliverance from present danger (verses 9-13). *“Have mercy on me, O Lord, for I am in trouble...For I hear the slander of many...They scheme to take away my life.”*
- Expressed confidence in God to help him through these trials (verses 14-11). *“Oh, how great is Your goodness...Blessed be the Lord, for He has shown me His marvelous kindness in a strong city!”*
- Exhorted the people (that includes you and me) to praise God (verses 23-24). *“Be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart.”*

Questions for Discussion:

1. Why do you think David had so many enemies?
2. What kinds of enemies challenge your faith today?
3. To whom did David turn in times of trouble? To whom should we turn in times of trouble? Why?

Psalm 32

- Author: David
- Date: During David’s lifetime (ca. 1040-970 BC)
- Type: Penitential (repentant)
- Message: Rejoicing after forgiveness

Commentary:

What a beautiful psalm about forgiveness. David had sinned. Psalms 38 and 51 reveal the anguish, pain, and deep remorse that he felt. *“For I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is always before me. Against You, You only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Your sight...”* (Psalm 51:3-4). In Psalm 32, David emerges from his groaning with great rejoicing over the knowledge that God has forgiven him. *“I acknowledged my sin to You, and my iniquity I have not hidden. I said ‘I will confess my transgressions to the Lord’ and You forgave the iniquity of my sin.”* Forgiveness is ours if we only seek it. Too often we continue to doubt ourselves (and our unworthiness) rather than move on. After Judas realized the terrible sin he had committed by denying Christ, he showed great remorse (he took the money back to the chief priests and elders) and confessed his sin. Unfortunately, he stopped there and neither asked God for forgiveness nor repented of his grievous sin. He gave up; went and hanged himself (Matthew 27:3-5). In contrast to Judas, after Peter denied Christ 3 times, we are told that he *“wept bitterly”* (Luke 22:62) but he didn’t stop there. He picked himself up, asked God for forgiveness and dedicated the rest of his life to faithful service

to his Lord. Forgiveness is available but it requires a broken and contrite heart (Psalm 51:17; Psalm 34:18). If we are willing to humble ourselves as David did, we will also be able to rejoice as he rejoiced. *“When I kept silent, my bones grew old through my groaning all the day long”* (verse 3). *“Be glad in the Lord and rejoice, you righteous; and shout for joy, all you upright in heart!”* (verse 11).

Questions for Discussion:

1. We all will sin (Romans 3:23). What does God require of us in order to receive forgiveness?
2. Another psalm about forgiveness and God’s mercy is Psalm 103. Read verses 11 through 14 of this psalm and write down your thoughts. Will God forgive us our sins? Why?
3. In this psalm, David expresses great peace knowing that God has forgiven him. In what ways does forgiveness provide peace? Why do many not have peace?

Psalm 33

- Author: Unknown
- Date: Unknown
- Type: Praise
- Message: Deliverance from heathen nations

Commentary:

This psalm can be divided nicely into 4 parts.

1. Verses 1-5 ... The psalm begins with praise and rejoicing over God’s word, His work, His righteousness and goodness. *“For the word of the Lord is right, and all his work is done in truth. He loves righteousness and justice; the earth is full of the goodness of the Lord.”*
2. Verses 6-9... These verses declare God’s greatness as the Creator. He is to be praised for He spoke all of creation into existence. *“By the word of the Lord the heavens were made... Let all the earth fear the Lord; let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him. For He spoke, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast.”*
3. Verses 10-17... God rules over all His creation and this includes all the nations and the mighty kings. *“The Lord brings the counsel of the nations to nothing; He makes the plans of the peoples of no effect... No king is saved by the multitude of an army...”* These words are reminiscent of the words and warning found in Psalm 2 *“Now therefore, be wise, O*

kings; be instructed, you judges of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling.”

4. Verses 18-22... The psalm concludes by describing (and declaring) the hope we have in God. *“Behold the eye of the Lord is on those who fear Him, on those who hope in His mercy... Our soul waits for the Lord; He is our help and our shield.”*

Questions for Discussion:

1. Describe the 4 parts of this psalm

2. Why does God remind us (vs. 10-17) that He rules over the nations? Why do we need to understand that?

3. Describe the goodness of God

Making Application

Determine to spend time this week praising God and thanking Him for His goodness, His sovereignty (our king), and His love. This may be through prayer or song or setting aside time for quiet meditation and reflection on our almighty Lord. When life gets to be overwhelming, it is good to remember the greatness and goodness of our God and that He is always by our side. We are not alone.

Psalms
Lesson 12
Psalms 34, 35, 36, & 37

*“The young lions lack and suffer hunger;
but those who seek the Lord shall not lack any good thing”*

Psalm 34:10

Lesson Goal:

To better understand these psalms: the author (if known), the type of psalm, the meaning and message.

Text:

Psalms 34, 35, 36, & 37

Psalm 34

- Author: David
- Date: During David’s lifetime (ca. 1040-970 BC)
- Type: Acrostic (alphabetic)... thanksgiving and didactic
- Message: Jehovah, a provider and deliverer

Commentary:

This psalm can be divided into two parts:

- verses 1-10 contain praise and thanksgiving for God’s goodness and deliverance
 - *“I sought the Lord and He heard me, and delivered me...”*
 - *“This poor man cried out and the Lord heard him and saved him out of all his troubles.”*
 - *“There is no want to those who fear Him.”*
- verses 11-22 are in the form of a teacher (or father) instructing his students (or children). The lesson is to seek God and trust Him and you will find peace (vs. 14), goodness (vs. 12), and salvation (vs. 22).
 - *“Come, you children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the Lord.”*
 - *“The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and His ears are open to their cry.”*
 - *“The Lord is near to those who have a broken heart...”*
 - *“The Lord redeems the soul of His servants, and none of those who trust in Him shall be condemned.”*

Questions for Discussion:

1. What lessons did you learn from this psalm?

2. Verse 14 has two action verbs: “depart” and “seek.” From what are we to depart? And for what are we to seek?

Psalm 35

- Author: David
- Date: During David’s lifetime (ca. 1040-970 BC)
- Type: Prayer
- Message: A prayer for rescue from enemies

Commentary:

David has been betrayed by a friend. Someone whom he trusted has now become his enemy. This happened more than once in David’s life. Some notable instances were:

- Saul (1 Samuel 24:14,15)
- Ahithophel (2 Samuel 17)
- Shimei (2 Samuel 16:5-14)
- Absalom (2 Samuel 15-18)

In this psalm, there is no direct reference to any one person so it may have been one of the above or someone else. However, the lesson of the psalm is clear: what do you do when you have been betrayed? How do you go on? Who can you trust? Where do you go? I am reminded of the words of a James Taylor song: “People can be so cold. They’ll hurt you and desert you. Well, they’ll take your soul if you let them. Oh yeah, but don’t you let them.” When our hope is in the strength of the flesh... either ourselves or someone else... we are setting ourselves up for disappointment. We all need friends to help us through life “winter, spring, summer, or fall... all you have to do is call.” And we are thankful to God for the friends we have. But our closest friend and companion must be our Lord. He will never leave us nor betray us. He is our rock in times of trouble. As David says in this psalm:

“And my soul shall be joyful in the Lord; it shall rejoice in His salvation. All my bones shall say, ‘Lord, who is like You, delivering the poor from him who is too strong for him, Yes, the poor and the needy from him who plunders him?’” (verses 9 & 10)

Questions for Discussion:

1. In verses 22 -25, David asks God to vindicate him. What does this mean?
2. Verses 13-14 describe David’s attitude towards his enemies when they were in need. What was his attitude? What can we learn from this?

3. In verse 1, David asks God to “*fight against those who fight against me.*” Should this be our attitude? Will God literally join in our battles?

Psalm 36

- Author: David
- Date: During David’s lifetime (ca. 1040-970 BC)
- Type: Didactic (Instruction)
- Message: Man’s wickedness and God’s perfections

Commentary:

Man is wicked, deceitful, and self-centered. God is faithful, righteous, merciful, and loving. Our hope is in God that he will protect us from ourselves and that we will become more like Him.

- Verses 1-4 describe man’s wickedness.
 - “*There is no fear of God before his eyes.*”
 - “*The words of his mouth are wickedness and deceit.*”
 - “*He has ceased to be wise and to do good.*”
- Verses 5-9 describe God’s goodness.
 - “*Your mercy, O Lord, is in the heavens*”
 - “*Your faithfulness reaches to the clouds*”
 - “*Your righteousness is like the great mountains*”
 - “*Your judgments are a great deep*”
 - “*How precious is Your lovingkindness*”
- Verses 10-12 are a prayer for God’s continued help and mercy.
 - “*Oh, continue Your lovingkindness to those who know You*”
 - “*Let not the foot of pride come against me*”
 - “*Let not the hand of the wicked drive me away*”

Questions for Discussion:

1. Contrast man’s wickedness with God’s goodness.

2. Selfish pride is a problem that is mentioned in this psalm (verses 2 and 11). Why is pride such a problem and what can we do to overcome it?

Psalm 37

- Author: David
- Date: During David's lifetime (ca. 1040-970 BC)
- Type: Didactic and Acrostic
- Message: The false prosperity of the wicked and the real prosperity of the godly

Commentary:

Don't worry when you see wicked people prosper. Their triumph is very brief and then all that they possess will be lost when their soul is required by God. The psalmist repeats the phrase "do not fret" three times in the first 8 verses as a reminder and exhortation to us to not worry about the prosperity of the wicked.

- *"Do not fret because of evildoers, nor be envious of the workers of iniquity."*
- *"Do not fret because of him who prospers in his way, because of the man who brings wicked schemes to pass"*
- *"Do not fret – it only causes harm."*

Rather than fret over the prosperity of the wicked, one should:

- *"Trust in the Lord" (vs. 3)*
- *"Dwell in the land and feed on His faithfulness." (vs. 3)*
- *"Delight yourself also in the Lord" (vs. 4)*
- *"Commit your way to the Lord" (vs. 5)*
- *"Rest in the Lord" (vs. 7)*
- *"Cease from anger and forsake wrath" (vs. 8)*

Beginning in verse 9 and continuing through the end of the poem, the psalmist offers calm instruction in the form of reasons to have confidence in God. One phrase stands out and is used 5 times in these verses: *"they shall inherit the earth (land)."*

- *"But those who wait on the Lord, they shall inherit the earth" (vs. 9)*
- *"But the meek shall inherit the earth" (vs. 11)*
- *"For those blessed by Him shall inherit the earth" (vs. 22)*
- *"The righteous shall inherit the land and dwell in it forever." (vs. 29)*
- *"Wait on the Lord and keep His way, and He shall exalt you to inherit the land" (vs. 34)*

Our Lord Jesus used this same phrase in His sermon on the mount when He pronounced a blessing on the meek. He said *"blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth"* (Matthew 5:5). Why this promise of great blessing regarding something that is so temporary and will eventually be destroyed (2 Peter 3:10)? It is quite apparent that our Lord and David (in this psalm) are not referring to the physical earth or land. Indeed, verse 29 states that they will live in it forever (there is a similar promise in verse 18 *"and their inheritance shall be forever"*). What is the one promise that God has made to His faithful servants regarding eternity? It is that they will be with Him forever in heaven; in a mansion not made with hands. The land of Canaan was the Promised Land. God had made a covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob that their descendants would possess the land. Moses led the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob not to just any land but to the Promised Land. We sing a song today titled "To Canaan's Land I'm On My Way." The land of

promise for us today is not Canaan. It is heaven. Crossing over Jordan meant that God's people had arrived. They were receiving their inheritance. Our inheritance is in heaven and it is the spiritual equivalent of the Land of Canaan. It is eternal. It is not earthly. It is much greater. Note also in verses 9, 22, 28, and 34 (the same verses where the righteous are told they will inherit the land) that the wicked are also mentioned but they will not be inheriting the land.

- *“For evildoers shall be destroyed” (vs. 9)*
- *“But those cursed by Him shall be destroyed” (vs. 22)*
- *“But the descendants of the wicked shall be destroyed” (vs. 28)*
- *“When the wicked are destroyed, you shall see it” (vs. 34)*

One group will inherit the land and one group will be destroyed. Choose wisely.

Questions for Discussion:

1. Why should we not fret (worry or be disturbed) when we see wicked people prosper?
2. What was the inheritance that the children of Israel sought as they journeyed through the wilderness?
3. What is the inheritance that we, the children of God, seek as we make our pilgrimage through this life?

Making Application

These four psalms speak of man's wickedness and God's goodness. Man, without God, is empty and vain. There is no substance in our lives without God. What about you? Are you living a vain and empty life? Are you being sucked into the sin and wickedness that is all around you but don't know how to escape? Remember the words of the preacher in Ecclesiastes 12:13 *“Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: fear God and keep His commandments, for this is man's all.”* Try it. It works. You can find meaning and peace in your life but you first must determine to completely humble yourself before God, trust Him with all of your heart, and obey His commands. When you do this, and find *“the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding”* (Philippians 4:7), determine to share it with someone else. You won't have to look hard to find someone much like yourself who is lost in sin and needs the gospel of Christ.

Psalms
Lesson 13
Psalms 38, 39, 40, & 41

*“Do not forsake me, O Lord; O my God, be not far from me!
Make haste to help me, O Lord my salvation.”*

Psalm 38:21,22

Lesson Goal:

To better understand these psalms: the author (if known), the type of psalm, the meaning and message.

Text:

Psalms 38, 39, 40, 41

Psalm 38

- Author: David
- Date: During David’s lifetime (ca. 1040-970 BC)
- Type: Penitential
- Message: David is prostrate with grief. He is distressed both in mind and body.

Commentary:

David grieved greatly over his sin. It ate at him and weighed him down. *“...Like a heavy burden they are too heavy for me. My wounds are foul and festering because of my foolishness”* (vs. 4-5). As in every other part of his life, when he sinned, he turned to God. *“O Lord, do not rebuke me in Your wrath”* (vs. 1). *“Lord, all my desire is before You; and my sighing is not hidden from You”* (vs. 9). *“For in You, O Lord, I hope; You will hear, O Lord my God”* (vs. 15). David knew that his only hope for relief from his grief was through God. This is a lesson each of us should learn. Our battles with sin and Satan are too great for us to fight alone. We will slip, we will fall, we will sin. The true test of character is found in what we do when we are convicted of sin. Do we ignore our sin? Do we deny our sin? Do we make excuses for our sin? Or do we confess our sin before God and man and (with the help of the Almighty) lift ourselves up, get back on our feet, and continue our journey? David chose the latter.

Notice also in this psalm the attitude of those around David. *“My loved ones, and my friends stand aloof from my plague, and my relatives stand afar off”* (vs. 11). *“Those who seek my life lay snares for me; those who seek my hurt speak of destruction, and plan deception all the day long”* (vs. 12). His family and friends did not come to his aid or comfort him. What about us? What is our attitude toward some brother or sister who has committed a terrible sin? Do we stand aloof and shake our heads or do we draw near and offer comfort? David’s enemies used this opportunity to attack him while he was down. Like jackals, they saw that this great man was vulnerable, and they couldn’t wait to attack him. If you want to know who are your true friends and who are your

enemies, just wait until trouble comes your way. Your friends will stick by you no matter what. Your enemies will either flee or use this opportunity to attack you. They add to your afflictions.

Questions for Discussion:

1. What was David's attitude toward sin?
2. What were the reactions of David's friends to his sin?
3. How did David's enemies react to his sin?

Psalm 39

- Author: David
- Date: During David's lifetime (ca. 1040-970 BC)
- Type: God (Jehovah)
- Message: The vanity of life.

Commentary:

Abraham Lincoln once said "it is better to remain silent and be thought a fool than to speak up and remove all doubt" (see also Proverbs 17:28). That is not exactly David's thoughts at the beginning of this psalm but I think it is close. In verses 1-3 he said he would be slow to speak when answering the wicked.

- *"I will guard my ways lest I sin with my tongue"* (vs 1)
- *"I will restrain my mouth with a muzzle, while the wicked are before me"* (vs. 1)
- *"I was mute with silence, I held my peace..."* (vs. 2)
- *"While I was meditating the fire burned. Then I spoke with my tongue"* (vs. 3)

What a great lesson for all of us. How often do we answer too quickly or in anger without thoroughly thinking about what we are saying? Or how often do we not really listen to what the other is saying and so respond to something that wasn't even said? In James 1:19 we are advised to *"be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath."* It is not easy to control our tongue and wait but, by practicing this, we can avoid much hurt and sorrow.

In verses 4-6, David contemplates the brevity and vanity of life.

- *"Lord, make me to know my end, and what is the measure of my days"* (vs. 4)
- *"Certainly every man at his best state is but vapor"* (vs. 5)
- *"Surely every man walks about like a shadow"* (vs.6)
- *"Surely they busy themselves in vain; he heaps up riches, and does not know who will gather them"* (vs. 6)

Once again, we can go to the book of James in the New Testament to see a parallel passage. “...*For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away*” (James 4:14). When we are children, life seems like it will go on forever. We can’t wait until we are old enough to: ride a bike, drive a car, go to school, leave home, etc. If, through God’s grace, we have been able to experience these events and more, we (if we are wise) start to comprehend the brevity and vanity of life. This realization leads us to ask “what should I do with this brief time God has granted to me?” In verse 6 David notes that laying up riches can’t be the answer. In the remainder of this psalm (verses 7-13), he continues this contemplation and asks God to help him choose wisely. He knows his help comes from God “*I was mute, I did not open my mouth, because it was You who did it*” (vs. 9). He is aware that own strength is not sufficient and that his help must come from God. If we are wise, we also will come to this realization.

- “*And now, Lord, what do I wait for? My hope is in You*” (vs. 7)
- “*Hear my prayer, O Lord, and give ear to my cry*” (vs. 12)
- “*Do not be silent at my tears; for I am a stranger with You, a sojourner, as all my fathers were*” (vs. 12).

Questions for Discussion:

1. Why is it difficult to remain silent (be slow to speak)?

2. Why is it important to not quickly respond with the first thought that enters our head (see James 1:19-20)?

3. What do you think is the meaning of verse 6?

Psalm 40

- Author: David
- Date: During David’s lifetime (ca. 1040-970 BC)
- Type: Praise
- Message: Praise and prayer for help

Commentary:

This psalm of David:

- begins with praise and thanksgiving (verses 1-3)
 - “*He has put a new song in my mouth – praise to our God...*”
- moves on to expressions of trust and obedience (verses 4-8)

- *“Blessed is the man who makes the Lord his trust...”*
- Notice in verses 6 through 8 the allusions to the old and new covenants.
- *“Sacrifice and offering You did not desire... Burnt offering and sin offering You did not require.”* See 1 Samuel 15:22. Regardless of the dispensation of time and the covenant, God has always required obedience. *“Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice...”*
- *“I delight to do Your will, O my God.”* While this passage is not noted as Messianic, it has strong ties to the way Christ lived and taught.
 - *“Jesus said to them, ‘My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work’”* (John 4:34).
 - *“For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me”* (John 6:38).
- *“And Your law is within my heart.”* The prophet Jeremiah declared that God would establish a new covenant with His people. Under this new covenant, His law would not be on stones but in the hearts of His people.
 - *“Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah...I will put My law in their minds and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people”* (Jeremiah 31:31-33). See also Hebrews 8:8-12 10:16,17).
- includes joyous proclamations of his faith (verses 9-10)
 - *“I have proclaimed the good news of righteousness in the great assembly; indeed, I do not restrain my lips.”*
 - *“I have declared Your faithfulness and salvation...”*
- brief petitions for continued help (verses 11-15)
 - *“Do not withhold Your tender mercies from me, O Lord”*
 - *“...O Lord, make haste to help me!”*
- and concludes with the acknowledgement that God is the refuge for all (verses 16 & 17)
 - *“But I am poor and needy; Yet the Lord thinks upon me. You are my help and my deliverer...”*

Questions for Discussion:

1. What about this psalm stands out the most to you?

2. It seems that many of David’s psalms begin with praise. Why is this a good way to begin a prayer or psalm (note also Matthew 6:9)?

Psalm 41

- Author: David
- Date: Thought to be during the time of persecution by Absalom
- Type: Complaint
- Message: Complaint because of enemies and false friends

Commentary:

This was perhaps the greatest trial of all for David. When his own son (and other close friends) betrayed him and sought to kill him (2 Samuel 14-18). As terrible as the sin was with Bathsheba and the consequences that followed the remainder of his days, this was different. It was not of his own doing. It was betrayal by a dear son and friend. In this psalm, David reflects on goodness, betrayal, suffering and hope.

- Verses 1-3
 - This is a description of a compassionate man. David was this type of man. In spite of his imperfections, and the fact that he was a mighty warrior, he was still compassionate and kind. He was merciful to the poor and downtrodden (see 2 Samuel 9 for an example of his kindness). In these verses David is acknowledging that God is merciful to those who show mercy. *“Blessed is he who considers the poor; the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble.”* David was certainly in a time of trouble and needed divine intervention to protect him and deliver him from Absalom’s hand. He had confidence that God would keep him safe. *“You will not deliver him to the will of his enemies.”*
- Verses 4-9
 - These verses describe betrayal and the suffering David endured.
 - *“My enemies speak evil of me... and if he comes to see me, he speaks lies.”*
 - *“Even my own familiar friend in whom I trusted, who ate my bread, has lifted up his heel against me.”*
- Verses 10-13
 - Where does one turn when even those closest to you betray you? I am reminded of a hymn we often sing: “Where Could I Go but to the Lord?”
 - “Where could I go?
Oh, where could I go?
Seeking a refuge for my soul.
Needing a friend to help me in the end.
Where could I go but to the Lord?”

David knew where to go when he needed help. His God would not fail him. His God would not betray him. Our God today is the same God who helped David. Whatever our trials and troubles may be. If we turn to Him, He is there and will help.

 - *“As for me, You uphold me in my integrity, and set me before Your face forever.”*

Questions for Discussion:

1. Friends may leave us or even betray us. Does that mean we should have no friends?

2. In whom should we place our ultimate trust?

Making Application

As we have seen in our study of the first 41 psalms, the psalms are beautiful poems/songs of praise, prayer, and prophecy. They contain deep expressions of sorrow, betrayal, kindness, love, and awe. It is apparent that those who penned the words of these psalms had a close relationship with God. Their faith was not shallow but very deep. We may never be able to write such beautiful psalms as these but we should strive to have a similar relationship with God as those who wrote these psalms. How can we obtain such faith; such a close relationship with God? It only comes through great effort. It only comes through much prayer and meditation on God's word. To have this type of relationship with God, we must come to know Him better. He must not be a remote person sitting on a shelf who we pick up and read about occasionally. He must be our friend and our constant companion. He tells us that if we draw near to Him, He will draw near to us (James 4:8). If we want Him as our friend, then we must be His friend. We must determine today to draw close to God and to be His friend. Then we can say with David "*The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.*"