connect 360

BIBLE TEACHING GUIDE

# Psalms

## The Believer's Prayer Book

A Study of Psalms

Rebecca Hays • Randy Johnson
Felisi Sorgwe • Carroll Townsend
John Duncan • Craig West

GC2 PRESS
Dallas, Texas

*Psalms: The Believer's Prayer Book*
*Connect 360 Bible Teaching Guide*

Copyright © 2026 by GC2 Press®.
All rights reserved.
Printed in the United States of America.

No part of this book may be used or reproduced in any manner whatsoever without written permission except in the case of brief quotations.
For information, contact
GC2 PRESS, 7557 Rambler Road, Suite 1200, Dallas, TX 75231-2388.

GC2 Press® is registered in U.S. Patent and Trademark Office.

CONNECT 360 ALL THE BIBLE FOR ALL OF LIFE®
is registered in U.S. Patent and Trademark Office.

Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations in lessons 1–5 are taken from the New American Standard Bible®, Copyright © 1960, 1971, 1977, 1995, 2020 by the Lockman Foundation. All rights reserved. Used by permission. NASB refers to this edition of the New American Standard Bible©.

Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations in 6–14 plus the Easter lesson are taken from the Holy Bible, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION®, NIV® Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.® Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

GC2 Press® Leadership Team:

Executive Director, BGCT: Julio Guarneri
Associate Executive Director, BGCT: Craig Christina
Treasurer/CFO, BGCT: Ward Hayes
Director, Resource Development Team, BGCT: Joshua Minatrea
Publisher, GC2 Press®: David Ritsema
Publishing Specialist, GC2 Press®: Stan Granberry

Production, Cover Design, and Printing: D6 Family Ministry

First edition: March 2026
ISBN: 978–1–961120–21–1

# How to Make the Best Use of This *Teaching Guide*

Leading a class in studying the Bible is a sacred trust. This Teaching Guide has been prepared to help you as you give your best to this important task.

In each lesson, you will find first "Bible Comments" for teachers, to aid you in your study and preparation. The three sections of "Bible Comments" are "Understanding the Context," "Interpreting the Scriptures," and "Focusing on the Meaning." "Understanding the Context" provides a summary overview of the entire background passage that also sets the passage in the context of the Bible book being studied. "Interpreting the Scriptures" provides verse-by-verse comments on the focal passage. "Focusing on the Meaning" offers help with the meaning and application of the focal text.

The second main part of each lesson is "Teaching Plans." You'll find two complete teaching plans in this section. The first is called the "Discovery Plan," which emphasizes discovery learning techniques; and the second is called the "Discussion Plan," which provides questions and suggestions for dialogue about the Scriptures. Choose the plan that best fits your class and your style of teaching. You may also use and adapt ideas from both. Each plan is intended to be practical, helpful, and immediately useful as you prepare to teach.

The major headings in each teaching plan are intended to help you sequence how you teach so as to follow the flow of how people tend to learn. The first major heading, "Connect with Life," provides ideas that will help you begin the class session where your class is and draw your class into the study. The second major heading, "Guide Bible Study," offers suggestions for helping your class engage the Scriptures actively and develop a greater understanding of this portion of the Bible's message. The third major heading, "Encourage Application," is meant to help participants focus on how to respond with their lives to this message.

As you begin the study with your class, be sure to find a way to help your class know the date on which each lesson will be studied. You might use one or more of the following methods:

- In the first session of the study, briefly overview the study by identifying for your class the date on which each lesson will be studied. Lead your class to write the date in the table of contents in their *Study Guide* and on the first page of each lesson.
- Make and post a chart that indicates the date on which each lesson will be studied.
- If all of your class has e-mail, send them an e-mail with the dates the lessons will be studied.
- Provide a bookmark with the lesson dates. You may want to include information about your church and then use the bookmark as an outreach tool, too. A model for a bookmark can be downloaded from www.gc2press.org under the "Teacher Helps" tab.
- Develop a sticker with the lesson dates and place it on the table of contents or on the back cover.

Here are some steps you can take to help you prepare well to teach each lesson and save time in doing so:

1. Start early in the week before your class meets.
2. If your church's adult Bible study teachers meet for lesson overview and preparation, plan to participate. If your church's adult Bible study teachers don't have this planning time now, look for ways to begin. You, your fellow teachers, and your church will benefit from this mutual encouragement and preparation.
3. Overview the study in the *Study Guide*. Look at the table of contents and see where this lesson fits in the overall study. Then read or review the study introduction to the book that is being studied.
4. Consider carefully the suggested Main Idea, Question to Explore, and Teaching Aim. These can help you discover the main thrust of this particular lesson.

5. Use your Bible to read and consider prayerfully the Scripture passages for the lesson. Using your Bible in your study and in the class session can provide a positive model to class members to use their own Bibles and give more attention to Bible study themselves. (Each writer of the Bible comments in both the *Teaching Guide* and the *Study Guide* has chosen a favorite translation. You're free to use the Bible translation you prefer and compare it with the translations chosen, of course.)
6. After reading all the Scripture passages in your Bible, then read the Bible Comments in the *Teaching Guide*. The Bible comments are intended to be an aid to your study of the Bible. Read also the small articles—"sidebars"—in each lesson. They are intended to provide additional, enrichment information and inspiration and to encourage thought and application. Try to answer for yourself the questions included in each lesson. They're intended to encourage further thought and application, and you can also use them in the class session itself. Continue your Bible study with the aid of the Bible comments included in this *Teaching Guide*.
7. Review the "Teaching Plans" in this *Teaching Guide*. Consider how these suggestions would help you teach this Bible passage in your class to accomplish the teaching aim.
8. Consider prayerfully the needs of your class and think about how to teach so you can help your class learn best.
9. Develop and follow a lesson plan based on the suggestions in this Teaching Guide, with alterations as needed for your class.
10. Enjoy leading your class in discovering the meaning of the Scripture passages and in applying these passages to their lives.

***Teaching Resource Items.*** These items are available for download for use in your class. These are available for $20 at www.gc2press.org. Watch for them in the teaching plans for each lesson. These items are selected from the teaching plans. They are provided online to make lesson preparation easier for handouts and similar items. Permission is granted to download these teaching resource items, print them out, and copy them as needed for all classes within your church.

***Premium Commentary.*** Plan to get the additional in-depth Bible Study comments available online. Visit our website, call 1-866-249-1799, or email gc2press@txb.org to order the Premium Commentary. It is available for $30 in electronic format (PDF) from our website. Permission is granted to download this commentary, print it, and copy them as needed for all classes within your church.

# Writers for This *Teaching Guide*

**Rebecca Poe Hays wrote lessons one through five.** Dr. Poe Hays is associate professor of Christian Scriptures (Hebrew Bible/Old Testament) at Baylor University's Truett Seminary. She writes on the Psalms and resilience, the book of Isaiah, and parables in the Old Testament. An ordained Baptist minister, she has served congregations in Tennessee, Alabama, and Texas. She is married to Dr. Joshua Hays, who serves as associate pastor of First Baptist Church, Waco, Texas and is the mother of two young children.

**Randy Johnson wrote the teaching plans for lessons one through five.** Randy grew up in Odessa, Texas. He is a graduate of Howard Payne University with a B.A. in Bible and Southwestern Seminary in Ft. Worth, with an M.Div. from the School of Theology. He served 38 years in local church student ministry and retired from student ministry in February 2013. Randy and his wife Carol, a reading tutor for local elementary schools, have been married for 47 years. They have two adult daughters (Lindsey and Casey) and 4 grandchildren (Parker, Piper, Aubrey, and Asher). He and Carol have been members for 40 years of First Baptist Church, Richardson, Texas, where he served his last 28 years of student ministry and now teaches an adult Sunday School class.

**Felisi Sorgwe wrote lessons six through ten.** Dr. Sorgwe is an associate professor of theology at Houston Christian University where he is also the director of the Center for Exploring Ministry Careers. He earned his Ph.D. in Religion degree from Baylor University, after graduating from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary with his M.Div. and M.A. in Religious Education. He obtained his B.A. in chemical engineering and mathematics from the University of Washington in Seattle. He is also the pastor of Maranatha International Church in Houston. He is the author of the book *I Will Be With You: God's Favorite Promise*.

**Carroll Townsend wrote the teaching plans for lessons six through ten.** Carroll Townsend is the director of Religious Education for the Chaplain Corps at Fort Knox, Kentucky. Before serving the last ten years in this position, he served Baptist churches in Texas and Louisiana. Carroll has written for Lifeway, been a consultant for the Louisiana Baptist Convention, and is also an associate professor at Liberty University. His doctorate is from Southwestern Seminary in Foundations of Education. He and his wife live in Acworth, Georgia and also Campo Alegre, South Brazil.

**John Duncan wrote lessons eleven through fourteen plus the Easter lesson.** Dr. Duncan is the co-pastor of The Church at Horseshoe Bay in Horseshoe Bay, Texas. John has a Ph.D. from The Open University via the Kirby-Laing Institute in Cambridge, England, and a D.Min. from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. He is married to Judy, has three married daughters, and seven grandchildren. He is also an avid basketball fan of the NBA's Dallas Mavericks.

**Craig West wrote the teaching plans for lessons eleven through fourteen plus the Easter lesson.** Dr. West currently resides in West Monroe, Louisiana, where he is a hospice chaplain and bereavement coordinator. He has written for GC2 Press for several years, penning both *Study Guide* and *Teaching Guide* materials. A graduate of both New Orleans Baptist and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminaries, he enjoys the experience of helping others prepare to teach God's Word.

# Psalms

## *The Believer's Prayer Book*

### A Study of Psalms


*How to Make the Best Use of This Issue* 3

*Writers for This* Teaching Guide 7

DATE OF STUDY

**LESSON 1** _____ **Sing and Shout to the Lord!** 11
PSALM 66:1–20

**LESSON 2** _____ **Rescued From the Pit** 23
PSALM 30:1–12

**LESSON 3** _____ **Don't Be Foolish** 34
PSALM 14:1–7

**LESSON 4** _____ **Creation Declares God's Glory** 45
PSALM 19:1–14

**LESSON 5** _____ **If You Did It, Admit It** 57
PSALM 51:1–19

**LESSON 6** _____ **God Forgives** 68
PSALM 86:1–17

**LESSON 7** _____ **Don't Worry. Trust in God.** 80
PSALM 37:1–40

*Ministry Promotions* 93

**LESSON 8** _____ **Rest on the Rock** 97
PSALM 62:1–12

**LESSON 9** _____ **Walking Blamelessly** 108
PSALM 119:1–16

**LESSON 10** _____ **Proclaim It!** 118
PSALM 96:1–13

**LESSON 11** _____ **God Uplifts the Poor and Needy** 130
PSALM 113:1–9

**LESSON 12** _____ **Has God Forgotten Me?** 143
PSALM 77:1–20

**LESSON 13** _____ **Our Refuge and Strength** 156
PSALM 46:1–11

**LESSON 14** _____ **King Above All Kings** 168
PSALM 93:1–5

**LESSON 15** _____ **The Grave Will Not Hold Us Either** 180
PSALM 16:1–11

*Prayer for This Study* 194

*Our Next New Study* 196

*How to Order More Bible Study Materials* 199

| FOCAL TEXT | BACKGROUND |
| --- | --- |
| Psalm 66:1–20 | Exodus 14:15–31 |

# lesson 1

# Sing and Shout to the Lord!

**MAIN IDEA**

When Christians truly comprehend what God has done, they will naturally respond with praise.

**QUESTION TO EXPLORE**

How do I praise the Lord?

**TEACHING AIM**

To lead adults to understand different ways people can praise the Lord

# Bible Comments

## Understanding the Context

The disciples asked Jesus to teach them how to pray (Luke 11:1). Jesus responded with the Model Prayer, which provides a general framework for how to speak to God (Luke 11:2-4; Matthew 6:9-13). In many ways, the Old Testament version of the Model Prayer—the Old Testament version of God teaching us how to pray—is the book of Psalms. This collection of 150 individual prayers (many of which include notations that suggest they were set to music and performed with instrumental accompaniment) provides a general framework for what it means for God's people to worship.

While the Psalms are traditionally associated with David, most of them are very difficult to connect with a particular person, place, or situation. These were songs and prayers that God's people *used*, which means they were constantly adding to them and adapting them for new contexts—similar to how we might update the word choice in an old hymn or add a new stanza to a praise chorus. What this means is that God has given us the Psalms in a way that lets us pray them ourselves, even though we aren't David or Solomon or an Israelite from thousands of years ago. These song-prayers have enduring relevance and relatability. They still teach us how to pray, and they still help us do so.

Divided into five books (poetic instruction mirroring the prose instruction found in the five books of Moses), the book of Psalms includes hymns, laments, thanksgivings, prayers for the Davidic kings, songs featuring proverbial wisdom, raw shouts of anger and doubt, and everything in between. Some of the psalms are voiced by individuals, some by the whole community. The overarching lesson of the Psalms, then, is that God wants to hear from us—no matter what we're feeling.

## Interpreting the Scriptures

Psalm 66 is a praise psalm that gives thanks to God for His powerful works on the earth. The psalmist isn't giving thanks alone but instead repeatedly calls others—within the faith community and beyond it—to recognize who God is, what God has done, and to respond with praise. Psalms scholar Bill Bellinger likes to say that "Biblical praise is always substantive." We praise God because He has *done* things, and our worship should reflect the particular incarnations of God's work in the world and in our lives. The psalmist of Psalm 66 found reasons for praise in both the stories of God's work in history and the psalmist's own personal story.

### A Series of Calls to Praise

This psalm is divided into four major "stanzas." Each section begins with an imperative call to praise and then explains *why* God is worthy of praise.

- Verses 1–4: All the earth should praise God because of His great power to overcome enemies (those who bring harm to others, those who scoff and mock, those who perpetrate injustice and promote false worship).
- Verses 5–7: We should praise God because He led the Hebrew people out of slavery and delivered them from Pharaoh's army by parting the sea, and God continues to keep enemies in check.
- Verses 8–12: The peoples of the earth should praise God because He has cared for His people. Also notice that this loving care includes times of both discipline and hardship.
- Verses 16–20: All who fear God should praise Him because He listens to us when we pray and answers us when we call.

### Praise Because of History (66:1–12)

The first half of the psalm used plural pronouns and reflects on God's care for the community of faith. The language is largely general and could refer to any

number of moments of salvation from enemies, guidance through difficulty, and periods of corrective discipline.

**66:1–9.** At the heart of this corporate section of the psalm, the psalmist specifically named the deliverance across the Red Sea (Psalm 66:6; Exodus 14:15–31). This miracle of the Exodus is foundational for the identity of God's people—it was a moment in which the all-powerful God heard the cries of the people, intervened to save them, and claimed them as His own. In Exodus 14, God delivered the children of Israel by parting the Red Sea and leading them safely through it on dry ground. In the next chapter, Moses and the prophetess Miriam led the people to respond to this miracle of salvation by singing praise to God (Exodus 15). The psalmist of Psalm 66 continued in this pattern of leading people to respond to God's works by singing praises.

**66:10–12.** These verses are easy to skip over in the midst of all this celebration of deliverance. Here the psalmist led the community in speaking directly to God. "*You* have put us to the test," the worshipers sing: "*You* laid an oppressive burden upon us. *You* made men ride over our heads" [emphasis added]. These statements seem at odds with the surrounding affirmation of God's protection and care. They indicate the worshipers have experienced hard times, and God is the One who caused these hard times (or, at least, who let them happen). Other psalms will give voice to the pain and disorientation such experiences prompt in the moment (for example, Psalms 38, 44, and 88), but in Psalm 66 the worshipers were able to look back on these experiences and see God's benevolent purposes. They may have experienced God's discipline, but God never abandoned them; moreover, God restored them and "brought [them] out into *a place of* abundance" (66:12b).

## Praise Because of Your Story (66:13–20)

**66:13.** The second half of the psalm moves from the memory of a corporate past to the ongoing experiences of the individual. The psalmist vowed to come and worship God with lavish sacrifices because God heard the psalmist's own prayers for help.

**66:14–15.** Notice that the psalmist admitted he or she was in trouble but also offered praise during this time of trouble. Perhaps because the psalmist remembered the story of God's past deliverance (like the psalmist sang about in the first half of the psalm), the psalmist had confidence that God would deliver again.

**66:16–19.** The psalmist recognized that this *personal* story of God's care and deliverance has the potential to encourage those who hear it to offer their own praises. Rather than a call to praise, this "stanza" is a call to hear the psalmist's testimony. The psalmist described calling out to the Lord, praising the Lord, and the Lord's gracious response.

In verse 17 the psalmist described praise as "exalted with my tongue." The language literally refers to raising something (or someone) up high. Raising someone high puts them in a place of honor—think about a king sitting on a dais—and puts them in a place where everyone can see them. Our praise should honor God, and it should do so in a way that helps others to see God better.

Verse 18 is not saying God doesn't hear or answer the prayers of sinners. We are all sinners. Instead, the psalmist was saying that willfully "regard[ing] wickedness in [one's] heart" is incompatible with true worship. In other words, we cannot worship God faithfully if we see our own sin and refuse to acknowledge it or repent of it.

**66:20.** The psalm concludes with a profound statement of worship that praises God because of God's *hesed*. Various English translations for this Hebrew word are "steadfast love," "loving-kindness," "faithfulness," "mercy," "unfailing love," "loyalty," "favor," and more. Jenny Matheny describes this key character trait of God as "loyal loving-kindness that originates in God's nature, embodying both answerability and possibility through anticipated and creative relational endeavors and expressions among God, humanity, and creation."[1] Ultimately, all of our praise could be said to be a response to God's *hesed*, which manifests over and over throughout history and our lives in countless ways. In Psalm 66, the psalmist modeled for us how to reflect on God's *hesed* in both corporate and individual ways and how to turn from

reflection to praise and from our own praise to the work of calling others to praise.

## Focusing on the Meaning

The plural imperatives that dominate the structure of Psalm 66 invite us to continue the pattern of seeing God's great deeds and responding with praise. When we look to history and examine our own testimonies of God's activity in our lives, we will find abundant occasions to praise and invite others to join the song.

Neither corporate history nor individual testimony is free from times of hardship, however. The experience of suffering (sickness, financial strain, mental health and anxiety, death, injustice, family brokenness, abuse, and more) does not preclude praise. And while God does not ever want to see His children hurting, we know these times can become important seasons of growth. We do not grow if we are not stretched, and we do not learn if we are not corrected. The good news is that God doesn't leave us to face this stretching and correction alone.

Just as Psalm 66:8–12 blesses the God who allows such trials, 1 Peter 1:3–7 also blesses the God who allows trials. As Christians considering how to offer up praises to God in all circumstances, these words offer a helpful benediction in the spirit of Psalm 66:

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.... In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, so that the proof of your faith, *being* more precious than gold which perishes though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise, glory, and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ (1 Peter 1:3–7).

## ENDNOTES

[1] Jennifer M. Matheny, *Hesed, The Seed of the Biblical Story: New Life for Old Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2026), 9.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Matheny, Jennifer M. *Hesed, The Seed of the Biblical Story: New Life for Old Testament Theology*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2026.

# Teaching Plans

## DISCOVERY PLAN

### Connect With Life

1. Search the internet for one of Chris Tomlin's versions of "How Great Is Our God" (preferably one with words printed on the screen) and play it for the class. Following the song, voice a prayer of thanksgiving and praise for how great our God is.

2. Comment, *Once we realize and understand what God has done for us, we will naturally respond with praise. So, how do you praise God?*

   As class members share their perspectives, write their responses on a whiteboard or a large piece of art paper attached to a focal wall.

3. Say, *In today's lesson we will be reminded of how God has delivered and restored those who have faith in Him. We will also discover how Psalm 66 guides us to express praise to God in response to His greatness.*

### Guide Bible Study

4. Invite a class member to read aloud the focal passage. Point out that the psalmist shared his heart in praise to God in this passage, even though he was not perfect and often disappointed God.

5. Invite class members to gather in three groups, and use smart phones, laptops, tablets, etc. to search electronically for *Commentaries on Psalm 66* (Bible Hub, Bible Gateway, etc.). Assign each group a certain number of verses, as listed below to research how God has blessed us and how we can praise God. Allow time for members to search and gather comments, and then guide reports and discussion concerning the following verses:

- Psalm 66:1–7—(awesome works; enemies pretend to obey; earth will worship; sing praises; turned sea into dry ground; rejoice in Him; rules forever; watches the nations)
- Psalm 66:8–14—(bless Him; He keeps us in life; He keeps us from slipping; He tests and refines us; He laid burdens upon us; during tough times He gave us abundance; we offer burnt offerings and make vows to Him when in trouble)
- Psalm 66:15–20—(offer animals as sacrifices; cried out to Him in praise; our sin was confessed, and He heard our prayers; He did not withhold His favor from us)

6. Call attention to Exodus 14:15–31 and ask someone to recount the story of Moses and the children of Israel crossing the Red Sea. Use this as an example of why Israel (and we) should thank and praise God.

7. Direct members once again to verses 6–7 in the focal passage. Read the verses aloud and ask listeners: *Why do you think the psalmist included these verses in this passage*?

8. To sum up the biblical ideas detailed in this passage, provide each member with a 4x6 card and pencil, and encourage him or her to write at least two basic biblical ideas presented in Psalm 66.

## Encourage Application

9. Remind class members that, *Our daily task is to know and understand what God has done for us, and to praise Him for it. When we realize what God has done for us, it motivates us to worship Him with music, prayer, Scripture, service, and praise.*

10. Share, *Sometimes we need to ask questions related to our knowledge of God and how we will respond. However, we might need to contemplate these questions for a while.*

11. Ask the following question and share with class members that you would like for them to live with this question during the coming week: *How will you respond to all God has done for you*?

## DISCUSSION PLAN

### Connect With Life

1. Share the story in the *Study Guide* about game six of the 1975 World Series when Carlton Fisk stepped to the plate, hoping to do the improbable, forcing a seventh game against the Cincinnati Reds. (See "A Universal Invitation (66:1–4)" in the *Study Guide*). Say, *Psalm 66 is a universal call to the people of God to sing and shout to the Lord because He continues to do the impossible*.

2. Ask class members to recall and share about the first time they felt an overwhelming sense of God and what He has done for them. Ask, *How did you respond to this realization*?

### Guide Bible Study

3. Invite selected class members to read Psalm 66 aloud.
   - Reader #1—66:1–7
   - Reader #2—66:8–12
   - Reader #3—66:13–20

4. Ask the following questions for consideration and discussion:
   - What are the reasons, listed in these verses, we should praise God?
   - What are some of the ways, listed in these verses, we can praise God?

   **Note:** See "Interpreting the Scriptures" in the *Teaching Guide* for ideas on how to lead this discussion.

5. Say, *Psalms scholar Bill Bellinger says, "Biblical praise is always substantive." We praise God because God has done great things for us, and our worship should reflect God's work in the world and in our lives. Psalm 66 finds reasons for praise in both the stories of God's work in history and the psalmist's own personal experience. Developing a lifestyle of praise and worship is not easy, but it is a part of becoming a disciple. And when, we begin to reflect on the work of God in our life and the lives of others, we sing and shout to the Lord for all He has done and all He will do.*

6. Point out that verse 20 in the *Study Guide* passage says it best, "Praise be to God, who has not rejected my prayer or withheld His love from me" (NIV).

## Encourage Application

7. Call attention to the third paragraph under "Focusing on Meaning" in the *Teaching Guide*. Lead the class in a discussion of why God allows trials in our lives and what we can learn from them.

8. Comment that this passage calls us to consider our response to God based on all He has done for us. Use a markerboard to present a simple chart to the class, asking them to first brainstorm and list considerations presented by the passage, and then how they might respond as a believer. Your chart might include some of the following.

| **Psalm 66 tells me what God has done for me . . .** | **I will respond to the goodness of God by . . . .** |
|---|---|
| God's great power to overcome enemies | |
| God cares for His people with discipline | |
| God listens to and answers our prayers | |

(A copy of this assignment is available in "Teaching Resource Items" for this study at www.gc2press.org.)

9. A question to live with this week: *Based on all God has done for you, how will you respond to Him?*

10. Close with a prayer that asks God to guide us in appropriate ways we can express our praise and thanks to God for all He had done for us.

FOCAL TEXT
Psalm 30:1–12

BACKGROUND
Mark 10:46-52

# lesson 2

# Rescued From the Pit

**MAIN IDEA**

When facing desperate situations, Christians can call on the Lord and know He will answer.

**QUESTION TO EXPLORE**

Do I only wait until the situation turns desperate to call on the Lord?

**TEACHING AIM**

To lead adults to understand no matter how depressed or distressed I feel, I can always cry out to God, who will hear and answer

# Bible Comments

## Understanding the Context

Psalm 30 is a thanksgiving psalm. We could call these psalms the "sequels" to the psalms of lament, which offer up cries for help to God. The thanksgivings are the prayers that come after God has given the help and tell the story of deliverance. In Psalm 30, we get the psalmist's story twice—once in abbreviated form (30:2–3) and once in a more detailed way (30:6–11). This story of being rescued from "the pit" is the occasion for the psalmist's resounding praise.

When we think about the place of these psalms as part of the biblical book of Psalms and as part of the worshiping life of God's people, however, we see that these stories are not only personal reflections about God's relationship to the psalmists. Instead, these are psalms that were *shared* with the community as part of corporate worship. The psalmists are giving thanks for what God has done for them individually, but they give thanks in such a way as to inspire *others* to recognize God's acts of deliverance and give thanks.

The psalm's superscription indicates that it is part of the Davidic collection (written by David, for David, or for the Davidic kings) and was used in association with the dedication of the Temple, which Solomon built in the 900s B.C. (1 Kings 8), Ezra rebuilt in 515 B.C. (Ezra 6), and Judas Maccabeus rededicated in 164 B.C. (the celebration of Hanukkah). The superscriptions are secondary to the psalms themselves, so this label shouldn't be seen as limiting how the psalm should be used in worship today but simply as an example of how God's people have used it in the past—an amazing testimony to the enduring power of the Psalms to guide us in worship.

## Interpreting the Scriptures

Psalm 30 unfolds in three major parts: a call to give thanks to God (30:1–5), an explanation of why we should give thanks (30:6–10), and a restatement of thanksgiving (30:11–12).

### A Call to Give Thanks to God (30:1–5)

**30:1–3.** The psalmist began with an enthusiastic shout of thanks to God. The language is of raising up and making high. We "exalt" God so that God holds the place of honor (like a king or queen on a throne), and we exalt God so everyone can see God clearly.

The psalmist exalted God by telling the story of how God had rescued him. Literally, the psalmist said God "drew me up" as from a well of water (30:1), and that God reversed his direction so instead of descending down into "the pit," the psalmist went up (30:3). Because God had raised up the psalmist, the psalmist raised up God in praise.

God's rescue of the psalmist has several dimensions. One is the social/relational dynamic: God's active involvement protected the psalmist from the mockery of enemies. Another is the physical: God had healed the psalmist. The reference to Sheol suggests grave illness or serious injury. Sheol—also called "the grave" or "the pit"—was the place where the dead dwelled as wandering shadows, so the psalmist was grateful that God kept him from succumbing to death.

**30:4–5.** The psalmist turned from his own individual praise to the rest of his community (those who embrace God's *hesed*, or loyal covenant love). Because of his testimony of deliverance, *everyone* should sing praise and give thanks to God. The psalmist did not try to hide that life under God's protection would still involve hardship (which the references to God's anger and to times of weeping reflect), but the enduring certainty of God's favor outweighs the temporary hardship.

## An Explanation of Why We Should Give Thanks (30:6–10)

**30:6–7a.** The psalmist told his story in more detail. He began by saying he had felt completely confident in his prosperity, comfort, and stability. Such a statement could sound arrogant, but in verse 7 he credited the Lord with this security, not his own efforts. The psalmist had a relationship with God and trusted that God would continue to bless him in all the ways God had before. Life—and the life of faith—then made sense to the psalmist.

**30:7b–10.** The psalmist described an abrupt, disorienting change of circumstances. Things went from really good to really bad. The image the psalmist used is of God hiding God's face. As in the priestly blessing from Numbers 6:24–26, the idea of God's face is associated with God bestowing favor upon someone. It's a relational figure of speech that should make us think of a loving parent smiling joyfully in the presence of a child. For God to hide God's face indicates the withdrawal of presence, protection, and favor. That the psalmist's dismay resulted from God hiding God's face reinforces the knowledge that God's favor is what provided the prosperity, comfort, and stability the psalmist enjoyed in the preceding verses. We rely on God; we cannot make it on our own.

Accordingly, the dismayed psalmist responded to his change of circumstance by calling upon God. The emotion of the psalmist's prayer is evident from the repetition: he said twice in verse 8 that he called to the Lord, and then he gave us the very words he prayed.

In verse 9, desperation prompted the psalmist to try and persuade God that it's worth it to God to deliver him. The shadowy inhabitants of Sheol can't worship God anymore. The dirt that fills a grave can't offer praise. God needed to rescue the psalmist so God would have someone around to give thanks. Lament psalms are full of this kind of "motivation clause." While theologically we may recognize that bribing God isn't the best course of action (nor is it necessary to bribe the God who loves us, *wants* to help us, and has gone to incredible lengths to save us), it's a very *human* course of action. As God teaches us to pray through the Psalms, these kinds of prayers assure

us that God isn't so concerned that our prayers are "formally correct." God just wants us to be honest—God knows how we feel anyway.

Verse 10 can be understood in two different ways. The Hebrew text could be read as the psalmist re-voicing his original prayers: "Lord, hear me and be gracious to me and help me!" Understood this way, the psalmist was so caught up in the emotion of his storytelling that he cried out as if he were still in danger. The Hebrew could also be understood as describing what had actually happened: "The Lord heard me and was gracious to me and helped me" (which is how the Greek Bible that was in wide use during Jesus' time translated it). In many ways, the full meaning of this verse involves both these ways of understanding the Hebrew: the immediate cry for help and the confidence that God answers this cry. The knowledge that God *has heard*, *has been gracious*, and *has helped* is what inspires us to keep crying out for God to hear, show grace, and extend help.

## A Restatement of Thanksgiving (30:11–12)

However one understands verse 10 specifically (as an ongoing cry for help or as a testimony about help that has already been offered), the final verses of the psalm make clear that God responded favorably to the psalmist's prayer. Once more the psalmist spoke directly to God. The rest of the congregation faded away as the psalmist marveled at God's ability to transform even the most dire of circumstances into opportunities to celebrate.

Notably, the final verse of the psalm begins with a purpose clause: "That." God rescues us from "the pit" not simply because God loves us, but because God has created us for a purpose. We are to praise God and to give thanks as a means of bearing witness to others. God calls us to be a light to the nations and to be a blessing to the earth. Part of how we accomplish this task is by telling our stories to others. As we tell our stories of God's deliverance, we announce to enemies that God reigns (see 30:1), and we assure the people of God that God is a gracious helper. Psalm 30 is a song spoken *by* an individual, but it is a song *for* the community.

## Focusing on the Meaning

Beyond simply teaching us to give thanks, God teaches us many things in Psalm 30 about the character of God, the nature of the life of faith, and the responsibility of God's people.

Psalm 30 reinforces some critical aspects of God's revealed character. The psalmist described a holy and powerful God with whom he was in relationship. God extends favor to human beings (30:5, 7), God hears those who cry out (30:2, 10), and God brings transformation and renewal (30:1, 2, 3, 5, 11). Many of the terms the psalmist used to describe God echo the way God described the divine nature to Moses in Exodus 34:6–7. The psalmist was bearing witness to God's enduring nature—which we, as worshipers responding to the psalmist's call to give thanks, can trust.

Psalm 30 acknowledges the spiritual "ups and downs" that are part of the human experience. Sometimes we stand strong, and sometimes we are dismayed (30:7). The psalm teaches us that we should acknowledge God's involvement in the whole of our lives—the good and the bad, times of prosperity and times of despair.

Psalm 30, above all else perhaps, teaches us that it is good to give enthusiastic thanks for the ways we see God intervening in our lives. Such thanksgiving is a key facet of the responsibility we bear as members of the body of Christ and God's kingdom of priests. The psalmist's testimony becomes the occasion for those who hear this testimony—whether in the ancient Temple, the early church, or twenty-first-century America—to embrace deeper confidence in who God is and to respond with praise. Worship in the Psalms is never just about the individual psalmists and God. Rather, it's about the whole community and God's care and faithful work among His people. In Psalm 30, the psalmist was not afraid to share his lowest spiritual moments with his community. Instead of letting pride or shame silence him, he boldly recounted how God met him in that moment and transformed it. And God wants to do the same for each of us.

# Teaching Plans

## DISCOVERY PLAN

### Connect With Life

1. Ask a member of the class to read a poem entitled: *The Pit—God's Little Acre* (author unknown), which can be found through an Internet search.

2. Ask the class, *Does this poem remind you of a familiar biblical story? If so, what is it? What are the similarities? What are the differences*?

3. Say, *We often find ourselves in a pit, that is, a distressing situation where we feel overwhelming despair. Sometimes it is brought on by our own decisions, and sometimes it is brought by the decisions of others. Regardless, we find ourselves hurting and hopeless. Today's lesson reminds us that no matter how depressed or distressed we feel, we can always cry out to God who will hear and answer.*

4. Before class enlist two members who would be willing to share a 2-minute testimony of a "pit" that God brought them out of. Emphasize to the volunteers to focus on God's deliverance more than the pit.

### Guide Bible Study

5. Invite a class member to read aloud Psalm 30. Point out that this is a thanksgiving psalm. These are the prayers that come after God provides help for us and tells us the story of deliverance. We get the psalmist's story twice—once in abbreviated form (verses 2–3) and once in a more detailed way (verses 6–11). The story of being rescued from the pit is an occasion for the psalmist's genuine praise.

6. Invite a class member to read Genesis 37:18–28. Point out that Joseph was a person who was rescued from an actual pit. Ask the class to com-

pare and contrast Joseph's story with the writer of Psalm 30. Ask for volunteers who are willing to share how God rescued them from the pit.

7. Invite three class members in advance of the lesson to research the meaning of the selected verses below. Provide copies of the *Teaching Guide* or direct them to use the *Study Guide* to aid in their research or point them to other resources you trust.
   - Researcher #1—A Call to Give Thanks to God (30:1–5)
   - Researcher #2—An Explanation of Why We Should Give Thanks to God (30:6–10)
   - Researcher #3—A Restatement of Thanksgiving (30:11–12)

   (A copy of this assignment is available in "Teaching Resource Items" for this study at www.gc2press.org.)

8. Ask each person to be prepared to give a verbal report based on their research. Allow the class to ask questions or make comments.

9. Say, *Psalm 30, above all else, teaches us it is good to give thanks for the ways we see God intervening when we find ourselves in the pit. Such thanksgiving is a key facet of the responsibility we have as members of the body of Christ*.

## Encourage Application

10. Remind class members that God rescues us from "the pit" not simply because God loves us, but because God has created us for a purpose. We are to praise God and to give thanks as a way of bearing witness to others. God calls us to be salt and light and to be a blessing to others. As we tell our stories of God's deliverance, we announce to the world that God is in charge, and we reassure the people of God that He is our helper.

11. Say, *Remember, no matter how deep the pit or how distressed we feel, we can always cry out to God who will hear us and lift us out of the pit, even if we cry out to God at the last minute. So, what are we waiting for?*

12. Close in prayer praising God for His grace and mercy to deliver us from the pit and thanking Him for the times He has done so.

## DISCUSSION PLAN

### Connect With Life

1. Ask, *Has anyone here literally fallen into a pit and couldn't get out?* If someone has, ask them to tell their story. How did they fall into the pit and how did they get out. If no one has had such an experience, ask the class to imagine how someone might fall into a pit and what they might do to get out. Allow time for sharing ideas.

2. Mini Lecture: *Some passages of Scripture symbolize despair, suffering, and hopelessness. These ideas are used many times in the Psalms to portray feelings of desolation, often pleading for God's deliverance from the "pit of despair." Psalm 40:2 says, "He brought me out of the pit of destruction, out of the mud; And He set my feet on a rock, making my footsteps firm." In Psalm 30* (our passage for today), *God delivers us from the pit of despair, hardship, and hopelessness. And all we need to do is cry out to him. In Psalm 30, we will discover that no matter how distressed or hopeless we feel, we can always cry out to God who will hear our cries and help us out of the pit.*

### Guide Bible Study

3. Invite three class members to read aloud Psalm 30.
   - Reader 1—30:1–5

     Say, *The psalmist explained that he had been "lifted out of the depths"* (NIV) *and spared from the pit.* Ask, *What did he do to get God to help him? After God helped him, what was his response to God?*

- Reader 2—30:6–10

  Say, *The psalmist proclaimed that when he had God's favor, he felt secure and that nothing could obstruct him, but when he no longer felt God's presence, the psalmist expressed his vulnerabilities and desperation for his life.* Ask, *How do you respond to God when anxiety and a sense of futility overwhelm you?*

- Reader 3—30:11–12

  Say, *The psalmist, in these final verses, made clear that God responded favorably to the psalmist's prayer.* Ask, *Why did God continue to rescue the psalmist?*

4. Say, *The psalmist gave thanks for what God has done for him individually, but he also responded in such a way as to inspire others to recognize and give thanks for God's acts of deliverance.*

5. Say, *Bartimaeus is another example of someone crying to God from a desperate situation and receiving deliverance.* Ask someone to read Mark 10:46–52 and discuss the circumstances of Bartimaeus' pit, Jesus' response, and Bartimaeus' reaction to the change Jesus made in his life.

## Encourage Application

6. Call attention to the sidebar, "Pit Groups" in the *Study Guide*. Ask a class member to read this aloud.

7. Ask these questions and allow time for a response: *What would a Pit Ministry look like in our church? How much would it cost? What kind of training would we need? How would we get started? How would we identify those we want to minister to?*

   (A copy of this assignment is available in "Teaching Resource Items" for this study at www.gc2press.org.)

8. Say, *God rescues us from the pit because He loves us and because God has created us for a purpose. We are to praise God as a means of bearing witness to others.*

9. Invite a class member to pray. Thank God that no matter how depressed or hopeless we feel, we can always cry out to God and He will hear us and lift us out of the pit. You could pray the prayer of Bartimaeus in unison, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" (Mark 10:47).

**FOCAL TEXT**
Psalm 14:1–7

**BACKGROUND**
Romans 3:9–20

# lesson 3

# Don't Be Foolish

**MAIN IDEA**

Those who harbor foolishness in their hearts lack spiritual wisdom.

**QUESTION TO EXPLORE**

How do I harbor foolishness in my heart?

**TEACHING AIM**

To lead adults to understand the dangers of harboring foolishness in our hearts

# Bible Comments

## Understanding the Context

Psalm 14 defies easy categorization. In a lot of ways, it sounds like some of the wisdom material from the book of Proverbs that teaches about the contrasting ways of the wise and the foolish, the righteous and the wicked. The psalm is similar to Psalm 1 in this way. In other ways, Psalm 14 sounds like one of the lament psalms that cry out to God because of the challenges life throws at us.

The psalmist referred to "detestable acts" (14:1) of the "workers of injustice" (14:4) and describes the "righteous generation" (14:5)—those "who seek God" (14:2)—as the ones who suffer from these acts. The psalm ends with an exclamation of desperation that God would save these righteous sufferers (14:7).

Other than the concluding plea, the psalmist spoke declaratively. The psalm boldly states known, *trusted* facts about the nature of the God whom the psalmist leads us to worship. In Psalm 14, God teaches us that the wise will trust in the God who reigns from Heaven, looks down with care and compassion on the earth, and acts in solidarity with the poor and vulnerable. This God is the one we should seek—in both good times and bad.

Psalm 14 sets up a contrast between those who seek God and act with righteousness and those who reject God and act with corruption. This simplified moral contrast reflects a teaching style and should not be understood to mean that anyone is *ever* fully good or fully bad, perfectly righteous or perfectly wicked. Notably, the psalm itself recognizes this complex reality: it describes the righteous (14:5) but also says that no one is good (14:3). The point is to set up choices for *us*. Will *we* seek God and act accordingly? Or will we not?

## Interpreting the Scriptures

The teaching strategy of the psalmist is to describe the "cast of characters" who populate our world and then leave it for us to decide where *we* want to fall on the cast list. Because we best understand these characters by seeing how they relate to one another, the psalm's structure is more organic. Each verse builds on the previous to explain who the fools are, who the righteous are, and who the Lord is.

### The Problem (14:1–4)

**14:1.** The psalmist began by describing the "fool." In Scripture, being foolish has nothing to do with your level of education or even your raw intelligence. Fools are those who—for one reason or another—reject right relationship with the God who created and reigns over all things. Other passages will highlight the fools' rejection of instruction, discipline, correction, and a lifestyle of obedience and hospitality (1 Samuel 13:13; 2 Samuel 24:10; Proverbs 1:7; 15:5).

We all have the capacity to become fools through our rebellious choices, which are the fruit of rejecting God (Psalm 107:17–18). Psalm 14 makes clear the connection between our thoughts, attitudes, and beliefs (what we say in our hearts) and our lifestyles and behaviors (our acts).

If we approach the world as if God is not God—whether by being nonexistent or by being unengaged with our lives (Psalm 10:4)—then we will act accordingly. If there is no one to set a standard of loving our neighbor, for example, then why would we go to the trouble of loving our neighbor? If we don't think God will hold us accountable for our selfish, unjust actions, why would we go to the trouble of putting others before ourselves? Without a God who loves us and who intercedes in the world, it is all too easy to act in detestable ways.

**14:2.** The opposite of the fool are the wise, or "those who understand." As with fools, being wise is not about intelligence but about relationship to God. Just as we all have the capacity to be foolish, we all have the potential to be

wise. All it takes is seeking God and seeking to follow God's teaching (Psalm 1).

The good news, even in this somewhat bleak verse, is that God is seeking us. The psalmist used anthropomorphic language to depict God looking down from the highest heavens—searching out the highways and byways of the earth for anyone who might be, in turn, searching for God. And God has promised repeatedly throughout Scripture that those who seek God *will find* God (Deuteronomy 4:29; Jeremiah 29:13; Matthew 7:7).

**14:3–4.** These verses describe in more depth the "detestable acts" (14:1) that fools commit. The introductory verse has already deployed exceptionally strong language that likens God-denying fools to the corrupted humanity in Genesis 6:11–12. Now the psalmist expanded the portrait with even more graphic, multi-sensory descriptors.

Fools who deny God "turn aside" from the way they should go like a driver taking a dangerous route to a wrong location (Psalm 1; Deuteronomy 30:11–20). Fools who deny God are "corrupt," which is the Hebrew word used to talk about the stench of milk that has turned and now tastes sour. Verse 3 ends by reasserting the sad state of affairs, a reality that Paul will state again in his letter to the Roman church: all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23).

Verse 4 makes explicit the fact that our individual sins never just hurt *us*. God created us to be in community, and our choices inevitably impact our communities. The foolishness of people harms others. The psalmist compared the harm fools do to God's people with cannibalism—and cannibalism that has become as commonplace as eating bread. Our sinful choices lead us to devouring each other and not even recognizing that doing so is wrong. We get used to our sinful, selfish behavior—in part because this behavior represents the wisdom of the world (1 Corinthians 3:19). Those who reject God also reject *God's* expectations, standards, and justice: loving God always means loving our neighbor, and failing to love God always means we fail to love our neighbor.

This theme runs throughout the entirety of Scripture. God cares how we treat each other, and God hates it when we hurt each other. As the mother of

two children, I feel this reality. When one or both of my children choose to reject me as their mother—which, by extension, means rejecting my instruction to "stop hitting your brother!" or "stop grabbing your sister's toy!"—then the other child suffers. And frequently, both children suffer. All of which grieves me as a parent. How much more does God grieve when people, those God created in His image, foolishly choose to reject God and perpetrate injustice against their fellow humans?

## The Solution (14:5–7)

**14:5–6.** The most important character—and the one who defines both what is foolish and what is wise—is the Lord. The psalmist has already described the Lord as looking down from Heaven to examine the hearts of human beings (14:2) and as the proper object of wisdom's focus (14:1–2). In verses 5–6, the psalmist made clear that God stands in solidarity with the righteous and the poor, which means the foolish oppressors should be "in great dread" (the Hebrew actually says they will "fear with fear").

Just as the wisdom framework of the psalm equates the foolish with the wicked, it also equates the wise with the righteous and the poor. As mentioned previously, this framework is meant to be a teaching tool and is not meant to indicate that the poor are always righteous or that the wealthy are always wicked. Rather, the psalmist is prompting us to examine our own hearts, motivations, and behaviors.

The psalmist did seem to exist in a context, however, in which exploitation of vulnerable groups was happening. In verse 6, the psalmist directly addressed the fools who were using their power—whether social, economic, or otherwise—to "put to shame" or humiliate those without power. The psalmist wanted these wicked fools to know that God is firmly on the side of the oppressed. God is the "refuge" that defends the ones who seek God (14:2) from the attacks of the fools who deny God (14:1).

These verses challenge us to consider whether we are standing with the righteous (who are being afflicted but defended by God) or with the fools (who have power, influence, and no respect for God's call to love our neigh-

bor). As with so much of Scripture, the psalmist's words comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable.

**14:7.** The final verse of the psalm broadens the scope out from individuals to the worshiping community of ancient Israel. This call for help—for "salvation"—names "Zion" as the source of this deliverance. Zion refers to Jerusalem, the location of God's Temple and a symbol of God's presence among the people. The language of "restores the fortunes" is common to the time of the Babylonian exile (see, for example, Jeremiah 31:18) and could perhaps reflect a later addition to an existing psalm about how those who reject God are fools and how God is a refuge for *all* those who seek God—even whole nations who need to be redeemed. Whether this verse is a later addition or not, it has provided words for successive generations of those who seek God (those who have true wisdom) to cry out to God in their times of need (anxiety, sickness, financial crisis, broken relationships, national strife, and more).

The psalm ends with the promise of praise. The God who looks down from Heaven and seeks for those who are seeking God in return, the God who stands in solidarity with and as a refuge for the oppressed and vulnerable—this is the God who will indeed bring salvation and restore the fortunes of His people. And in response, God's people will rejoice and be glad.

## Focusing on the Meaning

Psalm 14 is not just about whether you believe God exists. It is a psalm about your actions in the world—your posture before God, the way you treat your neighbors, the way you engage with those who are vulnerable—and whether these actions *truly* reflect a belief that God loves the world enough to save it. The Lord indeed offers refuge, brings salvation, and restores the fortunes of those who seek God. By extension, those who seek God—the righteous, the wise—should make their actions in the world reflect the character of the God they worship.

The Bible teaches us that every human is made in the image of God. God cares about those whom God has created, and God does expect us to be "our

brothers' keepers" (Genesis 4:9). Psalm 14 calls us to make sure we are not living our lives in ways that "devour" others (14:4) or "put to shame" the vulnerable (14:6). The psalm calls us to seek the Lord continually, which means learning more and more about the God who made us and who calls us to serve as God's hands and feet in the world. In Romans 3, which cites Psalm 14, Paul reminded us that none of us are able to serve in this role perfectly. We will indeed hurt one another; we will act like fools. "But now," Paul said, those of us who seek God are found, saved, and restored through faith in Jesus Christ (Romans 3:21–26). So don't be foolish. Seek God—and God will find you.

# Teaching Plans

## DISCOVERY PLAN

### Connect with Life

1. Research the meaning of the word "fool." You might find that a dictionary defines fool as "a silly or stupid person; a person who lacks judgment or common sense; a person who acts unwisely or imprudently."

2. Say, *In many parts of Scripture, being foolish has nothing to do with one's level of education or raw intelligence. Fools are those who, for one reason or another, reject a right relationship with God. Some passages will highlight the fool's rejection of instruction, discipline, correction, and a lifestyle of obedience and hospitality* (Psalm 53:1; 74:18; 94:8; 107:17; Proverbs 1:7, 32).

3. Say, *In today's lesson, we will discover the dangers of rejecting God. We will learn that the foolish reject God, are corrupt, and are headed for eternal separation from God. We will be reminded that we all make foolish decisions, but there are ways to avoid or correct these mistakes.*

### Guide Bible Study

4. Read aloud the focal passage printed in the *Study Guide* and then ask for class members to read their versions of Scripture. Briefly point out the different perspectives from different translations of Psalms 14.

5. Say, *In Psalm 14, God teaches us that a wise person will place one's trust in Him. He sets the example for care and compassion, and advocates for the poor and vulnerable. This God is the One we should seek—in both good times and bad.*

6. Invite class members to look at this passage again and ask them to find descriptions of a *fool and evildoers*. As they share their findings, be prepared to interpret some of these descriptions, if needed.

7. And then ask, *Do you see any dangers for those who reject God? If so, what are they?* Create a comparison chart like a T chart contrasting the wise and the foolish.

8. Form small groups and have groups compare and contrast Psalm 14 with Romans 3:9–20. What parts of Psalm 14 did Paul utilize and why? What else does Romans 3 say about the unrighteous?

## Encourage Application

9. Point out to the class members that Psalm 14 is not just about whether we believe God exists. It's a psalm about our behavior in the world—the way we treat our neighbors, the way we engage with those who are vulnerable, and whether our behavior reflects a God who loves the world and is willing to save it.

10. Suggest questions for the class members to live with this week.
    - How will you demonstrate to your neighbors that God exists?
    - What are you willing to do to express God's love to those you encounter each day?

    (A copy of this assignment is available in "Teaching Resource Items" for this study at www.gc2press.org.)

11. Close in prayer asking for wisdom from God "who gives to all generously and without reproach" (James 1:5).

## DISCUSSION PLAN

### Connect With Life

1. Ask class members to share what comes to mind when they hear the word *fool*. Ask, *How would you define the word fool?*

2. Point out that in Psalms 14, the Hebrew word, *nabal*, means *morally deficient and a rejection of wisdom* or *someone who lives like God is irrelevant, without fear of God.* Say, *In ancient Israel, acknowledging God was the key to wisdom and understanding.*

3. Say, *Today's lesson will guide us to understand the dangers of harboring foolishness in our hearts, and what we can do to avoid this terrible decision.*

### Guide Bible Study

4. Invite a class member to read Psalm 14:1–3. Ask, *What do these verses tell us about being a fool? And what do they tell us about mankind in general?* Be prepared to guide this discussion by referring to the "Interpreting the Scriptures" in the *Teaching Guide*.

5. Have a class member read Romans 3:10–12 and discuss Paul's purpose of including this part of Psalm 14 in his teaching.

6. Invite a class member to read Psalm 14:4–7. Ask, *What do these verses tell us about the fool or evildoers? What is the one plea that is made on behalf of Israel?* Be prepared to guide this discussion by referring to the "Interpreting the Scriptures" in the *Teaching Guide*.

7. Point out that Psalm 14 is a contrast between those who seek God and act with righteousness and those who reject God and act with corruption. The point of this approach is to set up choices for *us*. Will *we* seek God and act accordingly? Or will we not?

## Encourage Application

8. Call attention to questions 2 and 4 in the *Study Guide*. Allow class members to respond.

9. Comment that this passage calls us to consider our response to those we come in contact with each day. Will we "devour" them or care for them? Will we "frustrate" them or minister to them? Because of selfish thinking, everyone has made more than one foolish decision in life. Yet, we can be thankful that God is forgiving and has allowed us time to repent.

10. Questions to live with this week:
    - In what ways have I harbored foolishness in my heart?
    - When I realize I have rejected God's ways, what steps should I take to correct my sin?

    (A copy of this assignment is available in "Teaching Resource Items" for this study at www.gc2press.org.)

11. Close in prayer asking God to reveal when we have acted foolishly and confess those to Him, ask for forgiveness through the blood of Jesus, and ask for wisdom to guide our words and deeds.

| FOCAL TEXT | BACKGROUND |
| --- | --- |
| Psalm 19:1–14 | Romans 1:19–20 |

# lesson 4

# Creation Declares God's Glory

**MAIN IDEA**

The natural world testifies that the Creator is indeed God.

**QUESTION TO EXPLORE**

How do I see evidence of God in creation?

**STUDY AIM**

To lead adults to understand how the world and universe reveal the Creator God

# Bible Comments

## Understanding the Context

Psalm 19 is a hymn that celebrates God's revelation. The first part of the psalm (19:1–6) focuses on God's revelation through nature and the created order. The second part of the psalm (19:7–11) focuses on God's revelation through the Law. The psalmist views God's special revelation—given through God's Words to the prophets and preserved in the pages of Scripture—as a supreme gift. The final part of the psalm (19:12–14) reflects the appropriate human response to God's revelation.

In the Ancient Near East, human beings looked at the diversity of the world around them and concluded that multiple gods must be responsible. The same god who created and governed the seas could not possibly be the same god who created and governed the skies. The god who made the harvests plentiful must be a different god from the one who caused sickness and death. We have hundreds of hymns from the ancient Egyptians, Babylonians, Canaanites, and others that lift up praises to these gods who created the world through fierce, bloody battles and who had to work hard to maintain the rhythms of the seasons, weather, and human existence.

In the Hebrew Scriptures, only one God exists, and that God is responsible for *everything*. The psalmist of Psalm 19 looks at the wonder of the world and sees this *one* God's handiwork. The language the psalmist used took up the language of the pagan hymns that would have filled the psalmist's world—but adapts them to the theological truth of who the Lord is.

Psalm 19 is a more ancient version of the apostle Paul using Roman poetry to point to God (see Acts 17:27–28) and of contemporary Christian musicians using rock music or rap to proclaim the gospel.

## Interpreting the Scriptures

### God Speaks Through Creation (19:1–6)

**19:1.** The psalm begins by directing our attention to what "the heavens" and "their expanse" are doing: namely, worshiping the God who created them. These parallel terms, which harken back to the creation account in Genesis 1:8, refer to the skies and all that fill them. Where the pagans of the Ancient Near East would have seen the skies as deities in their own right, in Psalm 19 they exist to bear witness to *the* God who, in the beginning, created both the heavens and the earth.

God's "glory" is an important term in Scripture. At its root, the Hebrew word refers to something with great weight. Modern English idioms make the same metaphorical move as the ancient Hebrew: we might say that a conversation is "heavy" when it is very significant or engages important topics. The "glory of God" is the manifestation of God's unsurpassed importance in the universe. A child in my church once explained God's glory as "God having the bragging rights." For the heavens to "tell of the glory of God" means they testify to the fact that God has the bragging rights for all of creation.

**19:2–4a.** The Psalms are poetry, which means they are more concerned with conveying an idea than with giving us scientific data or perfectly logical statements. This aspect of Hebrew poetry is on full display in these verses. The psalmist said creation speaks day and night, which is a way of saying *everything* in creation speaks *constantly*. Yet there is no speaking; there are no words, but their words go out "to the end of the world." These verses are not contradicting themselves, they are trying to communicate the complex, mysterious way the natural world points to God's existence, ongoing work, and indescribable care (see also Romans 1:20).

**19:4b–6.** The psalmist drew upon what would have been familiar mythological imagery about the most "glorious" of the heavenly bodies: the sun. The Babylonians worshiped the sun as the god Shamash (the Hebrew word for

"sun" is *shemesh*), whom they envisioned as the great judge who saw everything on his daily journey across the sky and was therefore able to dispense justice on the earth. His nightly reunion with his wife marked the setting of the sun, and his daily emergence from his marriage tent marked the dawn. In Psalm 19, the psalmist made clear that the sun is just another part of God's creation—that God is responsible for placing it in the heavens, making it rise and set, and that even the sun joins its voiceless voice (19:3) in testifying to God's greatness (19:1). The sun is amazing, but it is not a god to be worshiped (Deuteronomy 4:19; Romans 1:25). Instead, it is part of what should prompt us—as we look up at the sky and feel the warmth of its rays—to worship the one true God.

## God Speaks Through Scripture (19:7–11)

**19:7–9.** With the second stanza, the psalmist shifted from the sun to the Law, from the general to the specific. The focus narrows in from what God reveals through all creation to what the Lord reveals through the words God gives to human beings—specifically, to the children of Israel (notice also the switch in this verse to the specific name for God that was revealed to Moses in Exodus 3).

*Torah*, the term most frequently translated "Law" in English, has a more nuanced sense in the Hebrew, as the sequence of parallel statements in verses 7–9 underscores. Torah includes God's testimony (or "covenant"), precepts, commandments, and judgments. Torah can refer specifically to what God revealed to Moses at Sinai, or it can refer to the collection of God's teaching and storytelling in Scripture. As Christians having read from the Pauline Epistles, we tend to see "the Law" as a negative thing. The psalmist, however, recognized that God's teaching is actually a beautiful source of life, enlightenment, and joy (see Matthew 5:17–20; Romans 7:7–12).

You could easily spend a whole series of lessons working through what each line of these verses means and how it plays out with various parts of Scripture. The point of these verses is poetic. The psalmist was not trying to create lots of different categories for God's teaching and what it accomplishes. Rather, the psalmist was trying to communicate, as summarized in verse

7a, the perfection of God's revelation. Here are a few explanations of key terms that can help us delve into what exactly the psalmist was celebrating:

- Restoring the soul: a Hebrew idiom for "bring back to life"
- Testimony: another word for "covenant," which refers to the committed relationship that God has with God's people and includes instruction about how to maintain this relationship
- Sure: trustworthy, faithful, completely reliable and dependable (the Hebrew word is the word "amen" that we say to conclude our prayers)
- Wise: remember that biblical wisdom is not the same as the world's wisdom (see the lesson 3 on Psalm 14)
- Precepts: also called "statutes," these are the standards and regulations that God establishes
- Right: honest, correct, upright, just
- Commandment: the singular noun is a collective way to refer to the entirety of God's teaching
- Enlightening the eyes: a Hebrew idiom for "gives understanding" or "makes clear" the best way forward
- Fear of the LORD: the psalmist was using the *effect* of following God's teaching to refer to God's teaching itself—the right response to God's revelation is respect and awe
- Judgments: the decisions that God makes and teaches humans to make
- True: constant, reliable, trustworthy (a word related to "sure" in verse 7)
- Righteous: perfectly meets the standards that God sets

**19:10.** The psalmist used very concrete comparisons to help us understand how wonderful God's revelation is. God's Words to us are worth pursuing more than the biggest bank accounts, and they are more mouthwateringly satisfying than the most delectable dessert. Scripture and the revelation of God is the most valuable thing in our lives as well as the most enjoyable.

**19:11.** Not separate from the joy of God's teaching is the fact that God's teaching helps us know our own boundaries and limits. We live in a time

and place that doesn't really appreciate either boundaries or limits. We think we can do anything we want, we revel in our rights, and we don't want anyone telling us what not to do. But boundaries and limits are also a gift. The boundaries I set for my own life ensure I stay healthy, well-rested, and safe. The boundaries God sets for us are even more important because they flow from His love and wisdom.

Note that with verse 11, the psalmist began speaking directly *to* the God who speaks through creation and through Scripture. The psalmist referred to himself as "your servant," which reflects an intimate relationship. The last section of the psalm will continue to speak to God.

## We Speak to God (19:12–14)

The proper response to God's revelation—to God's teaching—is humility. How are we measuring up to what God wants for us? The psalmist recognized that we are, as the hymn says, "prone to wander" and asked God to help him stay on track. We want to make our own laws, but the psalmist leads us to pray that God will not let these self-imposed laws rule us. Instead, we need God to help us look to the heavens and to God's teaching and meditate on who God is and how God is teaching us to live.

## Focusing on the Meaning

And the end of Moses's restatement of God's teaching in Deuteronomy, the prophet called upon the heavens to bear witness to what God has said to the people. Moses described this teaching (this Torah or Law) as "life," and he pleaded with the people on God's behalf: "Choose life in order that you may live… by loving the LORD your God, by obeying his voice, and by holding close to Him" (Deuteronomy 30:19–20). Moses could very easily have inserted the words of Psalm 19 into his sermon here.

As twenty-first-century Christians, it's all too easy to read about God's work as Creator without appreciating how amazing it is, and it's all too easy to read about the Law of the Lord and see burdensome rules rather than its

unfathomable grace. Psalm 19 helps us reclaim the awe, wonder, and joy that we should have as we consider the God we serve.

We are not God. Though we now understand a lot more about the science of the cosmos, we still do not keep the universe going or control its movements. Though we rejoice that those of us in Christ are saved by faith and not by works, we still do not set the standards for what is good, true, and beautiful. We don't determine moral law for ourselves. God alone sets the standard for what is good, right, and true. The Lord is God, and the appropriate human response to God is to worship, serve, and submit to God's revelation. With Psalm 19, the psalmist modeled for us this posture of both celebration and self-examination.

As you study Psalm 19, let it lead you into joy. Let it point you up to the sky to marvel at the blue, the clouds, the stars, the sun, and the moon. Let it prompt you to read the words of Scripture and see in them a God who goes to extraordinary lengths to be in relationship with God's creation—even when we don't deserve it. Let the psalm give you words to use as you feast on the richness of good teaching, faithful guidance, and honest correction. And let the psalm open your heart to the places you still need God to work in you—to reveal to you the fullness of who God is and who God created you to be.

# Teaching Plans

## DISCOVERY PLAN

### Connect With Life

1. Go to pexels.com and search their free images for some of these subjects: "universe, earth, heavens, national parks, animals, plants, etc." Choose images that express some form of creation, print them, and post them on a focal wall. Or you can create a PowerPoint presentation to display the images.

   (A copy of this assignment is available in "Teaching Resource Items" for this study at www.gc2press.org.)

2. Ask, *What do these images of creation tell us about God*? Some responses might be: They declare He exists—as Creator, as glorious, as all-powerful, as majestic, as beautiful, as the source of all life, etc.

3. Say, *Today's lesson from Psalm 19, will teach us that creation provides evidence of God and His glory. The natural world testifies to the fact that the Creator of the world and the universe is God.*

### Guide Bible Study

4. Point out that Psalm 19 is a hymn that celebrates God's revelation. The first part of the psalm (19:1–6) focuses on God's revelation through nature and the created order. The second part of the psalm (19:7–11) focuses on God's revelation through the Law. The final part of the psalm (19:12–14) reflects the appropriate human response to God's revelation. *Note:* You might want to write this outline on a whiteboard.

   (A copy of this assignment is available in "Teaching Resource Items" for this study at www.gc2press.org.)

5. Invite class members to form three groups and assign each group one of the titles and passages listed below. Ask each group to read their passage and discuss the meaning by using the *Study Guide* to guide their conclusions. You may need to provide each group with one or two copies of the *Study Guide*. Ask each group to report on their findings.
   - Nature and the Created Order—God Speaks Through Creation (19:1–6)
   - Revelation through the Law—God Speaks through Scripture (19:7–11)
   - Response to God's Revelation—We Speak to God (19:12–14)

   (A copy of this assignment is available in "Teaching Resource Items" for this study at www.gc2press.org.)

6. Say, *The New Testament affirms this truth by showing that Christ Himself is the agent of creation.* Call attention to Romans 1:19–20, read the passage, and ask, *Why is God's creation such an important part of a person's search for and understanding of God?* Have someone read Colossians 1:15–20 and ask, *What is Jesus' role in creation and how does it glorify the Father?*

## Encourage Application

7. Remind class members that our task each week is to know and experience God though the fullness of His creation, His Word, and then to live out His Word in our daily lives.

8. Gather twelve strips of paper and write "God's Creation" on six of them and "God's Word" on the other six. Tape them together to form a chain and attach it to a focal wall. Tell the class what is written on the strips. And then say, *This chain represents the totality of God's creation and His Word. When we acknowledge and understand this, we can be confident of who God is and how much He loves us. We can also express our heartfelt worship toward Him and know that we are prepared to share His love with others*.

(A copy of this assignment is available in "Teaching Resource Items" for this study at www.gc2press.org.)

9. Ask members to discuss ways they could use a statement or observation about God's creation to begin a conversation about God with someone.

10. Close in prayer by thanking God for His creation and His love for us. Ask Him to remind us each day to become people who are willing to lean on Him as our Rock and Redeemer.

## DISCUSSION PLAN

### Connect With Life

1. Ask class members to recall a time when they were overcome with the beauty of God's creation. Ask, *What did you see? How did you feel? Did any of it make you think of God?*

2. Point out the natural world testifies that the Creator is indeed God. Creation did not happen by accident or chance but by the purposeful hand of God. He is the one that made it happen.

3. Say, *Today we will discover how the world and the universe reveal the handiwork of the Creator God. We will understand how we can see evidence of God in creation.*

### Guide Bible Study

4. Invite class members to read Psalm 19 in the following increments:
   - Reader #1—19:1–6
   - Reader #2—19:7–11
   - Reader #3—19:12–14

5. After each reading, allow class members to comment on what they understand these passages are saying to us. Be prepared to expand the meaning of the passages by studying the content of "Interpreting the Scriptures" in the *Teaching Guide*.

6. Share the following quotes from the Internet entitled "Quotes on Creation":
   - "God didn't create the universe to be a mere backdrop for his creation; he made it for us to explore and learn from."—Attributed to Francis Collins
   - "God's creation is full of mysteries that we will never be able to explain, yet they reveal His grandeur."— Attributed to Tim Keller
   - "Every star in the night sky is a reminder of God's infinite power." — Attributed to Max Lucado
   - "To see God in creation is to see His magnificence."— Attributed to C. S. Lewis

   (A copy of this assignment is available in "Teaching Resource Items" for this study at www.gc2press.org.)

7. Invite the class to choose their favorite quote and why they chose it. Say, *These quotes support the content of Psalms 19*. Verse 1 says, "The heavens declare the glory of God," which is a declaration that creation reveals and confirms the existence of God. Creation illustrates the nature of God.

## Encourage Application

8. Call attention to questions 2, 3, and 4 found in the *Study Guide*. Allow time for response.
   - Is Paul justified in saying that, because God has revealed Himself through creation, humanity is without excuse (Romans 1:19–20)?
   - If creation declares the glory of God, what responsibility does humanity have to care for it?

- Why was it essential for the writer to close the psalm, speaking about lip service and sincere devotion to God?

9. Lead the class in reading together from Psalm 19:14 in the *Study Guide* as a commitment to God.

10. Say, *This psalm calls us to respond to God in praise and worship based on what we see in His creation*. Close in prayer. Thank God for His creation and how it confirms His existence, power, and glory.

**FOCAL TEXT**
Psalm 51:1–19

**BACKGROUND**
Exodus 12:21–23;
2 Samuel 12:7–13

# lesson 5

# If You Did It, Admit It

**MAIN IDEA**

When people sin, they should go immediately to God.

**QUESTION TO EXPLORE**

When I sin, do I confess it to God?

**TEACHING AIM**

To lead adults to understand sin disrupts fellowship with God, and only repentance can restore it

# Bible Comments

## Understanding the Context

If we understand the book of Psalms as God's extended lesson on how to pray, Psalm 51 is a good candidate for "Lesson One" in how to engage in the work of self-examination and confession.

Psalm 51 is a lament psalm and generally follows the expected lament psalm structure:

- A Cry to God (51:1–2)
- A Description of the Problem (51:3–5)
- A Plea for Help (51:6–14)
- Praise and Worship (51:15–19)

Most laments conclude with some kind of statement of trust in God, of confidence that God will favorably answer the plea for help, or of praise for the anticipated (or received) deliverance. Such a statement is absent in Psalm 51, though the psalmist's descriptions of God's character (faithful and compassionate in 51:1; delighting in a contrite spirit in 51:17) imply this kind of confident trust in God's forgiveness.

The superscription marks Psalm 51 as one of the "psalms of David," and its extended superscription connects the words of this prayer with the narrative in 2 Samuel 11–12. David's horrific sins against Bathsheba, Uriah, and ultimately God may seem more extreme than the sins most of us commit regularly, but the root cause of these sins (namely, human pride and selfishness) plagues us all. As we study and teach Psalm 51, it is important not to let its association with David in particular overshadow how the words of this prayer can and *should* speak for each one of us in our daily failures to love God and our neighbor fully.

## Interpreting the Scriptures

### Crying to God (51:1–2)

The opening verses of the psalm call out for God's attention and summarize the whole idea of the prayer: sin requires forgiveness. God is the one who can provide full forgiveness, and we can ask for God's forgiveness because of God's character.

Four imperative verbs govern these verses: "Be gracious to me," "wipe out my wrongdoings" (51:1), "Wash me thoroughly" and "cleanse me" (51:2). The psalmist approached God with direct, bold demands, and he made these demands on the basis of God's faithful and compassionate character. These two terms, along with the request that God "be gracious," echo God's own description of the divine character in Exodus 34:6–7. "Faithfulness" is the nearly un-translatable Hebrew word *hesed*, which refers to the deeply-committed loyal love that God shows to the covenant community (for more discussion of *hesed*, see Lesson 1). The word "compassion" is related to the word for "womb" and communicates the idea that God loves us with the kind of love good mothers show to their newborn children.

In a powerful poetic move that underscores the distance between God and humanity, the psalmist countered the three terms he used to characterize God with three different terms for his own character: "wrongdoings" (51:1) "guilt," and "sin" (51:2). These different Hebrew words for sin emphasize the willfully rebellious dimension of sin as well as the notion that sin is a departure from God's plans and vision for humanity. We sin because we choose to sin. And we do it over and over and over (notice that "wrongdoings" is plural).

### Confessing the Problem (51:3–5)

The causal conjunction "For" that starts the next section of the psalm underscores the reason for the prayer. The psalmist was fully aware of his sinfulness. Furthermore, the psalmist was aware that when it comes to sin, God is always the injured party. Jesus said that God's Law can be summarized

by the command to love God and your neighbor (Matthew 22:34–40; Mark 12:28–34; Luke 10:25–28), and the prophetic witness throughout Scripture is that failure to love God (idolatry) and failure to love your neighbor (injustice) *always* go together. Accordingly, the psalmist emphasized that transgression is against "You, You only" (51:4; see also 2 Samuel 12:13)—against the God who is not only faithful and compassionate but also perfectly justified in judgment.

Just as the psalmist established God's character in verse 1 and then contrasted his own in verses 2–3 to underscore the stark distance between them, the psalmist affirmed God's completely blameless status in verse 4 and then contrasted his own completely sinful status in verse 5. The poem follows this pattern of thesis, then antithesis. Psalm 51:5 should be read as the psalmist intended: as part of a poetic prayer reflecting the psalmist's feelings of overwhelming guilt and unworthiness before God. The psalmist was not trying to teach us about the universal status of babies before God. The point is that God is right, and we are wrong; God is God, and we are not.

## Calling for Help (51:6–16)

**51:6–12.** No matter how alienated from God and God's character, no matter how stained with sin, the psalmist affirmed that God desires reconciliation. Significantly, *God* is the one who accomplishes this reconciliation. God is the one who "makes wisdom known" (51:6), who "purifies" and "cleanses" (51:7), who allows us to experience "joy and gladness" (51:8), who chooses to forgive and forget sin (51:9), and whose Holy Spirit "creates" and "renews" the human heart—not the seat of emotions but the seat of the will—so we can remain joyfully faithful to God (51:10–12).

A few images in this petition deserve comment. 1) "purify me with hyssop" (51:7) is a reference to purification rituals in the sanctuary context (see Exodus 12:21–23; Leviticus 14:1–9). Rather than hyssop, which does not grow natively in the Middle East, the plant in view is probably another aromatic herb such as thyme. 2) "The bones you have broken" (51:8) suggests physical pain and suffering, though nowhere else in the psalm (or in the associated 2 Samuel 12 account) refers to the body. When read together with

the references to the psalmist's "spirit" and "heart," the sense of the poetry is that the *whole* of the psalmist was troubled, distorted, and harmed by his sin. 3) "Hide your face" (51:9) is a common idiom within the biblical—and wider Ancient Near Eastern—tradition. The idiom imagines God with a human body, and the idea is similar to the way young children play peek-a-boo. Being able to see your face is what makes your presence real to the child. If you hide your face, they don't recognize your presence. In the priestly blessing, the prayer is that God *will* show God's face to the people for good—The LORD will be present with the people for good (Numbers 6:25–26). In Psalm 34:16, the psalmist said that "The face of the LORD is against evildoers," which means they do not (or *will not*) exist. Here in Psalm 51:9, the psalmist asked that God hide God's own face from the psalmist's sins—an idea the psalmist clarified with the parallel line: "wipe out all my guilty deeds." The psalmist was asking that God make his sins completely disappear.

Note that the psalmist was not just concerned with specific past sins. Instead, the psalmist's prayer is more all-encompassing. He asked God to forgive him, but also that God would help him to do better and be better in the future. The ultimate goal of the psalmist—and the ultimate goal of humanity—is not to be perfect but to be with God.

**51:13–15.** Many lament psalms include "motivation clauses" or "vows" as part of the petitions. While we know theologically that we have no need to bribe God, the psalms reflect the raw honest feelings of those who pray to God—we often *feel* as though we need to "sweeten the deal" so God will answer us. Martin Luther, for example, famously promised God that he would become a monk rather than a lawyer if God would only save him from a thunderstorm! These verses of Psalm 51 function similarly. Why should God be gracious and forgive the psalmist's sin? This is why.

God's presence and deliverance should always prompt a response. We should respond with individual praise *to* God, but we should also recognize that God has placed us in community and called us to be priests, witnesses, and servants. The psalmist vowed to praise God (51:14–15), but the psalmist rightly located this praise within the context of human relationship. Our praise of God—our sharing of the story about God's character and acts of de-

liverance—should "teach wrongdoers" so "sinners will be converted" (51:13). Our worship should invite others to worship, and our confession should inspire others to confess.

**51:16–17.** Protestant Christians in the twenty-first century are often quick to dismiss the Old Testament laws and sacrificial system as harsh legalism far removed from the gracious God of the New Testament. These verses of Psalm 51, however, stand alongside many, many other places in the Old Testament where God reminds God's worshipers that it's not the laws or sacrifices that save us—it is a right relationship with God (see also 1 Samuel 15:22; Psalm 40:6–8; 50:7–23; Isaiah 1:11–31; Jeremiah 7:21–23; Hosea 6:6).

In a religious context in which "sacrifice" literally meant breaking apart animals on an altar, the psalmist teaches us that these sacrifices mean nothing if the person who offers them does not do so with the right attitude. Animal sacrifices—which the psalmist was *not* condemning here—should be an outward sign of an inward change. Paul picked up this image in Romans 12 when he called Christians to become living sacrifices, which can only happen through God changing our hearts and minds.

### Communal Context (51:18–19)

The final verses of the psalm continue the theme of "brokenness," but seem to switch gears radically. Rather than an individual's failures, ability to offer right sacrifices, and relationship with God, the psalmist begins to pray for "Zion," which is another name for "Jerusalem." The psalmist envisioned the city's walls as broken and in ruins, and the psalmist asked that God rebuild them (51:18) and by so doing equip the city's inhabitants for right worship (51:19).

## Focusing on the Meaning

Psalm 51 teaches us to ask for help. It teaches us to look long, hard, and clearly at our own hearts and lives and to see God—the gracious, faithful, com-

passionate, perfectly just God—as the standard by which we are measured. The psalm teaches us that we can earnestly confess the ways we fall short of this standard and be confident that God will forgive and forget. Psalm 51 also teaches us that this story of grace and restoration is one we should share with the world so *everyone* will join in the psalmist's song of praise.

Originally, the psalmist likely intended verses 18–19 to be a prayer for the literal city of Jerusalem and its inhabitants. Because Jerusalem's walls were never in such dire straits during the reign of King David, many believe these verses were added later (perhaps during the Babylonian exile) to an existing psalm to apply the individual prayer of confession to the whole community: the psalm of David becomes a psalm for the people.

We see this same kind of development in our hymns and praise choruses today—we add new stanzas to old hymns as we continue to use these songs in worship over the years. Whatever the composition history of the psalm, these concluding verses should remind Christians that while we have personal relationships with God, God has also called us and formed us into a body of believers. We are part of a community of faith, and our individual choices and actions impact others. When we sin, our sin is against God but hurts our fellow human beings. When we confess and are restored, our reconciliation with God is personal, but this reconciliation ultimately has an outward, evangelistic focus.

Psalm 51 teaches us to confess and sets forth a model for us. As new covenant people, Christians can make such confession boldly and with the assurance that God will forgive. In Hebrews 4:14–16, we are reminded that Jesus serves as our Great High Priest and intercessor before the God who loved the world enough to become human and make complete, final atonement for the sins that we confess. "Therefore," the preacher of Hebrews concluded, "let's approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy."

# Teaching Plans

## DISCOVERY PLAN

### Connect with Life

1. Read the partial lyrics from a song entitled "You Did It" from the musical and movie entitled, "My Fair Lady" (1964) music written by Frederick Loewe and lyrics by Alan Jay Lerner. The song takes place after an event at the palace where Colonel Hugh Pickering and Professor Henry Higgins congratulate each other on teaching Eliza Doolittle to speak properly. Today, we're using a portion of this song to introduce our study of Psalm 51. Note: https://www.allmusicals.com/lyrics/myfairlady/youdidit.htm will take you to the lyrics. Begin reading toward the end of the lyrics with "Ev'ry bit of credit…" and read to the end.

2. Point out that today's lesson is entitled, "If You Did It, Admit It" and is based on David's moral failure and his heart-felt confession to God. Summarize what David's sins were and then ask someone to read 2 Samuel 12:7–13 to set the context of Psalm 51. We will be reminded that sin damages our fellowship with God, and the only way to restore it is through repentance.

### Guide Bible Study

3. Write on a whiteboard or art paper attached to a focal wall the following title and outline: The Lament of David
   - A Cry to God (51:1–2)
   - A Description of the Problem (51:3–5)
   - A Plea for Help (51:6–14)
   - Praise and Worship (51:15–19)

   (A copy of this assignment is available in "Teaching Resource Items" for this study at www.gc2press.org.)

4. Ask selected class members to read each passage and then discuss the content and meaning of these verses. Become familiar with the biblical content of the Teaching Guide and the Study Guide to help facilitate the discussion of these verses.

5. Say, *Most laments conclude with some kind of statement of trust in God, of confidence that God will answer their plea for help, or of praise for the deliverance to come. Such a statement is absent in Psalm 51; however, it is implied that David placed his trust in God's forgiveness.*

## Encourage Application

6. Present a mini lecture: We are part of a community of faith, and our individual choices and actions impact others. When we sin, our sin is against God and usually hurts others—sometimes those we love. Our confession and reconciliation are between us and God—but this reconciliation ultimately has an outward influence on others. As we reflect on Psalm 51, it is important not to let its connection with David overshadow how the words of this prayer can speak to each one of us in our failures to love God and to love our neighbor as we should.

7. A question to live with this week:

   *This week, during your devotional time with God, bring a piece of paper and something to write with. Pray asking the Lord to reveal specific sins in your life. As He starts revealing, you start writing down. Then, agree with the Lord on each sin, naming each sin in confession. By the end of the week, review your list of sins. Is there a recurrent sin? Focus on a recurrent sin and implement a strategy to overcome it.*

   (A copy of this assignment is available in "Teaching Resource Items" for this study at www.gc2press.org.)

8. Close with a time of silent confession of sins to God, followed by an audible prayer thanking Him for the forgiveness we have in Christ.

## DISCUSSION PLAN

### Connect With Life

1. Open by saying, *Psalm 51 is David's prayer of contrition, confession, and repentance. This takes place after the prophet Nathan came to David to confront him after David committed adultery with Bathsheba and had her husband Uriah killed (2 Samuel 12:7–13). David's prayer could be summed up in verse 10 when he wrote, "Create in me a clean heart, God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me."*

2. Say, *Today, we will discover that even though we belong to the family of God, we are all sinners. Some sins have greater consequences than others. But regardless of what sin we commit, the only way to remedy our sin is to go to God in confession and repentance.*

### Guide Bible Study

3. Invite a class member to read Psalm 51:1–5 and then ask, *How did David cry out to God and what did he confess to God?* Quote 51:2–3 "Wash me thoroughly from my guilt and cleanse me from my sin. For I know my wrongdoings, and my sin is constantly before me."

4. Invite a class member to read Psalm 51:6–12 and then ask, *How did David call for help?* Quote 51:7 "Purify me with hyssop, and I will be clean; Cleanse me, and I will be whiter than snow."

5. Invite a class member to read Psalm 51:13–19 and then ask, *What did David promise to do after he was forgiven and restored?* Lead the class to read aloud together verse 17 from the Study Guide, "My sacrifice, O God is a broken spirit; A broken and contrite heart you, God, will not despise" (NIV). Ask, *What do you think David understood about God's forgiveness?*

6. Conclude by saying, *As we have discussed, David did not remain in his sin indefinitely. He accepted conviction, repented, and asked God for restoration. The goal of this lesson is to demonstrate that God provides a solution for sin. The first step on the journey to redemption is to agree with God (confess) that we have sinned.*

## Encourage Application

7. Guide the class in a discussion of what Psalm 51 means to them. Allow time for responses.

8. Say, *Before we close in prayer, I have a couple questions for you.*
   - Who keeps you spiritually accountable?
   - How can we use our restoration from sin to enhance the body of Christ?
   - How can you physically, mentally, and spiritually know and feel the joy of your salvation?

9. Conclude in prayer asking God to guard our hearts against temptations but, when we do sin, to be quick to confess and thank God for His forgiveness.

**FOCAL TEXT**
Psalm 86:1–17

**BACKGROUND**
Exodus 34:5–7; Acts 10:42–43; 1 John 1:9

# lesson 6
# God Forgives

**MAIN IDEA**

Christ provided forgiveness of sin on the cross and gives people the freedom to accept or reject that forgiveness.

**QUESTION TO EXPLORE**

Do I live as if God has forgiven me?

**TEACHING AIM**

To lead adults to understand that our response to God's forgiveness is to praise Him with our lives

# Bible Comments

## Understanding the Context

Christ left His throne in Heaven and came to this world to save human beings from our sins. He said, "The Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost" (Luke 19:10). He came into this world specifically to die on the Cross for our sins, to give us forgiveness that would free us from our sins. That enables us to exchange eternal punishment for eternal life. It exchanges a life of brokenness for a life that is full and meaningful (the abundant life).

It sounds too good to be true, but it is true. As astounding as the offer is, God does not compel us to accept His forgiveness. He gives us the freedom to accept or reject it. This acceptance calls for repentance. The person accepting the forgiveness must realize he or she has strayed from God and gone against His will and so needs God's forgiveness. First John 1:9 states that, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness." So, God is willing to forgive us, but we must confess our sins and repent.

Psalm 86 gives us a prayerful window into how a believer deeply aware of God's forgiving character, cries out to Him in a time of trouble and trusts His mercy.

God proclaimed Himself to Moses as "The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God…maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin" (Exodus 34:6–7). God's offer of forgiveness is to anyone who would accept it. Peter proclaimed this to Cornelius and his relatives and friends in Caesarea, saying, "All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name" (Acts 10:43). Cornelius and his relatives and friends accepted the offer for themselves, and they experienced the forgiveness of their sins.

John 3:16 states, "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." The "whoever" includes anyone and excludes no one.

## Interpreting the Scriptures

### A Plea for Mercy (86:1–7)

**86:1.** In crying out to God, one must realize that it is disastrous to try to live without God. The psalmist realized his need for mercy and forgiveness from God. He recognized his wretched nature, saying, "for I am poor and needy." Everyone needs God. There are times in life when God may seem distant from us, but we can have confidence that as believers we can bring our concerns, fears, struggles, and sin to God who will hear our prayer (1 John 5:14) Not only will God hear us, but if we pray according to God's will and purpose, He will grant our requests (1 John 5:15). The psalmist had this confidence that God would hear and respond.

**86:2.** The psalmist called on God to guard his life and to save him, knowing God has the ability to do so. On his part, he was faithful to God, trusted in Him, and acknowledged God as his God.

**86:3–4.** Once again, the psalmist pleaded for mercy, and he was so aware of his need for mercy that he called to God all day long. When we are desperate for God to act, to heal a loved one, to redeem a prodigal, or restore us from our sin, it is appropriate to be in a time of concentrated prayer. God wants us to offer Him all of who we are in prayer to be completely open and honest with Him. He continued trusting in God and knew that only God could bring him joy.

**86:5.** The psalmist knew his plea for mercy was going to a God who is a forgiving and good God, the God who abounds in love toward all who call on Him. Our God is loving, patient, and faithful and He longs to hear from His children no matter the circumstances.

**86:6.** The psalmist cried for mercy again as he called on God to answer his prayers. He cried multiple times for mercy. God is a listening God.

**86:7.** When the psalmist was in distress, he knew he could call on God, for he recognized that God is a prayer-answering God. We need not wait until we are in a pinch to call out to God, we need to develop that on-going prayer life with our Father by talking to Him throughout the day.

## God's Identity (86:8–13)

**86:8.** God is unique; there is no comparison to other gods that are worthless. There is none like God, and no other god can do the mighty deeds God does. The Lord God is distinct from the gods of the Egyptians, Canaanites, and Philistines who were made of stone, wood, and metal who could not hear and respond. What gods do we turn to today that offer us nothing constructive, instead of the One who listens, understands, and responds to us?

**86:9.** God is the Creator. He created all the nations and their peoples. All the people will come and worship the Almighty God. The apostle Paul would echo these sentiments when he said about Christ in his letter to the Philippians: "At the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Philippians 2:10–11). They will actually glorify the name of God.

**86:10.** God is a great God, and He does marvelous things. He alone is God. There is no other God.

**86:11.** God is a God who can teach His people to follow His will. The psalmist relied on God's faithfulness. He knew God could give him an undivided heart that would enable him to reverence God. That was his desire. People desire many things; some are evil, but some are good that have been turned into unhealthy obsessions. Studying God's Word and spending time in focused prayer will help believers learn and follow His will.

**86:12.** The person who knows he or she has been forgiven by God should respond by praising God with all of his or her heart. He or she should glorify the name of the Lord at all times, in fact, forever. When a team scores a

touchdown or a goal, the fans erupt in raucous applause and shouts of triumph. How much more should believers shout and celebrate the God who has forgiven them through the Lord Jesus Christ?

**86:13.** The psalmist recognized how great God's love is and how mighty His deliverance is. The psalmist said, "You have delivered me from the depths, from the realm of the dead." It is important to recognize where God rescued us from, otherwise we can minimize the extent of His deliverance.

## God's Mercy Versus Attacks of Foes (86:14–17)

**86:14.** The psalmist spoke of arrogant foes who were attacking him and ruthless people who were trying to kill him. Arrogant and ruthless people have one thing in common—they have no regard for God. It is because they are godless people determined to attack and even kill someone who wants to walk in the ways of God.

**86:15.** The psalmist listed classic attributes of God. God is compassionate, gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in love and faithfulness. These were some of the attributes God used to describe Himself to Moses on Mount Sinai in Exodus 34:5–7. It is instructive to view God in this larger context, for the Lord added, "maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin."

The prophet Jonah acknowledged he knew of these gracious attributes of God and that was why he did not want to go and preach to the sinful people of Nineveh (Jonah 4:1–2).

The notion that the God of the Old Testament is only wrathful is not borne out by the Scriptures. Just think of how often the Israelites rebelled against Him. (See Psalm 78:38 and Nehemiah 9:31.)

**86:16.** Here is yet another cry for God's mercy and salvation. The psalmist knew he would gain strength from God's mercy and salvation.

The psalmist next appealed to his service of God and his mother's service of God in the past in pleading for God's mercy and salvation. It is noteworthy

that the psalmist did not say he had the right to rebel against God and still count on being delivered by God because of how his mother had served God in the past. He points to the fact that not only did his mother serve God in the past, but he was also serving God.

**86:17.** The psalmist called on God to give him a sign of God's goodness to put his enemies to shame. He acknowledged the Lord had helped and comforted him. It is important to acknowledge God's help. When God helps us, we should not congratulate ourselves but humbly thank Him.

## Focusing on the Meaning

God is a forgiving God, but He does not forgive automatically. We need to get to the place—just like the prodigal son (Luke 15:11–32)—where we come to ourselves and realize we have sinned against God and repent. First John 1:9 states that "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness." We can count on the fact that God is faithful and just. It is God's nature to forgive and cleanse the repentant sinner, but the sinner must first come to the place of repentance.

No one can blame God for not giving them the chance to accept Him. God's offer of salvation is to all. A keyword of the gospel is *whosoever*. A case in point is the call in Isaiah: "Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost" (Isaiah 55:1). As costly as salvation is—for it cost God His only begotten Son—it is free to anyone who would accept it.

A forgiving God does not do everything for His children, just as an earthly parent does not do everything for the child. It is important for the child to listen to his or her parents. When the parent advises the child not to jump into muddy water, it is the place of that child to listen and obey. Otherwise, the child may jump into the muddy water and splash mud all over his or her clothes. Therefore, the place of obedience cannot be forgotten.

When God forgives us, it is also necessary for us to thank and praise Him. The psalmists were very good at modeling this behavior. So while it is true that God is forgiving, compassionate, gracious, faithful, loving, and longsuffering, we should respond appropriately in praise and obedience. Do you find yourself praising and obeying God, or is there the tendency for you to take God's forgiveness for granted?

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Arterbury, Andrew, W. H. Bellinger, and Derek S. Dotson. *Engaging the Christian Scriptures: An Introduction to the Bible.* Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2014.

Bullock, C. Hassell. *An Introduction to the Old Testament Poetic Books*. Chicago, IL: Moody, 1988.

McCann, J. Clinton, Jr. "Psalms" in *The New Interpreter's Bible: A Commentary in Twelve Volumes*. Volume IV. Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1996.

*NIV Study Bible*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2016.

Sorgwe, Felisi. *I Will Be With You: God's Favorite Promise*. Bloomington, IN: WestBow, 2022.

# Teaching Plans

## DISCOVERY PLAN

### Connect With Life

1. The title of the lesson is simply "God Forgives." One way to express this truth is with this statement. "When faced with a difficult situation, requiring forgiveness, a believer remains confident that God hears his or her prayers." Write the phrase "God Forgives" on your focal wall or board.

2. Before the session, take a stack of index cards and write certain words, one per card, that relate to an episode where forgiveness is needed (these will be used in step 8). For example, one card could have the word "yelling." Another card "stealing," even a card with the word "infidelity." Write enough words on cards so each member can have one. If you prefer, write additional words on cards so each member can have more than one. Put this set of cards aside for use later during the "Encourage Application" section. Ask the class to take their Bibles and turn to Psalm 86. State the title, "God Forgives."

   (A copy of this assignment is available in "Teaching Resource Items" for this study at www.gc2press.org.)

### Guide Bible Study

3. Ask three volunteers to locate the passage of Scripture under the heading "Interpreting the Scriptures." Assign one of these passages to each volunteer: Psalm 86:1–7, 8–13, and 14–17.

4. Ask the person assigned to the first passage to read the verses. Then ask the class, *What are the responses the psalmist made to God and how did he describe God?* For example, in verse one, the psalmist cried out to God.

Each selected passage should have several responses. Continue by asking the person assigned to the second passage to read the verses. Again ask the group, *What are the responses the psalmist offered to God and how did he describe God?* Allow a few minutes for all to respond. Lastly, ask the person assigned to the third passage to read the verses. Then ask, *What are the requests or concerns the psalmist presented to God and how did he describe God?*

5. Ask a member who didn't read a passage to come to the focal wall. Allow members to call out the words or phrases the psalmist communicated to God. This person, at the front, will then write the words or phrases offered on the whiteboard or paper attached to the wall.

6. Enlist another member of the class who didn't read a passage to come to the board and write the responses that God spoke, which described His attributes or connection to that key word. For example, a connection would be within verse 5. The psalmist's pleas for mercy leads to the truth that God forgives and is good. Another connection is in verse 7 where the psalmist expressed distress that leads to the truth that God answers prayer.

7. Erase a section of your board and write these two sentences. The first one is "The psalmist sought God's provision for his needs." The second is "God responded." Call on a member to assume the role of the psalmist. However, this member will restate the psalmist's pleas using modern day language (the volunteer could check a modern version such as *The Message* on a Bible app). Ask a second member to give the response as the psalmist remembers and testifies who God is. Here the volunteer will say God is compassionate, gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in love and faithfulness.

## Encourage Application

8. Distribute the index cards talked about in step #2 equally to members. Allow a few moments for each member to read the card and consider a hypothetical illustration that has a worldly response. Facilitate feedback from the group.

9. Conclude this section with the same activity, however, ask the class to consider an illustration where the response to the situation would be biblical. Ask, *Would any of the situations change if one of the persons asked for forgiveness*? Allow for responses.

10. Ask, *How does Christ's offer of forgiveness of our sins affect our response to God? How should His forgiveness govern how we respond to those who wrong us?*

11. Close in prayer thanking God for His love, faithfulness, and forgiveness.

# DISCUSSION PLAN

## Connect With Life

1. Ask the class this question, *Why do people not offer an apology*? As members consider their answer, mention the three statements offered by Karina Schumann on reasons why people don't offer an apology (found in the sidebar "Afraid of Asking Forgiveness" in the *Study Guide*). They are (a) feeling low levels of concern for the victim or one's relationship with the victim, (b) perceiving that apologizing will threaten one's self-image, and (c) perceiving that apologizing will be ineffective at eliciting forgiveness. Ask the class to state which of the three reasons are common and which ones are uncommon.)

   (A copy of this assignment is available in "Teaching Resource Items" for this study at www.gc2press.org.)

2. Following, ask the class to offer three reasons why Christians would not offer an apology and three reasons why Christians should offer an apology. Phrase each with a question. *Are there times when a Christian should not offer an apology? Are there times when a Christian should offer an apology*? Allow for responses.

## Guide Bible Study

3. Write the outline from the *Study Guide* on your board and enlist a different member to read each passage.
   - God Forgives His People (86:5)
   - God Listens to His People (86:1–10)
   - God Guides His People (86:11–17)

   (A copy of this assignment is available in "Teaching Resource Items" for this study at www.gc2press.org.)

4. Ask the same three members who read passages to go to the board, one at a time, and write a summary statement below their theme.

5. Select three other members to share an illustration where God did what was expressed in the three themes. These can be written below the summary statements.

6. Proceed to the board and draw a dotted line from the first theme to the second theme and then to the third theme. Bring a summary of the class of the continuity of all three statements.

## Encourage Application

7. Emphaize to the group that living as forgiven people means both praising God and forgiving others. Present these three questions to the class. *What are some ways to offer forgiveness? What are the evidences that people*

*are forgiven? What are the benefits of knowing that God forgives His people*? Allow for a response.

8. Encourage the class to keep a journal listing experiences that would necessitate an apology and for each one recorded also indicate the benefits of offering an apology that honors God. Close in prayer thanking God for offering personal forgiveness.

**FOCAL TEXT**
Psalm 37:1–40

**BACKGROUND**
John 16:33;
Matthew 6:33–34

# lesson 7

# Don't Worry. Trust in God.

**MAIN IDEA**

People will do evil, but God will punish them eventually. Believers continue to trust in the Lord.

**QUESTION TO EXPLORE**

In what situations do I worry and not turn them over to God?

**TEACHING AIM**

To lead adults to understand that Christians' lives won't be easy, and trusting God is the only way to endure tough times

# Bible Comments

## Understanding the Context

Worrying can be likened to sitting in a rocking chair and rocking away. You move parts of your body, but you go nowhere. Many people do a lot of worrying. In His Sermon on the Mount, Jesus talked about how ridiculous it is to worry about what we eat, drink, and wear (see Matthew 6:25–34). He asked us to consider the birds of the air that do not sow or reap or gather food in barns, yet our Heavenly Father feeds them. He also asked us to consider how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labor or spin, yet God enables them to flourish. He said we are of much more value than the birds, and God would take even better care of us than the flowers of the field. He ended that part of the sermon by enjoining us to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and "all these things will be given to you as well" (Matthew 6:33). Seeking God first means seeking God before we seek anything else, but it also means seeking God more than anything else. In an addendum to the conclusion, He said, "Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own" (Matthew 6:34).

Many who do not worry about food, drink, and clothing do worry about the seeming ease of the lives of the wicked. The wicked seem to have whatever they want, they are uncaring and ruthless to people, and they seem to literally get away with murder. In Psalm 37, our focal text, the psalmist was disturbed by this seeming ease of life for the wicked but concluded that it is worth being a righteous person.

Psalm 37, a psalm of David, is considered a wisdom psalm and it is similar to Psalm 73, contrasting the life of the wicked with that of the righteous, and showing that a consideration of the end of each exposes how bankrupt the life of the wicked is.

## Interpreting the Scriptures

In forty verses Psalm 37 points out the transient nature of ill-gotten wealth, the inevitable doom of the wicked, the blessedness of the righteous, and the wisdom in trusting in God. The psalmist buttressed these points over and over again.

### The Transient Nature of Ill-gotten Wealth, the Doom of the Wicked (37:1–2)

The psalmist said, "Do not fret" to those who observe the seeming ease with which the wicked lead their lives. That is the opening salvo in the psalm, which the psalmist emphasized three times within the first eight verses (37:1, 7, 8). In verse 8 he stated fretting leads only to evil. He pointed out that the wicked, like the grass, will soon wither; like green plants, they will soon die away (37:2).

The news cycle and social media have tapped into people's anger, and they feed that anger by bombarding audiences with clips and posts about what "the other side" has been doing. This only leads to obsession and resentment of others' actions. God will not let people get away with evil deeds. Justice for those who commit evil is coming, whether in this life or for certain at the Final Judgment.

### The Wisdom in Trusting in the Lord, the Blessedness of the Righteous (37:3–8)

The psalmist assured the reader that trusting in the Lord is the way to combat the tendency to fret over the seeming ease of life of the wicked. He said, "Trust in the LORD and do good" (37:3), "Take delight in the LORD (37:4), "Commit your way to the LORD" (37:5), and "Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for him" (37:7).

The psalmist emphasized, it is unmistakable that the righteous will be blessed. He proclaimed, the righteous will "enjoy safe pasture" (37:3), "[God]

will give you the desires of your heart" (37:4), "He will make your righteous reward shine like the dawn, your vindication like the noonday sun" (37:6).

There are many challenges or commands to the believer to live a fulfilled life amidst the wicked who seem to prosper. First one must "trust in the Lord." The psalmist didn't say trust in military, political, or economic power, but only "trust in the Lord." Not only should one trust in the Lord, but that person is to do good even when those all around are doing wrong. If one can trust and do good, then that will allow a person to dwell in or live a full and purposeful life in the Lord, who will grant believers their requests when they are according to God's will. Because of this trust, Christians can commit their ways to God because they know God has their best interests.

God wants us to come before Him, be still, silent, and wait patiently for Him. Too often, Christians are so busy bringing their requests to God, they don't slow down to listen to what God has to say. Finally, believers should refrain from anger as that only leads to harboring resentment resulting in evil thoughts, words, and actions.

## The Inevitable Doom of the Wicked, the Blessedness of the Righteous (37:9–17)

"Those who are evil will be destroyed" (37:9). "A little while and the wicked will be no more; though you look for them, they will not be found" (37:10).

The evil plots of the wicked against the righteous will come to nothing (37:12). The Lord simply "laughs at the wicked, for He knows their day is coming" (37:13). The swords the wicked draw against the righteous "will pierce their own hearts," and the bows they bend against the righteous will be broken (37:14–15). "The power of the wicked will be broken" (37:17).

On the other hand, "those who hope in the LORD will inherit the land" (37:9). "The meek will inherit the land and enjoy peace and prosperity" (37:11). Even the little that the righteous have is better than the wealth of many wicked people put together (37:16). The "LORD upholds the righteous" (37:17).

Have you seen the bumper sticker "Those who die with the most toys, wins"? We see others with big houses, new technology, fancy cars, and cool

trips. This can create FOMO (fear of missing out) in us, and we may start to believe we need to enjoy these things also in order to live a fulfilling life. These things can only provide fleeting happiness. Christians await a greater reward in Heaven, when we will get to spend eternity worshiping and communing with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and fellowshipping with the saints.

## The Blessedness of the Righteous, the Inevitable Doom of the Wicked (37:18-22)

The blameless are always "under the LORD's care" (37:18). "Their inheritance will endure forever" (37:18). They will persevere through disasters, and they will enjoy plenty, even during famine (37:19). "They will inherit the land" (37:22).

On the other hand, "the wicked will perish" (37:20). Even when the wicked seem to flourish "like the flowers of the field, they will be consumed, they will go up in smoke" (37:20). They "will be destroyed" (37:22).

People's attitude toward money displays the workings of their hearts. When the wicked borrow, they may not repay, whereas the righteous give generously (37:21).

Jesus, in the Sermon on the Mount, challenged His followers not to focus on material possessions and necessities, "But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own" (Matthew 6:33–34). What pursuits distract you from dwelling in Christ and being about His kingdom work?

## The Blessedness of the Righteous (37:23–26)

The steps of the righteous are made firm by the Lord; the Lord upholds them even when they stumble (37:23–24). The psalmist was confident that the righteous are never forsaken by God, and their children never beg for bread (37:25). The children of the righteous are always a blessing and, returning to

the statement in verse 21, the righteous are always generous, even lending freely (37:26).

## The Blessedness of the Righteous, the Inevitable Doom of the Wicked (37:27–29)

Verse 27 invites the wicked to turn from evil and do good, which would please the Lord. The Lord loves the just and will not forsake His faithful ones, for "the righteous will inherit the land and dwell in it forever" (37:29).

On the other hand, "wrongdoers will be completely destroyed," and their offspring will perish (37:28). With this warning, it seems the choice to do good would be obvious and evil should be avoided at all costs, yet like Paul we sometimes do the very thing that we don't want to do and have trouble doing the things we know we should (Romans 7:15)

## The Blessedness of the Righteous (37:30–31)

Everything about righteous people points to their blessedness. Their mouths "utter wisdom, their tongues speak what is just (37:30). God's Law "is in their hearts, their feet do not slip" (37:31). Lies, slanders, braggadocious talk, and curses should not come out of our mouths. Instead, we need to speak truth lovingly, encourage others, and often just hold our tongues.

## The Blessedness of the Righteous, the Transient Nature of Ill-gotten Wealth (37:32–36)

The wicked may be bent on destroying the righteous, but they will not succeed (37:32). The Lord will not leave the righteous in the power of the wicked (37:33).

Verse 34 admonishes the righteous to keep hoping in the Lord and to keep doing His will, for the Lord will exalt them to inherit the land.

On the other hand, even when a wicked person flourishes like a luxuriant tree, his or her days are numbered, for soon he or she would be no more (37:35–36).

### The Blessedness of the Righteous, the Inevitable Doom of the Wicked (37:37–40)

A future awaits the blameless, the upright, and the peaceful, but there will be no future for the wicked (37:37–38).

The Lord saves the righteous, and He is their stronghold in time of trouble. The Lord delivers the righteous from the wicked. God helps them and delivers them, for they take refuge in Him.

The world admires the powerful, the rich, the boisterous, and the famous, God calls us to be just, faithful, humble, righteous, blameless, and peaceful. Although the powerful may seem to win in this time over those who follow the ways of Jesus, believers will be saved and the sinners and wicked will be destroyed.

## Focusing on the Meaning

In very many countries of the world, the haves lord it over the have-nots. The haves oppress the have-nots. Also, those who are sophisticated in their wickedness tend to get away with much of the evil they perpetrate. What the psalmists said in such psalms as 73 and 37 resonates with many of us. There are times when we wonder if some people are not literally getting away with murder. These psalmists pointed out to us that they came to the point of realization that doom is what awaits wicked people. The doom is in different forms. They do not get away with evil after all. Make no mistake about it, God judges wicked people sooner or later.

On the other hand, God provides for and protects the righteous. They sometimes suffer in different forms—a lot of times unjustly—and it is tempting to think that righteousness on this earth could be for naught. But God never forgets His own. God's blessings in different forms await the righteous, with the culmination being eternal bliss in Heaven.

The Bible does not deceive anyone. The Bible never promises that life will be a bed of roses for all believers. We see believers in the Bible going through tough times just as we experience today and sometimes much more than we

experience today. But the believers trusted in God, and God demonstrated over and over again that He was with them. We too need to trust God at all times and in all circumstances.

Are there some situations in which you worry, and do you then forget to turn things over to God? What do you do when you find a situation overwhelming? How do you remind yourself that you should not worry because God has everything under control?

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Arterbury, Andrew, W. H. Bellinger, and Derek S. Dotson. *Engaging the Christian Scriptures: An Introduction to the Bible*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2014.

Bullock, C. Hassell. *An Introduction to the Old Testament Poetic Books*. Chicago, IL: Moody, 1988.

McCann, J. Clinton, Jr. "Psalms" in *The New Interpreter's Bible: A Commentary in Twelve Volumes*. Volume IV. Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1996.

*NIV Study Bible*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2016.

Sorgwe, Felisi. *I Will Be With You: God's Favorite Promise*. Bloomington, IN: WestBow, 2022.

# Teaching Plans

## DISCOVERY PLAN

### Connect With Life

1. Before the class, draw a graph on your board. The graph should be a line from bottom left to top right. Draw, on the line, several stars or another object that will represent decades of life. Each object represents a ten-year period of life. For example, the first object could be the time period of a person in their 20's. The second item is for the time period 30's and so forth. Make a mark for each ten-year period through the 80's. Assign each ten-year time period to a member of your class and have them think about major issues that a person in that age group faces.

   (A copy of this assignment is available in "Teaching Resource Items" for this study at www.gc2press.org.)

2. Ask each member whom you assigned to come to the board, beginning with the earliest time period, and write one to three words that represent major issues that people worry about for that time period. For example, a person in the 20–30's range might worry about marriage. Remark that this assignment will be discussed later in the lesson.

### Guide Bible Study

3. Invite participants to open to Psalm 37 either in the *Study Guide*, their Bibles, or a Bible app.

4. There are three sub-themes found in the "Interpreting the Scriptures" section in the *Teaching Guide*. Write these on your board.
   - The Transient Nature of Ill-Gotten Wealth
   - The Inevitable Doom of the Wicked

- The Blessedness of the Righteous

Divide the class into three groups. Assign a theme to each group. Lead the groups to underline the phrase, conditions, or wisdom of the psalmist in the entire passage, for their sub-theme.

(A copy of this assignment is available in "Teaching Resource Items" for this study at www.gc2press.org.)

5. Each group should select a writer. The assignment is to rewrite a summary statement of the sub-theme. The assigned writer then proceeds to the board and writes the summary statement. The members of each sub-group then offer a biblical illustration and a modern-day application of the sub-theme. For example, a biblical illustration might be judgment delivered on a pagan group. A modern-day application could be blessings experienced by being a righteous person, family, or nation.

## Encourage Application

6. Call attention to the graph you created at the beginning of the class. Lead the class to recall the experiences that focus on a person worrying. Ask members to call out their choices that create a state of worry for each decade of life. Ask, *Which ones tempt us to fret rather than trust?*

7. Verses 3–7 offer imperatives to the reader to place their trust in God. Place the following words on the focal wall and ask the group what comes after each command. **Trust; Dwell; Delight; Commit; Be Still; Wait**

(A copy of this assignment is available in "Teaching Resource Items" for this study at www.gc2press.org.)

8. The "Focusing on the Meaning" section of our lesson asks two questions. Call for a response to both. *What do you do when you find a situation overwhelming*? (Possible answers might be seek counsel, pray, or find a solution in the Bible.) *How do you remind yourself that you should not worry because God has everything under control*? (Possible answers might be

recall relevant Bible verses, meditate on Scripture, apply Scripture to the situation.)

9. Ask the group to consider these reflection question.
   - What areas do I need to trust, delight, and commit to the Lord?
   - When are times I need to be still?
   - What can I do to help myself refrain from anger?

   (A copy of this assignment is available in "Teaching Resource Items" for this study at www.gc2press.org.)

10. Close in prayer asking the Lord to guide our hearts, thoughts, and decisions when we tend to worry.

## DISCUSSION PLAN

### Connect With Life

1. Print the passage outline from Psalm 37:1–9 on a regular sheet of card stock. Print enough for each member of the class. Consider cutting each piece of card stock into three pieces.
   - Trust in the Lord
   - Take Delight in the Lord
   - Commit Your Way to the Lord

   (A copy of this assignment is available in "Teaching Resource Items" for this study at www.gc2press.org.)

2. Ask each person to write the word "when" following each statement of this passage outline. Direct the class to flip the index card over and write three or four daily experiences that would be applicable with each statement. For example, I will trust in the Lord when praying for guidance. Another might be "I will commit my way to the Lord when He instructs me to pray before making a major decision." Mention that each rephrase can be personalized for a specific decision for that day.

## Guide Bible Study

3. Proceed to your focal wall or board and write **Human Justice** on the left and **Divine Justice** on the right. Prior to the lesson ask three members of your class to serve as a panel. Turn three chairs facing the room. Call out words that define evil in the world. Words might be murder, adultery, kidnapping, and others. After mentioning one of the words, ask your panel to decide what human justice would be given and what divine justice would be given.

4. For the next assignment, encourage the class to identify David's guidance where he noted three aspects of God's judgment on evil. Call for responses. Write these on your focal wall or board.
   - The plans of the evil people will backfire on them (37:14–15, 34)
   - The wicked will experience everything falling out from under them (37:10, 17, 20, 35–36)
   - God is just and He will deal with evildoers in His timing (37:13, 38)

5. Create a responsive reading. State this question. *What does Psalm 37 say about God's judgment*? The class responds with statement number one from step 4. Repeat your statement a second time. The class will respond with the second statement. Finally do the same for the third statement.

   (A copy of this assignment is available in "Teaching Resource Items" for this study at www.gc2press.org.)

6. David had faith to believe divine deliverance would occur. See verses 10–14. Ask the class this question, *If divine deliverance occurred with a situation you are facing, what would be your response*? Discuss as time allows.

## Encourage Application

7. Write the words "Life Is Unfair" on your focal wall or board. Ask the class to consider situations, personal examples, or hypothetical illustrations that confirm this statement. Next, ask, *In using Psalm 37, how should we respond when life is unfair*? Call for responses.

   (A copy of this assignment is available in "Teaching Resource Items" for this study at www.gc2press.org.)

8. Conclude, *One response to situations when life is unfair is to pray for the Lord's peace and His wisdom. Second, look for opportunities to be Christ-like in your family, work, church, and neighborhood offering alternative biblical solutions*. Lead the class in prayer seeking the Lord's guidance and your openness to serve others.

# Between Sunday School & Seminary

## Truett Seminary Online Certificate Program

Unlock a deeper understanding of your faith and enhance your ministry skills with Truett Seminary's Online Certificate Program. Designed for church members and leaders, this program offers substantial theological study in a flexible format that fits your unique pace.

- Sunday School Teachers
- Church Leaders
- Adult Learners
- Bi-vocational Pastors
- Deacons
- Ministers of all Types

Enroll Today!
Elevate Your Ministry Journey.

Baylor University
TRUETT SEMINARY

Learn more at
**baylor.edu/truett/certificate**

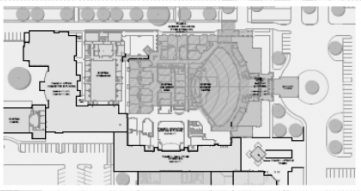
Baylor University admits students of any race, color, national and ethnic origin, sex, age, disability, or veteran status.

# Church Architecture

VisionBridgeConsultingLLC.com
Cal@VisionBridgeLLC.com
936-203-1422

**Vision Accomplished**

VisionBridge Consulting can serve the Church from initial consultation unti project is complete. Whether your Church is looking at property, renovati building new, or expanding, the our Team is a great source to obtain accur information and get your project started.



**PRE-DESIGN CONSULTING**

- Land Feasibility Studies
- Needs Assessment
- Financial Analysis
- Pre-Development Meetings

**ARCHITECTURE**

- Master Planning
- Interior Design
- 3-D Renderings
- Construction Documents
- Construction Administration

**OWNERS REPRESENTAT**

- Pre-Construction Budg
- Project Scheduling
- Contractor Selection
- Contractor Accountabi

# Vision Funding

**Our Desire**

Help Churches lead effective campaigns that steward the heart and grow the congregation into ongoing Biblical Generosity.

**Our Goals**

- To see God move through the congregation and community
- Create a culture of giving and generosity
- Obtain Funds for a specific purpose and/or project
- Eliminate debt service and/or decrease amount to be borrowed
- Eliminate staff time obligations of being the fundraisers
- Increase discipleship, community, and unity in the Church body
- Incorporate the community & those outside the Church into the Campaign
- Provide members of the congregation opportunities to be active in the project

Vision Fur

# SERVING CHILDREN.

## STRENGTHENING FAMILIES.

**We welcome you to join with us to provide those who are most vulnerable with the support and structure they need to find hope, heal, and put their lives back on track.**

Children At Heart Ministries

GRACEWOOD

Miracle Farm

TEXAS BAPTIST CHILDREN'S HOME

1301 N Mays St., Round Rock, TX 78664 · 512-255-3668 · www.cahm.org

TEXAS BAPTISTS®
The Missions Foundation
*God's Mission. Your Legacy.*

# We have made it possible for you to create a legally valid will for FREE!

## WHY DO I NEED A WILL?

**Your will defines your legacy by:**

- Providing for your family
- Preserving the resources God has entrusted to you
- Perpetuating God's Kingdom through your church and other Baptist causes

*"During my time as pastor of Calvary Baptist Church McAllen, we were privileged to have the leadership of the Texas Baptist Missions Foundation present the FreeWill resource to our congregation. Several members were encouraged to use this resource, which was a blessing to them, to Calvary and to the Kingdom of God. In this new role, I am thankful that we can continue to offer this to our Texas Baptists churches."*

**JULIO GUARNERI,** Executive Director of Texas Baptists

## Interested in a FreeWill workshop for your church or group?

**To learn more or schedule a presentation, contact one of our Missions Foundation staff.**

Jerry Carlisle
President
*(214) 828-5114*
*jerry.carlisle@txb.org*

Steve Massey
Vice President
*(214) 828-5365*
*steve.massey@txb.org*

Eric Wyatt
Vice President
*(214) 828-5173*
*eric.wyatt@txb.org*

Scott Stevens
Vice President
*(469) 218-4481*
*scott.stevens@txb.org*

Get started with your will today!
*missionsfoundation.org/create-a-legacy*

**FOCAL TEXT**
Psalm 62:1–12

**BACKGROUND**
Matthew 11:28–30;
Revelation 14:13;
Isaiah 26:4

# lesson 8

# Rest on the Rock

**MAIN IDEA**

Only God provides true rest.

**QUESTION TO EXPLORE**

How do I rest in God?

**TEACHING AIM**

To lead adults to understand that God alone provides refuge and rest

# Bible Comments

## Understanding the Context

Our Lord called out, saying, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light" (Matthew 11:28–30).

True rest is found in the Lord, for only God provides true rest. The Lord called out that He was willing and happy to give rest to anyone who would come to Him. In Him we can take solace from the bombardments of life. Picture someone carrying a heavy burden on his head or shoulders, stumbling under the weight of the burden, and a very strong man going to lift the burden off the person's head or shoulders and actually carrying the burden himself. That was what the Lord did for us on the Cross, and that is what He does for us today. By His stripes, we are healed (Isaiah 53:5).

The Lord is described as our Rock. In Him we hide, and He provides shelter and refuge from the storms of life (Isaiah 32:2). No matter how the storms may be raging, we can find protection in Him. God keeps in perfect peace those whose minds are steadfast, those who trust in Him. He is our eternal Rock (Isaiah 26:3–4).

Unbelief keeps true rest at bay. God's plan was for the Israelites to go on to attain rest in the Promised Land but, with the exception of Joshua and Caleb, they forewent that wonderful plan. The Israelites' problem was unbelief. They were afraid of the inhabitants of the Promised Land, and they forgot about the power of the God who had rescued them from Pharaoh and the Egyptians.

The writer of the letter to the Hebrews commented on it thus: "There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God; for anyone who enters God's rest also rests from their works, just as God did from his. Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will perish by following their [the Israelites'] example of disobedience" (Hebrews 4:9–11).

Indeed, this earth does not provide true rest, for there are always interruptions and stumbling blocks in the way. In Revelation, the Spirit pronounces blessings on those who die in the Lord, saying, "they will rest from their labor, for their deeds will follow them" (Revelation 14:13). That is when lasting rest will be achieved for eternity.

Psalm 62 is a psalm of David, so it was composed by or at least attributed to David. It is an individual hymn, a song of confidence and trust in God. It paints a beautiful portrait of God and of what comes from God, emphasizing that we attain rest only in God, our Rock.

## Interpreting the Scriptures

### Rest in God (62:1–7)

**62:1.** The psalm begins with the strong affirmation that rest is found in God and salvation comes from God. It is the opening salvo of this psalm, and the psalmist buttressed that point over and over again. Rest could be ceasing from labor, like a worker who had worked all day and then rests at night. It could also be ceasing to worry, like a baby who lies perfectly content in the arms of the parent. Both aspects can be seen in the concept of resting in God. We refrain from, or at least minimize, worrying now, knowing that God is capable of meeting all our needs. We also see ourselves lying in the arms of our Heavenly Father, protected from all ills that are out there.

**62:2.** God is the Rock. He is so strong that you can rest on Him at any time. He is our salvation, for He can deliver us from any harm. He is a fortress, and He can provide protection from any outside threat. There is no need to be shaken when you have such a Rock.

God, the Rock, is like a dependable strong tower. The righteous can be assured of their safety in this tower.

**62:3.** We cannot depend on ourselves, for we are not God. Compared to God, any of us is like a leaning wall or a tottering fence. Our foes are bent on cast-

ing us down. However, the righteous have no need to be afraid for God cannot be toppled. In fact, God is so sure and secure that He won't even budge an inch.

**62:4.** The adversaries are intent on toppling the psalmist. They delight in lies, not in truth. They flatter easily, blessing with their mouths while cursing in their hearts.

**62:5.** Our souls can find rest only in God. Our hope comes from God. We must pause, be still, and meditate on God to find that rest.

**62:6.** This verse repeats verse 2 to reemphasize the point that God, the Rock, is our salvation and fortress, leaving no reason to be shaken. Will you be the one who builds his house upon the sand or upon the Rock (Matthew 7:24–27)?

**62:7.** Our salvation and our honor depend on God. He is our mighty Rock and our refuge from any storm. The righteous do not need to be afraid of any storm. Our salvation can only be found in Christ and not from any business leader, politician, judge, family member, or sports hero.

## Trust in God (62:8–10)

**62:8.** It is our place to trust in God, for He is trustworthy. And we should trust Him at all times, not just sometimes. He can never fail us, no matter what the circumstances may be. We should pour out our hearts to Him, who is our refuge. Whatever is going on in your life, God wants to hear about it. He already knows, but He enjoys the relationship with His children and wants to deepen intimacy with you. Just as you can't grow closer to a friend if you never share or communicate, one cannot grow closer to God without telling Him about the good, bad, and ugly in your life.

**62:9.** Being lowborn in the society or highborn (born of nobility) matters very little in the large scheme of things. The lowborn are just like a breath, and the highborn are a lie. When weighed on a balance, they both weigh zero,

compared to God. Together they are only a breath. James would say, "What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes" (James 4:14). It is noteworthy that even though each of us is but a mist, God, our Creator, wants to have a relationship with us and to give us rest.

**62:10.** We are to put our trust in God, not in extortion. We are to have our hope in God, not in stolen goods. Ill-gotten wealth and ill-gotten goods are worse than nothing, for they are actually harmful. It is sad how many people the devil deceives with ill-gotten goods and wealth. The advice is given that should we acquire wealth honestly; we should not make our lives depend on our wealth. Wealth is not bad in itself, for there were wealthy people in the Bible—such as David, Joseph of Arimathea, Lydia, and Barnabas—who used their God-given wealth to do the work of God and to bless others. And there are wealthy believers today who are pillars in many respects in their churches and in parachurch organizations. Money is not the root of all evil; it is the love of money that is "a root of all kinds of evil" (1 Timothy 6:10).

## Seek God's Power and Love (62:11–12)

Power belongs to God. He is the omnipotent God. His love is unfailing, unconditional, and steadfast.

God rewards everyone according to what he or she has done. We must remember this earth does not end it all. Judgment day awaits us. Our Lord told parables, such as the parable of the talents (Matthew 25:14–30) and the parable of the sheep and the goats (Matthew 25:31–46), to tell us there will be a day of reckoning when He will judge all people, and it will take place on the last day.

## Focusing on the Meaning

God is the Rock that shelters believers. Believers can count on God for protection and refuge. He is the shelter in the time of storm, a refuge from an invading army, an oasis in the middle of the desert. We can find true rest in God, even in the middle of a crisis that looks insurmountable.

Human institutions have their place, but you must realize they can fail you. On this earth, rest is temporary, but rest in God is true and eternal. On this earth, people can snatch away your rest, but no one can snatch away the rest God gives you.

Human beings may claim to be strong enough to protect you and give you rest, but human beings can fail you. People can pretend to be who they are not. Even someone who is your true ally today can be your enemy tomorrow. Someone who sells you arms today can be the one attacking you tomorrow.

A house built with straw cannot protect you from the elements. You must examine the substance before relying on it for protection. You have no reason to doubt the strength and efficacy of God's protection. Is there a tendency for you to accept and rely on inadequate protection? What can you do to enable you to rest in God more?

Guard against unbelief. Unbelief keeps true rest at bay. It kept the Israelites from attaining rest in the Promised Land. Only Joshua, son of Nun, and Caleb, son of Jephunneh, escaped that punishment because they had unshakable faith in God. The reason for the unbelief of the Israelites was fear; their fear of the giants who were the inhabitants of the Promised Land. Does the fear of someone or something threaten to stand in your way to true rest? If so, what can you do about it?

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Arterbury, Andrew, W. H. Bellinger, and Derek S. Dotson. *Engaging the Christian Scriptures: An Introduction to the Bible*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2014.

Bullock, C. Hassell. *An Introduction to the Old Testament Poetic Books*. Chicago, IL: Moody, 1988.

McCann, J. Clinton, Jr. "Psalms" in *The New Interpreter's Bible: A Commentary in Twelve Volumes*. Volume IV. Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1996.

*NIV Study Bible*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2016.

Sorgwe, Felisi. *I Will Be With You: God's Favorite Promise*. Bloomington, IN: WestBow, 2022.

# Teaching Plans

## DISCOVERY PLAN

### Connect With Life

1. Ask the class if they remember a movie published by the Billy Graham Association in 1975 called "The Hiding Place." Mention that it focused on the life of the Ten Boom family in the Netherlands and depicted their experiences risking their lives to hide escaping Jewish people during World War II. State, *Similarly God is our refuge, our hiding place*.

2. Read a definition of the word "refuge." From an AI search comes this definition "a place of safety, shelter, and protection from danger or distress." Ask a member of the class to write this definition on your focal wall or board. Keep it as a reminder during this lesson.

3. Read Psalm 61:1–4. Explain that David cries to the Lord to listen to his prayer, acknowledging that God is his Rock, his Refuge, and a Strong Tower. Call attention to today's passage, Psalm 62, saying it is a continuation of the themes of Psalm 61.

### Guide Bible Study

4. There are twelve verses in Psalm 62. Divide these equally among the members of your class. Ask each person to read their verse or verses. As each person reads their verse or verses, interject when a word is read that states an attribute of God. For example, verse 2 states that God is my rock, salvation, and fortress. Do this for every reading. Then, ask a member of the class to count the words that describe the attributes of God. Check off the words as they mention them to help keep track (salvation, fortress, rest, hope, honor, mighty rock, refuge, power, unfailing love, fairness).

5. Provide index cards to each person in your class. Say, *The main idea of this lesson is "Only God provides true rest."* Comparable Scripture passages are Matthew 11:28–30 and John 16:33. Ask the class to find each passage in their Bible. Call one person to read. Following, ask each person to draw or describe a picture of earthly rest on one side of the index card. Then, describe or draw an illustration of their interpretation of God's rest. Ask the class to share their examples.

6. Proceed to your focal wall or board and write the three outline statements under "Interpreting the Scriptures" section in the *Teaching Guide*.
   - Rest in God (62:1–7)
   - Trust in God (62:8–10)
   - Seek God's Power and Love (62:11–12)

   (A copy of this assignment is available in "Teaching Resource Items" for this study at www.gc2press.org.)

7. Divide the class into three groups. Assign to each group one of the statements. Call attention to the contrasting situations in each category. For "Rest in God," it would be verses 3–4. For the second category, "Trust in God," it would be verses 9–10. For the last category, "Seek God's Power and Love," would also be contrasted with verses 3–4. Ask each group to comment on their interpretation of the "negative" type situations. For the first theme, two of the "negative" contexts are "attacking a man" and "pleasure in falsehood." Allow for responses.

## Encourage Application

8. Say, *The overall theme of this lesson "Only God provides true rest," is foundational.* Ask the class to respond to these questions and add additional questions as needed.
   - Should believers refrain from speaking evil?
   - Can a believer express disapproval? Can a believer challenge another person's opinion?

- Should a believer keep quiet if spoken to negatively?
- Should a believer refrain from retaliation?

(A copy of this assignment is available in "Teaching Resource Items" for this study at www.gc2press.org.)

9. On your focal wall or board write these three words: Rebellion, Rest, and Reward. They should be equal distance apart. Next, ask the class to reflect in silence on the times during the past week that they rebelled or exhibited selfish ungodly behavior. Allow one minute for each. Do the same for the second word, reflecting on the times they rested listening to the Lord's instruction. And do the same for the third word. Ask, *Were there positive changes or rewards in your life because you allowed God to be your refuge*?

10. Close with two minutes of silent prayer directing the class to meditate on "God is my refuge."

## DISCUSSION PLAN

### Connect With Life

1. Call on three members of your class to read one of these passages of Scripture. They are Isaiah 26:4; Matthew 11:28–30; John 16:33, and Revelation 14:13. Guide the class to make a one-sentence summary of each passage. For example, a summary statement for Isaiah 26:4 might be "God is the Eternal Rock."

2. Next, lead the class to find within the Matthew 11:28–30 passage the words that describe a need (heavy-laden, weary, burdened, etc.). Following, ask your group to find the words that would give rest (yoke, gentle, humble, easy, and light).

3. With the Matthew passage in mind, call for a member to share a personal experience of having a burden and how the Lord gave rest in the

situation. Many people wear out themselves striving after things that don't have eternal value. Jesus gave the solution to this physical and mental exhaustion in Matthew 6:33–34. Read these verses now.

## Guide Bible Study

4. List on your board these three outline statements and verses from the *Study Guide*.
   - Rest From Personal Attacks (62:1–6)
   - Rest From Emotional Pain (62:7–8)
   - Rest From Unethical Pressure (62:9–10)

5. Divide the class into three groups with each group assigned one of the themes. Inform the groups that their assignment is to first list examples of personal pain (group 1), emotional pain (group 2) and unethical pressure (group 3). Second, each group is asked to brainstorm a list of godly behaviors when faced with the assigned category. For example, when faced with personal attacks, one of several correct behaviors would be to pray for the attacker.

   (A copy of this assignment is available in "Teaching Resource Items" for this study at www.gc2press.org.)

6. Invite class members to discuss these true/false statements:
   - The psalmist was always sure of God's presence and power.
   - Waiting in silence before God means being passive and inactive.
   - God always acts at just the right time.

## Encourage Application

7. Using the three outline statements from step 4, lead the class to design a response sheet for each statement. Hand a piece of paper to each person. This would be a fill-in-the-blank response. For example, complete

this statement: "When I am personally attacked, I will rest in the Lord by (blank)." Another, "When I have emotional pain, I will rest in the Lord by (blank)." And, "When I face unethical pressure, I will rest in the Lord by (blank)."

Several responses can be given for each outlined statement. Ask the class to keep this activity in their Bibles as a reminder of God's rest available for every believer.

(A copy of this assignment is available in "Teaching Resource Items" for this study at www.gc2press.org.)

8. Close in prayer thanking God that His rest is sufficient for all needs.

FOCAL TEXT
Psalm 119:1–16

BACKGROUND
Deuteronomy 6:4–6;
Matthew 6:19–21

# lesson 9

# Walking Blamelessly

**MAIN IDEA**

Studying, meditating on, and following God's Word helps me to love God and others.

**QUESTION TO EXPLORE**

How do I meditate on God's Word and treasure it in my heart?

**TEACHING AIM**

To lead adults to understand that studying and meditating on God's Word is essential to following God

# Bible Comments

## Understanding the Context

God wants us to walk blamelessly before Him. The Bible praises some people in a way that leaves no doubt about how good their walk with God was. It is said of Enoch that he "walked faithfully with God" (Genesis 5:22–24), and God spared him the experience of physical death, which is the lot of mankind. The Bible also describes Caleb as one who "followed the LORD ... wholeheartedly" (Joshua 14:8, 9, 14). King Josiah of Judah is also praised unequivocally: "Neither before nor after Josiah was there a king like him who turned to the LORD as he did—with all his heart and with all his soul and with all his strength, in accordance with all the Law of Moses" (2 Kings 23:25).

In reference to people in Scripture "blameless" does not mean sinless perfection but a wholehearted, repentant, and obedient walk with God. These are examples of people in the Bible who walked blamelessly before God. We can emulate Enoch, Caleb, Josiah, and others like them in our walk with God.

One cannot walk blamelessly before God if one does not know the Word of God. It is by knowing the Word of God that one obeys what we call the Great Commandment: "Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength" (Deuteronomy 6:5).

With the Great Commandment as our motto, we can face any circumstance in life. Jesus expounded on the *Shema* by connecting love for others with love for God (Matthew 22:37–40).

Psalm 119, by far the longest chapter in the Bible—consisting of 176 verses—is devoted to extolling the Word of God. In the Hebrew Bible, the psalm is a beautiful acrostic. It has 22 sections corresponding to the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet. Each section has eight verses, each of the verses beginning with the same Hebrew letter, hence the 176 verses.

The psalm is described as a wisdom psalm or as a character psalm, and it emphasizes the need to study, meditate on, and follow God's Word in order to walk in His will. What is taken for granted is that walking in the will of God is the best thing for anyone. The Word of God should be viewed as a treasure

that should be stored in the heart to bring about the good outcome of walking in the will of God.

It needs to be borne in mind that the psalm uses the following terms as synonyms of the "Word" of God: teaching (instructions), laws, decrees, precepts, statutes, commands (commandments), and ordinances. Not much is gained by trying to distinguish between them.

## Interpreting the Scriptures

### The Joy of Walking Blamelessly (119:1–8)

**119:1–3.** The psalmist pronounced blessedness on those whose ways are blameless, who do no wrong, who walk according to the Law of the Lord, who keep His statutes, and who seek Him with all their hearts and so follow His ways. It echoes Psalm 1:1–2, which opens the book of Psalms: "Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of the mockers, but whose delight is in the law of the LORD and who meditates on his law day and night."

**119:4.** In saying that the Lord has "laid down precepts that are to be fully obeyed," the psalmist was affirming that God does not hide His will from mankind. He has made His will known to mankind, so no one can make the excuse that God's will cannot be known. God's will is to be fully obeyed. One should not use the cafeteria-style approach, where you feel free to pick and choose what you want and ignore everything else.

**119:5–6.** The psalmist cried out that if only he were steadfast in obeying God's Law, he would not be put to shame when thinking of the commands of God. We feel guilty when we disobey God, and we feel joyful when we obey Him. God's laws are actually for our own good, and His commandments are not meant to be burdensome (1 John 5:3).

**119:7–8.** The psalmist expressed the determination to learn God's righteous laws in order to praise God with an upright heart, to obey His decrees.

We should want to study the Word of God. One does not have a good excuse if one refuses to learn the righteous ways of God and then pleads ignorance of the Law.

## The Word and Purity (119:9–16)

**119:9.** The way in which any young person—actually, anyone—can stay on the path of purity is to live according to the Word of God. The way in which someone can be exemplary in his or her ways is to live according to the dictates of God's Word. Paul said: "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:16–17).

God's Word can, and should, be a lamp unto the feet of a person and a light unto his or her path (Psalm 119:105).

**119:10.** The psalmist sought God with all of his heart. This sentiment is the same as that of Psalm 42:1, "As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, my God."

The psalmist then prayed for God to prevent him from straying from God's commands. We can pray for God's wisdom and strength in keeping His commands. In the model prayer our Lord taught His disciples, commonly referred to as The Lord's Prayer, we say, "Deliver us from the evil one" (Matthew 6:13). Jesus told Peter that He had prayed for Peter that his faith "may not fail" (Luke 22:32).

**119:11.** The psalmist joyfully stated that he had hidden the Word of God in his heart to keep from sinning against God. That comes not from just studying the Word but also studying, memorizing, and meditating on it.

**119:12.** The psalmist praised God and pleaded for God to teach him His decrees. So great is the psalmist's longing to know God's will. When some followers of Jesus left Him after a difficult teaching, Jesus asked the Twelve if they wanted to leave also. Peter responded, "Simon Peter answered him, 'Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to be-

lieve and to know that you are the Holy One of God'" (John 6:68–69). Why do we keep searching for life in careers, family, possessions, and hobbies? None of these things are evil in themselves but cause us to sin when we place them ahead of our relationship with God.

**119:13.** One cannot recount all the laws that come from God's mouth unless the person actively recalls God's laws. This comes from reciting the laws of God audibly or silently. It is vital to the believer's faith to be reading and studying the Bible, both individually and corporately. Christians need their personal alone time with God reading His Word. They also need to be a part of a group study to get insights from others. Believers also need to be fed on God's Word from the teaching and preaching of their pastor.

**119:14.** Following the statutes of the Lord brings joy to the person's heart. The psalmist affirmed the joy is comparable to what comes from acquiring great riches. Actually, it should be viewed as being even more than the joy that comes from acquiring great riches, for even the little that the righteous have is better than the wealth of many wicked people put together (see Psalm 37:16).

**119:15.** The psalmist declared here that he meditated on God's precepts to be mindful of God's ways. The value of meditating on God's Word cannot be overstated.

**119:16.** The psalmist ended this section of this long psalm by expressing delight in God's decrees, promising never to neglect God's Word. How does your day or week go when you have not spent time reading and studying the Bible?

## Focusing on the Meaning

Many say they are seeking to find out what God's will is for them in a particular situation. Yet they may not be obeying what they already know is God's will. Many therefore find themselves in a confused state, not because they do not know the will of God, but because they do not want to obey what they

know is God's will for them. The problem is one of disobedience. Do what you already know is God's will and then seek to find out God's will for what you do not have answers for.

At other times the problem is one of fear—that it is hard to do God's will. Doing the will of God should bring joy, not sadness. God's commandments are for our own good, and they are not burdensome (1 John 5:3), so do not be afraid of doing the will of God. Only someone who is bent on sinning against God finds God's laws burdensome.

The problem can also be that of ignorance, truly not knowing what the Bible says. That is why it is important to study and meditate on the Word of God, to be familiar with what the Bible teaches on different subjects. God's will cannot contradict what the Bible clearly says, so if someone is suggesting a line of action that contravenes what the Bible says, that cannot be the will of God for you.

Proverbs 3:5–6 states: "Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight." You must know His will and be ready to obey Him, so Psalm 119:9–11 complements Proverbs 3:5–6. If you would study and meditate on God's Word, hide it in your heart, and be willing to obey Him, God will direct your paths in all circumstances.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Arterbury, Andrew, W. H. Bellinger, and Derek S. Dotson. *Engaging the Christian Scriptures: An Introduction to the Bible*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2014.

Bullock, C. Hassell. *An Introduction to the Old Testament Poetic Books*. Chicago, IL: Moody, 1988.

McCann, J. Clinton, Jr. "Psalms" in *The New Interpreter's Bible: A Commentary in Twelve Volumes*. Volume IV. Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1996.

*NIV Study Bible*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2016.

Sorgwe, Felisi. *I Will Be With You: God's Favorite Promise*. Bloomington, IN: WestBow, 2022.

# Teaching Plans

## DISCOVERY PLAN

### Connect With Life

1. Distribute index cards to the class. Ask each one to write down a situation where a person did not act with integrity. Suggestions might be telling "white" lies, grumbling at work, making lewd comments, gazing at the opposite sex, and talking behind someone's back. Share a personal illustration where you acted with integrity when the situation was neutral. Allow members to share a similar situation.

2. The "Understanding the Context" section notes certain people in the Bible who walked blamelessly or faithfully. People like Enoch (Genesis 5:24), Noah (Genesis 6:9), Abraham (Genesis 17:1), Job (Job 1:1), Zechariah and Elizabeth (Luke 1:6), and Daniel (Daniel 6:22). Ask six members to read the verse related to each person or persons, then from recollection share a reason or experience that showed they walked blamelessly.

   (A copy of this assignment is available in "Teaching Resource Items" for this study at www.gc2press.org.)

### Guide Bible Study

3. Write these two passages on your focal wall or board. The first is Psalm 119:1–8, the second is Psalm 119:9–16. Ask half the class to read verses 1–8 and the other half to read 9–16.

4. Ask a member from each group to write the key words from their passage that relates to the "Word of God." Each group can call out the key words. For example, verses 1–3 indicate that people who applied the Word of God to their life seek Him with all their hearts.

5. After each group shares their list of phrases, each representative will circle the one they believe exemplifies the best meaning of the phrase "the Word(s) of God." Next, ask your class to share one or more examples that would indicate a believer is putting into practice the Words of God.

6. Following, lead the class to complete this sentence. "The Word of God is…" Begin with asking the class to share only one word to complete the sentence. Following, ask the group to share two or three words to complete the sentence. Allow time for multiple responses.

7. Next, ask the class if there is any time the Word of God does not apply to a situation or experience. Ask, *Is there any time that God's Word is not truth*?

8. Take this line of questioning further by asking the class to answer this question. *The Word of God can be applied to my life when I face (blank)*. After a member shares, ask the group if there are other Scripture verses, biblical personalities, or wisdom from Christ's teachings that could apply. Guard your time so other members who want to share have the opportunity.

   (A copy of this assignment is available in "Teaching Resource Items" for this study at www.gc2press.org.)

## Encourage Application

9. Have the groups return to their assigned Psalm 119 passage from earlier. Guide both groups to describe a modern action or behavior that glorifies God when His Words are put into practice. Call for a response.

10. Similarly, lead the class to consider how both passages of Scripture lead a believer to follow God's will. Write this phrase on your focal wall. "God's Word leads to knowing God's will." Close in prayer using this phrase asking the Lord to enable each member to apply the Word of God to their life.

(A copy of this assignment is available in "Teaching Resource Items" for this study at www.gc2press.org.)

## DISCUSSION PLAN

### Connect With Life

1. Ask the class to share their definition of these words (joy, happiness, blessings, and fulfillment). Next, lead the class to select the word that best aligns with knowing the Word of God. Other words may be shared.

2. Next, write the first background passage heading on your focal wall. This is Deuteronomy 6:4–6. Call on a member to read this passage. Following, call on one member to reinterpret this passage as if it were a modern translation. Give a brief commentary on this passage. (A copy of this assignment is available in "Teaching Resource Items" for this study at www.gc2press.org.)

### Guide Bible Study

3. Write these outlines from the *Study Guide* on your focal wall. Following, direct the class to review both sections. Ask two members to come to the front and write a one-sentence summation of each passage.
   - Obeying God's Word Is the Key to Blessing (119:1–6)
   - We Must Choose to Obey (119:7–11)

4. Remind the class that the theme of today's lesson is "Walking Blamelessly." Erase your board and write these four phrases. 1) Blameless vs. Sinless, 2) Blameless vs. Prudent, 3) Blameless vs. Ethical, and 4) Blameless vs. Moral. Ask four individuals to select one of the phrases and explain the difference. Lead others in the class to state their definition of each word.

5. Remark that living blamelessly is a lifestyle blessed by God and accompanies obedience to God's Word.

6. To accent the statement above, draw a Venn diagram on your focal wall. A Venn diagram is comprised of three overlapping circles. Call a volunteer to come to the front. Ask the class to offer phrases that complete the Venn diagram. For example, the left circle could say "The Word of God." The right circle could say "The will of God." The middle circle could be the name of a member.

   (A copy of this assignment is available in "Teaching Resource Items" for this study at www.gc2press.org.)

7. To expand on the Venn diagram image, call on other volunteers to describe a situation or experience (personal or hypothetical) that would bring honor to God. The situation would be written within the circle in the middle. The left circle would contain Scripture that could offer guidance. The right circle would contain a biblical solution. Allow time to discuss the notations by members.

## Encourage Application

8. Write this phrase on your focal wall. How to Internalize God's Word (Psalm 119:11–16) from the outline in the *Study Guide*. Lead the class to brainstorm decisions they would make to allow God's Word to penetrate their heart and lives.

   (A copy of this assignment is available in "Teaching Resource Items" for this study at www.gc2press.org.)

9. Challenge each member to take action during the coming week to apply God's Word to their lives. Close in prayer asking the Holy Spirit to guide every decision and behavior.

**FOCAL TEXT**
Psalm 96:1–13

**BACKGROUND**
Acts 1:7–8;
Matthew 28:19–20

# lesson 10

# Proclaim It!

**MAIN IDEA**

Through praise and testimony Christians are to proclaim God to the nations.

**QUESTION TO EXPLORE**

How am I proclaiming Christ to the nations?

**TEACHING AIM**

To lead adults to understand that God doesn't want Christians only to worship Him; He wants the Church to proclaim Christ to all nations

# Bible Comments

## Understanding the Context

As good as it is to study and meditate on the Word of God, the Lord does not want us to stop there. He wants us to go on to proclaim His gospel to the whole world. Our Lord clearly wanted us to know that so, before ascending into Heaven, He gave us what we call the Great Commission, which is expressed in different forms in the New Testament. Matthew rendered it thus: "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age" (Matthew 28:19–20).

In his gospel, Luke reported the risen Lord said, "repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem" (Luke 24:47).

In Acts of the Apostles, Luke stated it thus: "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

In the version in Acts 1, our Lord mapped out the order in which the early church would spread the gospel. Both Matthew and Luke—in both his books, Luke and Acts of the Apostles—give the Great Commission as one of the last things, or the last thing, the risen Lord said to His disciples before He ascended into Heaven in full view of all the disciples. That emphasizes the weight our Lord put on the Great Commission, for He wanted it to be indelible in their minds.

Psalm 96, our focal text this week, is described as an enthronement Psalm, an example of the psalms that describe God in His glory, the description enabling the reader to visualize God on His throne in Heaven. When we correctly visualize God in His glory, we should be intent on proclaiming His Word to all the nations.

## Interpreting the Scriptures

### Praise God (96:1–2a)

This psalm opens with a call to sing a new song to the Lord. The sentiment is similar to that of Psalm 95:1–2: "Come, let us sing for joy to the LORD; let us shout aloud to the Rock of our salvation. Let us come before him with thanksgiving and extol him with music and song." There are many Christian artists who are creating new songs and praise choruses to be sung to God. There are Christian radio stations and apps that one can connect with to learn and sing along with these new expressions of love, trust, thanksgiving, praise, and dependence on God. Some of the best theology can be found in the old hymn book. God invented music and enjoys listening to His children play and sing to Him.

### Proclaim God (96:2b–3a)

**96:2b.** The psalmist called on the readers to proclaim God's salvation "day after day." The proclamation needs to be done over and over again. We must not get tired of proclaiming the good news of God.

**96:3a.** The call to declare God's "glory among the nations" is a call to proclaim God's Word to all nations. The Great Commission is not simply a New Testament concept. The emphasis in the New Testament is a reaffirmation of this Old Testament concept. When God called Abraham, He told him that "all peoples on earth will be blessed through you" (Genesis 12:3).

### Declare God's Uniqueness (96:3b–6)

**96:3b.** The psalmist emphasized the need to proclaim the uniqueness of God, starting with reference to His "marvelous deeds." No person, nation, entity, or power in history has done or can accomplish what God has done. Only the Lord our God can do infinitely beyond what our finite minds can

even imagine (Ephesians 3:20). Christians need to testify to this and share what God has done in their personal lives and throughout creation.

**96:4a.** The psalmist declared the greatness of the Lord and the fact that God is "most worthy" to be praised. The doxology is the same as that expressed in Psalm 145:3: "Great is the LORD and most worthy of praise; his greatness no one can fathom."

**96:4b–5.** The Lord "is to be feared above all gods," for He alone is God. "All the gods of the nations are idols" made with hands. People were afraid of these manmade gods and thus had to offer sacrifices to them so these "gods" would no longer be mad at them and cause them harm. In contrast, we should have a holy fear of One so powerful that the earth formed when all He had to do was speak it into existence. That is an awesome God! "The LORD made the heavens," a reminder of the fact that the Lord created heaven and earth and everything that exists. We find the same sentiment in Isaiah: "You are my witnesses. Is there any God besides me? No, there is no other Rock. I know not one" (Isaiah 44:8).

**96:6.** God is worthy of praise, for "splendor and majesty are before Him," and "strength and glory are in His sanctuary."

Revelation 4 gives a description of the throne room in Heaven. God is praised without ceasing, "'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come'" (4:8). It is an awesome, powerful place where lightning flashes, thunder roars, and lights blaze (4:5). Heavenly beings are praising God, and the 24 elders are falling down in worship before the throne saying: "You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being" (4:11).

## Glorify God (96:7–13)

**96:7.** In asking all the families of the nations to ascribe glory and strength to the Lord, the psalmist was calling on everyone in every nation to acknowl-

edge God for who He is. People will either choose to do this voluntarily during their lifetime or they will do it in shame at the final judgment. The writer of Philippians declared what will happen when everyone gives honor to the Lord Jesus. "Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (2:9–11).

**96:8.** The glory is due God, and people should come to the courts of the Lord with offerings.

**96:9.** People should worship the Holy God in His splendor. They should reverence Him, even to the point of trembling.

God in His splendor is a concept that comes up again and again in the Bible. God told Moses, "You cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live" (Exodus 33:20). God asked Moses to stand on a rock and said, "When my glory passes by, I will put you in a cleft in the rock and cover you with my hand until I have passed by. Then I will remove my hand and you will see my back; but my face must not be seen" (Exodus 33:22–23).

When God spoke to Elijah in a gentle whisper (or a still small voice), Elijah pulled his cloak over his face (1 Kings 19:13).

In John's description of the New Jerusalem, he said, "The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp" (Revelation 21:23).

**96:10.** People in all the nations of the world should declare "The LORD reigns." God has dominion over all His creation. He has established the world firmly, and no one can move it. He will judge His creation with equity, not with partiality.

The prophecy about the Messianic Age in Isaiah and Micah enables one to visualize this concept: "He will judge between the nations and will settle disputes for many peoples" (Isaiah 2:4; Micah 4:3).

The concept becomes most vivid in the New Testament. Our Lord told the parable of the sheep and the goats, talking of how "he will sit on His

glorious throne" and "all the nations will be gathered before him" (Matthew 25:31–32).

In Revelation, the scene of the great white throne judgment is described. In the vision, John "saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne … The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books" (Revelation 20:12).

**96:11–13.** The psalmist called on all of creation to give glory to God. Every person, animal, rock, tree, body of water, galactical object in the sky, and every grain of sand should praise their Creator. We have voices and they should be used with skill and exuberance to praise God. When the pious demanded that Jesus rebuke His disciples for praising Him, He responded "I tell you…if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out" (Luke 19:40).

The next time you are in nature, stop and listen to the wind blowing, see the trees swaying, notice the majesty of the mountains, smell the sweet aroma of blooming flowers, and notice the artistic sunsets that God paints full of vibrant color. The heavens should rejoice, all the earth should be glad, the sea and everything in it should resound. The fields and everything in them should be jubilant. All the trees of the forest should sing for joy. All creation should rejoice before the Lord, because He is coming to judge the earth. "He will judge the world in righteousness and the peoples in faithfulness."

When Jesus on the night before His death promised His disciples that He would send the Holy Spirit to guide them, Jesus said, "When he comes, he will prove the world to be in the wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment" (John 16:8). We were made in God's image to worship Him because of the great mercy and grace that He has shown us through His Son. What is holding us back?

## Focusing on the Meaning

The psalmist's call on the readers to proclaim God's salvation "day after day" would align with the Great Commission, which the risen Lord would give His disciples. In the Great Commission, our Lord sent them to proclaim the

gospel to all nations. But He also commanded them to wait in Jerusalem until they had been endued with power from above. He was referring to what would be the descent of the Holy Spirit on the disciples in the upper room at Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2).

Having been empowered by the Holy Spirit, our Lord's disciples took on the assignment and they immediately began to proclaim the gospel fearlessly. About 3,000 people came to know the Lord on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:41) and that gave birth to the early church. The gospel was spread all the way to Rome, the imperial capital city of the Roman Empire, even before the apostle Paul made his way there.

The work of spreading the gospel has continued till today, but there is still work to be done. It is easy to be apathetic, not seeing any urgency in spreading the gospel, but that would be a big mistake. Do not be tempted to think that simply worshiping God in our churches is enough. Christ is coming again, and He could come back any day now. We must do all we can to spread the gospel to all peoples. We can do whatever we can where we are; we can assist those who go to distant lands to proclaim the gospel; and we ourselves can go when the Holy Spirit leads us to do so.

Ask yourself what you are currently doing to spread the gospel to all peoples. If you feel that your answer is inadequate, what can you do differently?

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Arterbury, Andrew, W. H. Bellinger, and Derek S. Dotson. *Engaging the Christian Scriptures: An Introduction to the Bible*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2014.

Bullock, C. Hassell. *An Introduction to the Old Testament Poetic Books*. Chicago, IL: Moody, 1988.

McCann, J. Clinton, Jr. "Psalms" in *The New Interpreter's Bible: A Commentary in Twelve Volumes*. Volume IV. Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1996.

*NIV Study Bible*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2016.

Sorgwe, Felisi. *I Will Be With You: God's Favorite Promise*. Bloomington, IN: WestBow, 2022.

# Teaching Plans

## DISCOVERY PLAN

### Connect With Life

1. Write these four words—Talents, Treasure, Testimony, and Travel—one under another on your focal wall. Place these on the left side of your wall. Share the Question to Explore, "How am I proclaiming Christ to the nations?" with the class. Call on four members to come to the front, select one of the words and answer the Question to Explore by writing an answer beside the word they chose. For example, "How am I proclaiming Christ to the nations with my talents?" Allow responses.

   (A copy of this assignment is available in "Teaching Resource Items" for this study at www.gc2press.org.)

2. On the right side of your board, do these tasks. First, draw an outline of your city, then an outline of your state, followed by an outline of America, and finally an outline of the world. If you are not artistic, then simply write the words. Call on four other members to come to the front, one at a time, draw a line from one of the words to one of the geographical areas. For example, one member might draw a line from "Testimony" to their city. Ask participants to explain their connections. Guide the group to discuss other possibilities.

   (A copy of this assignment is available in "Teaching Resource Items" for this study at www.gc2press.org.)

### Guide Bible Study

3. Erase your board and write the four headings from the "Interpreting the Scriptures" section in the *Teaching Guide*.
   - Praise God (96:1–2a)

- Proclaim God (96:2b–3a)
- Declare God's Uniqueness (96:3b–6)
- Glorify God (96:7–13)

(A copy of this assignment is available in "Teaching Resource Items" for this study at www.gc2press.org.)

4. Enlist four members to read each passage. Following each reading, ask the volunteer what the significance of the passage to the Main Idea is: "Through praise and testimony, Christians are to proclaim God to the nations."

5. Ask the same four people to read their assigned passage a second time and, this time, mention the word or words that support missions.

6. Ask your class to form four groups. Groups can be any size. Refer to the four words in the first activity, Step 1. Ask each group to become a hypothetical task force for the church. With the psalm passage in mind, each team creates a list of tasks to enhance the Main Idea. If you have tear sheets, attach with tape on your focal wall. Each group has a designated area to write.
   - Group 1—How can the "Talents" of members of my church proclaim God to the nations?
   - Group 2—How can the "Treasures" of members of my church proclaim God to the nations?
   - Group 3—How can the "Testimonies" of members of my church proclaim God to the nations?
   - Group 4—How can the "Travels" of members of my church proclaim God to the nations?

   Allow time for sharing their strategies. (A copy of this assignment is available in "Teaching Resource Items" for this study at www.gc2press.org.)

## Encourage Application

7. After the group returns to their seats, ask the class to decide on the best response to each question. Their selection should be based on what your church could do to proclaim God to the nations. Take a sharpie marker and circle the selected answer.

8. Lead the class to pray specifically for the Lord to move in the hearts and lives of members to accomplish the goal of proclaiming God to the nations.

# DISCUSSION PLAN

## Connect With Life

1. Before the class session, invite a missions leader in your church to attend and speak on mission opportunities. If a leader is not available, ask this member to provide brochures and flyers that announce future mission events. Further, if there are members of your class who have gone on mission trips, allow them to share their experiences.

2. Using the Connect With Life activity in the Discovery Plan that asked the class to draw an image of their city, state, nation, and the world, lead the class to list the mission projects your church has participated in each of those locations.

3. To express interest in future mission projects, ask members to call out a project that is being considered or has been added to the church calendar. Brainstorm ideas of mission projects and opportunities your class could engage directly.

## Guide Bible Study

4. On your focal wall write the outline from the *Study Guide*. Have members pair up and assign one passage to each pair. Have one of the pairs read the passage. Then, the second member of the pair will offer a summary. You may need to call on multiple pairs who have the same passage. Continue until all three passages are complete.
   - Our Purpose Is to Reveal the Greatness of God (96:1–6)
   - Our Goal Is the Universal Worship of God (96:1, 7–13)
   - Our Time Is Now (96:2)

   (A copy of this assignment is available in "Teaching Resource Items" for this study at www.gc2press.org.)

5. Have pairs combine with another pair to form four person groups. Have each group come up with ways and opportunities they can praise and worship the Lord at church, at home, and other places.

## Encourage Application

6. A person's Christian testimony is crucial to accomplishing the proclamation of worship and mission mindedness to the world. An outline is shared in the sidebar "Personal Testimony" in the *Study Guide*. Distribute three index cards to each member. Guide the class to write each of these statements—My Life Before Christ, How I Met Christ, and My Life Since Christ—on a separate card. Lead the class to write a brief answer to each statement on the back side of the index cards. Each member can then keep these cards in their Bible, a journal, or another prominent place.

   (A copy of this assignment is available in "Teaching Resource Items" for this study at www.gc2press.org.)

7. Ask if one or more members (depending on time) would share their Christian testimony. At the end, lead in prayer acknowledging the importance of sharing one's testimony as part of praising God and fulfilling the mission entrusted.

FOCAL TEXT
Psalm 113:1–9

BACKGROUND
1 Samuel 2:8;
Luke 4:18–19

# lesson 11

# God Uplifts the Poor and Needy

**MAIN IDEA**

The Lord God seeks out those who are downtrodden and lifts them up.

**QUESTION TO EXPLORE**

How do I help the poor, the neglected, and others in need?

**TEACHING AIM**

To lead adults to understand if God is uplifting the poor and needy to places of prestige, Christians should do the same

# Bible Comments

## Understanding the Context

This psalm begins a series of six psalms (Psalms 113–118) that recall God's miraculous work in the past history of the nation of Israel. Known as a "Passover Psalm," it commemorates the Passover lamb, the blood on the doorpost, and the deliverance of the children of Israel from Egypt via the Red Sea and the wilderness. The psalm celebrates an "Egyptian *Hallel*," literally, "hallelujah," or "Egyptian praise" for God's hand of salvation—His rescue of His people from slavery and despair in Egypt. In a sense, the *Hallel* (praise) accentuates gratitude for God's hand in leading the children of Israel to the land of promise, the land flowing with milk and honey.

The children of Israel sang Psalms 113 and 114 before the Passover meal. Scholars believe, of the six Passover Psalms, a few might have been sung by Jesus and His disciples at the Passover meal in the upper room before soldiers arrested Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane. Mark 14:26 records the possibility, "When they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives." Jesus' last hymn sung at Passover became a hymn of grateful praise for deliverance of His people, both past and future.

One featured characteristic of this psalm remains the regal majesty of God Most High seated on His throne in triumphant joy. However, a clear picture in this psalm emerges, God reigns on high, but He does not forget His people. He looks on the poor with kingly, even shepherding care. Though high, God looks down with empathy for the struggles of the poor, the widow, and lonely strugglers. Care for the lowly remains a significant distinctive of God and His people in their walk of faith. James, the half-brother of our Lord and pastor of the poor congregation in Jerusalem, penned these words: "Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world" (James 1:27). This psalm possesses a "double-edged sword" remembering the past history of the Jews under Egyptian slavery, oppression,

and poverty and a thrust to care for those who live under present oppressive, poverty-stricken, and hardship conditions.

## Interpreting the Scriptures

### Praise to the God on High (113:1–4)

**113:1.** Psalm 113:5 asks the question: "Who is like the LORD our God?" The entire psalm answers this question. No one is like our Lord. He stands alone. He alone is God. "'For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,' declares the LORD. 'As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts'" (Isaiah 55:8–9). God says, "I am the LORD, the God of all mankind. Is anything too hard for me?" (Jeremiah 32:27).

Verse one responds to the question with praise to God. The praise acknowledges God's worthiness, reverence, honor, power, and glory (Revelation 4:11; 5:13). Think of a pillar of fire by night and a cloud by day leading the children of Israel through the wilderness after deliverance from Egyptian bondage. The praise comes from God's servants, possibly the priests in the Temple. The praise hails and rejoices in God's name. His name is His person. His name is His wonderful work. His name is His wonder. His name is His steadfast love and faithfulness, a repetitive melody in Psalms. "Your love, LORD, reaches to the heavens, your faithfulness to the skies" (Psalm 36:5).

**113:2–4.** Praise to God turns to the worship of God. The worshipers bless the name of the Lord in perpetual praise. They praise God daily, at the sun's rising and setting. They acknowledge God's place in Heaven and earth, in the glory of creation and in the quietness of their hearts, and in His radiant glory over everything and His glory above the heavens. The twofold meaning here shows (1) God as sovereign; (2) God as involved in the daily life of His people and exalted above the heavens, yet a priority in their hearts. "Glory" always in the Old Testament references the *shekinah*, God's light, His presence in

leading His people and His overwhelming fullness filling the Temple like a cloud.

"Now the cherubim were standing on the south side of the temple when the man went in, and a cloud filled the inner court. Then the glory of the LORD rose from above the cherubim and moved to the threshold of the temple. The cloud filled the temple, and the court was full of the radiance of the glory of the LORD" (Ezekiel 10:3–4). *Shekinah* represented and fulfilled God's glory, His radiance reaching out to His people, and symbolized His provision in life's journey.

## Care for the Hurting (113:5–9)

**113:5–6.** The psalmist shifted focus from God's glory to God's rule over Heaven and earth. Who is like our God? What the psalmist declared next was what the children of Israel announced in the Exodus: "Who among the gods is like you, O LORD? Who is like you, majestic in holiness, awesome in glory, working wonders? You stretched out your right hand, and the earth swallows your enemies. In your unfailing love you will lead the people you have redeemed" (Exodus 15:11–13). "Unfailing love" translates as *hesed* in Hebrew, that is, God's love as a part of His covenant to Abraham (Genesis 12), God's love as a promise to His people, and God's love as tenderness, mercy, and as is often noted, His lovingkindness. "I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with unfailing kindness [lovingkindness]" (Jeremiah 31:3).

God is seated on high and looks down on the heavens and earth. God looks down, but the implication also directs the eyes of God's followers to look up. "Fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Hebrews 12:2). The weary, wounded, and weak cry out to God. "Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need" (Hebrews 4:16). God helps the weak.

**113:7–9.** These three verses look back at history. They remind the reader of Hannah's song, her tearful prayer to God in gratitude for miraculously giving

her a son, Samuel. She dedicated him to God at the Tabernacle in Shiloh, and her prayer began in rejoicing to God on high (1 Samuel 2:1–2). It continues by confessing God's holiness and that there is no one like Him. It culminates by stressing God's strength in setting the earth on its pillars and in humble gratitude for God's tender care. The psalmist borrowed Hannah's heartfelt words: "He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the needy from the ash heap; he seats them with princes and has them inherit a throne of honor" (1 Samuel 2:8).

Mary's poetic words in her *Magnificat,* magnifying the Lord, echo Hannah's words. Mary shared words of God's deliverance, praise for His mercy, gratitude for God's care for the humble and poor, and praising God for His strength, help, and provision that "fills the hungry with good things" (Luke 1:46–55).

Both Hannah's song and the psalmist melodic words set to music here announce three powerful statements: (1) God reigns and His rule over His kingdom and people lifts them up; (2) God's reach in His care touches both the heavens and earth, both thrones on high where princes sit and poor paupers who beg at city gates; and (3) His shepherding care touches the weak, the poor, the needy, the mother longing for a child, and His love reaches down as a hand to lift up people where they dwell and live, literally, their "homes."

The psalm ends as it began: shouting a word of praise to God. The Egyptian *Hallel* sings a loud hallelujah. The God who delivered Moses and His people delivers His followers today. The God of unfailing love for the children of Israel leads and guides His people today by His mercy. The God who crossed over the Red Sea to rescue His people crossed over on the Cross to redeem His people today. The *shekinah* of yesterday bursts forth as the God of glory today, worthy of honor, worship, and praise.

## Focusing on the Meaning

One absolute necessity in any kingdom-focused church ought to be care for the broken, the poor, the orphan, and the weak in society. More than social justice, what this psalm appreciates and challenges the believer to do is to

live, think, and care with the tenderness of a shepherd caring for the sheep. The staff points the sheep in guidance. The curved hook on the staff rescues the sheep. The loving nature of the shepherd caring for the sheep leads them to green pastures for feeding, still waters to sustain life, to places of restoration, and to paths of righteousness in life. Goodness and mercy follow the shepherd and offer ample supply for the sheep.

Jesus Himself proclaimed the gospel, borrowing from the prophet Isaiah, a gospel of shepherding care: "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to see the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor" (Luke 4:18–19). Jesus' proclamation became a message of redemption, freedom, hope, and grace (literally, "favor").

Every New Testament church should direct stewardship resources, implement care ministries, and offer opportunities of encouragement and hope for the neglected and the hurting in their own communities, even around the world. The need multiplies daily. The opportunity increases exponentially given the fires, the floods, the hurricanes, the tornadoes, the homeless, and the heartbroken in society.

Praise and thanksgiving to God swell in the hearts of believers, producing a benevolent heart that cares for others. People care for people; churches care for people. Luke recorded in Acts (24:17) the apostle Paul's message: "After an absence of several years, I came to Jerusalem to bring my people gifts for the poor and to present offerings." On mission, churches help churches as Paul attested to the Corinthians: "What is more, [Titus] was chosen by the churches to accompany us as we carry the offering, which we administer in order to honor the Lord himself and to show our eagerness to help" (2 Corinthians 8:19).

This psalm celebrates God's hand of deliverance, rescue, promise, and freedom, reminding the reader to extend the same hand to others that God has extended to them. God lifted up the downtrodden and His followers lift up the broken, bruised, and bewildered.

Psalm 40:2–3 summarizes this psalm's theme: "He lifted me out of the slimy pit, out of the mud and mire; he set my feet on a rock and gave me a firm place to stand. He put a new song in my mouth, a hymn of praise to our God. Many will see and fear the LORD and put their trust in him." Hallelujah!

# Teaching Plans

## DISCOVERY PLAN

### Connect With Life

1. As class members arrive, direct their attention to Psalm 113:1 displayed on a poster or board. Instruct them to consider things God has done that would be deserving of praise.

   (A copy of this assignment is available in "Teaching Resource Items" for this study at www.gc2press.org.)

2. Once class begins, take a small beanbag or stuffed animal to pass around the class. Instruct class members to state their reason for praising the Lord when the object is tossed to them. (Toss the item to a class member prepared ahead of time to illustrate what should be done.) Allow time for responses before moving to the next step.

3. After several minutes, ask the class the following questions:
   - When is it easiest to offer praise to someone?
   - When might it be most challenging?

   Direct students to the lesson Main Idea and share how believers today are called to imitate the Lord's example by lifting up the vulnerable in their world.

### Guide Bible Study

4. Give a 30-second synopsis of last week's lesson, connecting it to the overall theme of this study. Have students form discussion groups of 3–4 people. Using material from the *Teaching Guide* and *Study Guide*, prepare a short background of the use of the Hebrew verb *Hallel* in the "Passover Psalms" (113–118).

5. Read Psalm 113:1–3 and ask groups to discuss the following prompts. Allow time for discussion and then allow groups to share with the class.
   - Who are "you his servants"? Does this refer to ministers and priests, or to the average believer? Why do you think so?
   - Describe the difference in praising the *name* of the Lord and praising *the Lord*. What examples could you provide?
   - Describe a time of life when praising the Lord would be difficult. What would the psalmist say about praising during those times of life? How is that possible?
   - From verse 3, what can we learn about God's sovereignty and how should we respond to it?

   Allow 2–3 minutes for groups to share their findings with the class. (A copy of this assignment is available in "Teaching Resource Items" for this study at www.gc2press.org.)

6. Have groups read Psalm 113:4–6, then discuss these prompts:
   - What characteristic of God is cause for praise in this section? (Transcendence)
   - Why should that elicit praise from believers today?
   - Describe some of the "gods" people pursue today. How do they compare to the Lord? (Guide discussion to include God "stooping down" and interacting with His creation.)
   - Where else in Scripture do we see worship or praise of the Lord notably occurring? (See Isaiah 6:1–3 and Revelation 4:8–11) How do these passages compare to the words of the psalmist?

   Provide time for groups to share their results. (A copy of this assignment is available in "Teaching Resource Items" for this study at www.gc2press.org.)

7. Direct the class to the sidebar, "The Great Reversal" in the *Study Guide*. Using its material, have the class consider the following prompts:

- True or False: God's blessings are reserved only for those who follow Him. (Be prepared to justify your response.)
- Apart from the psalmist's testimony, how else do we see God "coming near" to those who are weak and needy? (Responses may include the Tabernacle, the Temple, the name "Immanuel," etc.)
- Compare Psalm 113:7–8 with James 1:27. How does this passage compare with the New Testament perspective?

(A copy of this assignment is available in "Teaching Resource Items" for this study at www.gc2press.org.)

## Encourage Application

8. Allow 60 seconds for groups to review the sidebar, "Making an Impact" in the *Study Guide,* then respond to the following:
   - True or False: I am currently pleased with my level of concern for the vulnerable, poor, and oppressed.
   - What is one area in which our church or small group could better reflect God's actions of lifting the vulnerable in our world?
9. Provide 3"x5" cards for the class and have them respond to the following statement: "I cannot do everything, but everyone can do something."
   - Ask students to write on their card one thing they will do to honor God after this lesson.
   - Encourage students to keep their cards in a place that they can see them during the week.
10. Close the lesson in prayer, asking the Lord to help sensitize the hearts of believers to be intentional in showing compassion.

## DISCUSSION PLAN

### Connect With Life

1. Display Psalm 113:1 for the class and as students arrive have them consider the importance of the command.

   (A copy of this assignment is available in "Teaching Resource Items" for this study at www.gc2press.org.)

2. As class begins, call out a time of day (like 6 a.m.) or an activity in the day (breakfast). Have students give actions or statements that would fulfill the call to praise the Lord during those times of the day.

   Allow several minutes for responses, then direct students to today's "Main Idea." Share how God calls believers to follow the Lord's example as an act of worship and praise to Him. Lead the class in prayer to begin the lesson.

### Guide Bible Study

3. Give a 30-second recap of last week's lesson, connecting it to the overall theme of this study. Using material from the *Teaching Guide* and the *Study Guide*, have a student who is comfortable speaking prepare a brief presentation of the "Passover Psalms" (113–118). Connect the history of Israel's deliverance with God's current expectation of His people in interacting with those in their world who are less fortunate or oppressed.

4. Read Psalm 113:1–3, then have students respond to the following prompts:
   - Who would you say are "you his servants"? How would that make a person feel, being described as a servant?

- How could the phrase, "no time like the present" be applied to these verses? What are some possible responses from others when we praise the Lord in this way?

5. Read Psalm 113:4–6 and ask for responses to these questions:
   - How do these characteristics of God point to His worthiness? (Responses may include that God's sovereignty and transcendence separate Him from other praise-worthy things; He is higher than other deities; etc.)
   - Is there any encouragement to be found in these three verses? If so, what might it be? If not, why not?

6. Using material from the sidebar, "The Great Reversal" in the *Study Guide,* provide a brief presentation that contrasts God's use of power and the ways that other powerful people have behaved throughout Scripture (ungodly kings of Israel; Pharisees; etc.).

7. Read Psalm 113:7–9 and have the class respond to the following prompts:
   - How does God set Himself apart from the other gods in the world?
   - What motivates God to act in such a way to the people mentioned by the psalmist? (cf. John 3:16–17; Romans 9:15–16; 1 John 4:9)
   - How does Jesus' life or ministry compare to verses 7–9?

## Encourage Application

8. Allow 30–45 seconds for students to review the sidebar, "Making an Impact" in the *Study Guide,* then ask:
   - True or False: God is satisfied with my level or concern for those around me who are weak, oppressed, or vulnerable.
   - What would you say is your default response when encountering someone in need?

- What is one area in which our church or small group could better reflect God's actions of lifting the vulnerable in our world?

9. Have students consider the following statements and fill in the blanks silently. Allow a moment for volunteer responses:
   - Because of today's lesson, God wants me to _____ _____.
   - One way that I can use Psalm 113 to prompt me to remember God's compassion in my life this week is_____.

   (A copy of this assignment is available in "Teaching Resource Items" for this study at www.gc2press.org.)

10. Close the lesson in prayer, thanking God for His mercy and grace to those who are in need.

**FOCAL TEXT**
Psalm 77:1–20

**BACKGROUND**
Exodus 2:23–25; Psalm 22:1–31; Luke 22:41–44

# lesson 12

# Has God Forgotten Me?

**MAIN IDEA**

No matter how bad it seems or gets, believers can call upon the Lord.

**QUESTION TO EXPLORE**

When I feel discouraged or depressed, will I call upon the Lord?

**TEACHING AIM**

To lead adults to understand that no matter the struggles and trials believers endure, they can honestly and openly share their feelings and situations with God and have confidence that He hears

# Bible Comments

## Understanding the Context

Psalm 77 begins with the cry of a wounded, weary, and gloomy worshiper, but halfway through the cry, it turns to hope. The wounded one turns to grateful remembrance of God's wonders, and the gloom of despair changes to energetic resilience. Psalm 77 acknowledges life's realities: despair, discouragement, and the quest for a detour to seek escape from life's painful misery. Yet Psalm 77 also recognizes the importance of remembering God's past wonders, His redemptive acts, and His eternal purposes. Psalm 77 highlights suffering, sorrow, and deep sadness as true anxiety and angst in the hearts of wounded followers of Christ. But Psalm 77 also shifts to show the power of historic images that resurrect hope in the hearts of the depressed and disheartened.

The psalmist poetically painted a picture of the joyful image of God's deliverance of the children of Israel from Egyptian bondage. This rhythmical and lyrical poetry set to music, most likely on a harp, possibly with words sung out loud like a hymn, declares God's miraculous hand at work in the harsh realities of life. Invoking this powerful, triumphant image of chariots flooded in rough waters and churning in the Red Sea was a common theme in the Psalms (Psalm 78; 106; 114; 136). This image of the children of Israel fleeing Egypt through the dry bed of the Red Sea, provided hopefulness in the dejection of defeat, misery, and hopelessness. This image of the children of Israel moving toward God's promise in the land of milk and honey, renewed confidence in God and supplied reassurance of God's love and care in moments of crisis. The psalmist even put four faces to reinforce God's hand of deliverance: Jacob, Joseph, Moses, and Aaron. Individually, each one wrestled with God, experienced deep, painful anguish, and saw God's miracle-working grace in moments of personal crisis.

One interesting, yet subtle feature of this psalm requires the reader to feel the rhythm and anguish of the psalm. The writer quietly moved away from "I" in the psalm, the personal nature of worry, fear, and anxiety that

swells in the soul when despair takes hold of the heart and mind. The writer transitioned from "I" to God's provision, His redemption, and His unseen work in deliverance, literally, His unseen "footprints" on the sands of time. Psalm 77 answers the question, "Has God forgotten me?"

## Interpreting the Scriptures

### The Broken, Hurting, and Lonely Soul (77:1–9)

**77:1–2.** The psalm starts as a tearful, intense, and honest cry to the Lord. The cry out to God has an expectation that God will hear. The suffering soul writhes and languishes because of trouble. The Septuagint uses the word *thlipsis*, a clear portrait of the person weighed down and burdened, literally, "crushed" by life. The psalmist pleaded with God, with weary hands outstretched. Yet the cry for God to move and act comes with silence, not comfort, and loneliness surges to fill the heart.

The first two verses of Psalm 77 seem similar to Jesus' distress in the garden of Gethsemane: "He withdrew about a stone's throw beyond them, knelt down and prayed, 'Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done.' An angel from heaven appeared to him and strengthened him. And being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground" (Luke 22:41–44).

These verses also echo Jesus' lonely cry from the cross, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, so far from my cries of anguish? My God, I cry out by day, but you do not answer" (Psalm 22:1–2; Mark 15:34). Jesus offered loud cries and tears (Hebrews 5:7).

**77:3–4.** The psalmist thought of God, remembered Him, then moaned and meditated. He could barely keep his eyes open. Anguish and God's silence combined to create soulful agitation, sleeplessness, and an anxiety-ridden hopelessness. The psalmist could no longer speak or pray.

**77:5–6.** The psalmist again remembered his God, while meditating and searching his own spirit with a painfully deep diligence for answers, listening for God's reply. Verse 6 mentions "songs in the night." Scholars debate the tone of such songs. Some scholars see them as joyful songs sung in an effort to revive faith, renew hope, and restore joy as the Hebrew might indicate. Others see them as laments, woeful dirges of grief, and as wails of sad songs sung in desperate confusion and restless doubt. Maybe both ideas seem appropriate here: a despairing song longing for the restorative joy of God to return.

**77:7–9.** Next the psalmist in anguish asked questions: God, will you turn away from me forever? God, has Your covenant love and promise to Abraham been nullified? God, have You forgotten the grace of Your covenant love, forgotten Your gracious acts in my life? God, has Your anger so flared that You have forgotten simple compassion to Your servant? The repetitive questions reinforce the drama, agony, and hurtful appeal of the psalmist. God's silence is deafening. God's silence proves difficult. God silence shouts, in a sense. God, where are You?

## The Hope of a Soul Turning Eyes Toward God (77:10–20)

**77:10–13.** Next the psalmist "remembers" God two more times: His "deeds" or active works. He turned from despair to remembrance of God's wonders from days past. The recollection of God's promise to Abraham, His deliverance of His people from Egypt, and His supply of strength through the wilderness and into the land of promise suddenly excited the writer. The recollection led to an appreciation of God's holiness, and may have brought to mind the light of God's presence that filled the Temple and led God's people in a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night through the wilderness.

Appreciation surrendered to an exclamation; "What god is as great as our God?" The psalmist appealed to God's throne, His position High and lifted up, and to God's "right hand" of authority (Psalm 77:10). The despairing tone completely shifted to hope in God. Light shattered the darkness. The

insomniac at prayer singing songs in the night discovered the grace of God in a new dawn.

**77:14–15.** Next the psalmist presented four faces of memory in God's miraculous work and wonders: Jacob, Joseph, Moses, and Aaron. Jacob wrestled with God like the psalmist in Psalm 77 (Genesis 32:29–32). God transformed the life of Jacob. Jacob had twelve sons, one of whom was Joseph. Joseph, in a sense, "saved" and protected the children of Israel from famine and extinction. Joseph's faith, his resilience in the face of trouble, his trust in God, and his participation in the wonders of God's story of redemption inspired the psalmist as he renewed his confidence in God (Genesis 45–50). Joseph's love became a picture of God's covenant love, known as *hesed*, God's far-reaching love that demonstrates lovingkindness, grace, mercy, and the tenderness of a shepherd's care. One feature of Joseph that might be subtly addressed in this psalm is Joseph's infamous words to his brothers: "You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives (Genesis 50:20; see also Romans 8:28).

**77:16–20.** The next four verses appeal to Moses and Aaron. They show God's work in leading His people out of Egypt, through the Red Sea, and toward the Land of Promise. The imagery is powerful here: the rough waters of the Red Sea, the thunder and lightning as a reference to God drowning the Egyptians and their chariots in the Red Sea, and victory through Moses's raised staff, through trusting God's power, and Aaron holding Moses's hands up to secure victory over enemies.

The psalm ends dramatically, suddenly, like one of Jesus' parables, which invite the reader or hearer to join God in His story. The focus is twofold: (1) God's unseen "footprint"—His invisible hand always at work for His people; (2) God's tenderness—His merciful and loving care for His people like a shepherd cares for his flock (Psalm 23; John 10). The powerful picture anticipates Jesus as the Good Shepherd who lays down His life for the sheep and sacrificially loves the sheep (John 10:1–16).

## Focusing on the Meaning

Psalm 77 shares the heartfelt experience of the psalmist. He encountered a time, even a place where he felt lonely and despaired, as if the living God had abandoned him. Circumstances arise in life, a financial crisis, the loss of a job, a broken relationship, grief over the loss of a child or loved one, an unexpected emergency, or maybe even a medical issue. Life carries with it uncertainty and unpredictability, and life does not come with perfect instructions nor is it an exact science. Tragedy strikes. Catastrophe interrupts. Pain fills a burdened heart. Suffering multiplies. And people cry out to God in their despair.

Three key elements in this psalm can offer encouragement to any individual in the darkness and sadness of life. First, the shift in tone midway in the psalm strengthens faith in knowing that we do not face life alone. As God delivered His people from Egypt, He can also deliver us. God affirmed Joshua with these words, "No one will be able to stand up against you all the days of your life. As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will never leave you nor forsake you" (Joshua 1:5).

God reminds us, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you" (Hebrews 13:5). God's promise of His presence sustains believers who walk with Him and trust in Him (Proverbs 3:5–6; Matthew 28:19–20). The Holy Spirit will guide you as a Counselor, a Comforter, and as a Shepherd; from despair to hope, from anxiety to peace, from anguish to the glory and love of His abounding grace (John 14:26).

Second, Psalm 77 invokes images of the Red Sea, Moses and Aaron, and Jacob and Joseph. The deliverance from Egypt and the faces of four servants of God supplies powerful, poetic imagery that serve as reminders of God's work and wonder, His arm of rescue, and His hand of direction. In each situation and in each person of the four, God delivered them, guided them, and provided for their needs (Philippians 4:13, 19). Psalm 77 tells us of sleeplessness, confusion, doubt, and gut-wrenching internal torment, but also of God's supernatural work through God acting as Father, through Christ's strengthening power, and by the Holy Spirit's leadership. Powerful New Testament images of the Cross, the empty tomb, the garden of Gethsemane, the

resurrected Christ, and the Mount of Olives where Jesus ascended to Heaven uplift the faith of the saints.

Third, Psalm 77 teaches us the importance of God's invisible footprint (Psalm 77:19). We cannot always see God's hand or feet at work, but we can trust His heart. We may face the rough waters of life, but persevering prayer to God Almighty can lead us to still waters. We may feel alone, but God's arm of redemption and His prevailing presence remind us of His shepherding care and gracious love.

# Teaching Plans

## DISCOVERY PLAN

### Connect With Life

1. Create a visual display with words illustrating trials and struggles one might face in life (illness, loss of job, divorce, death, etc.). As students arrive, have them consider what these words have in common.

   (A copy of this assignment is available in "Teaching Resource Items" for this study at www.gc2press.org.)

2. Once the class is present, ask students what these examples have in common. Allow a few moments for responses, then ask, *How hard would it be to navigate _____ if you had someone present to walk with you through it*? Allow time for responses, then ask, *How difficult would it be to navigate _____ if you had to do it alone*?

3. After a few moments of responses, direct students to the lesson Main Idea. State, *Today's lesson is a reminder to lean into God during the challenging experiences of life, then lead the group in prayer before the next step.*

### Guide Bible Study

4. Provide a 30-second recap of the previous week's lesson, then have the class form listening groups of 3–4 people. Read Psalm 77:1–6 and have groups consider the following:
   - How might current terminology describe the psalmist's state of mind in these verses?
   - How might you describe the posture of seeking God in these verses? (Responses may include fervent, humble, persistent, etc.)

- In verse 3, why does the psalmist's memory fail to bring him comfort? (The disconnect between God's faithfulness and the apparent lack of divine action.)
- What type of song comes to mind in verse 6? Joyful? Lamenting? (Cf. Job 35:10)
- Why do you think the psalmist mentioned music? (During the week before class have a student who would connect with Asaph provide a 30-second biography of this psalmist.)

(A copy of this assignment is available in "Teaching Resource Items" for this study at www.gc2press.org.)

5. Allow groups to present their conclusions, using material from the *Teaching Guide* to remind students that the psalmist's experiences can encourage and strengthen believers today.

6. Have students read the sidebar, "Jesus Sought Reassurance" in the *Study Guide*, and compare and contrast the psalmist's comments in verses 7–9 with Jesus' questions to God discussed in the sidebar.
   - What encouragement is there to be found in being honest before the Lord when we are uncertain in life's circumstances?

7. Have the groups read Psalm 77:7–12 and discuss the following prompts:
   - How might you counsel a friend who asked you the questions found in verse 7?
   - True or False: When our understanding of a difficult life circumstance is unclear, it is fair to assume that God's character will change as well? Why did you choose that answer?
   - What would be the result of God's abandonment of His people? (He would be abandoning His character, or Himself.)
   - How did the psalmist seek to change his perspective? (Focusing on God's *known* behavior instead of the *unknown* apparent lack of action.)

(A copy of this assignment is available in "Teaching Resource Items" for this study at www.gc2press.org.)

8. Read Psalm 77:13–20 and provide responses to these questions:
   - Why do you think the psalmist chose to meditate on this segment of Israel's history?
   - How does the psalm's depiction of God change from the verse 1 to verse 20? (God heard but did not respond; God is a shepherd, lovingly guiding His people.)
   - What New Testament moments from Jesus' life would you add to the evidence of God's faithfulness in action?

## Encourage Application

9. Direct students to the sidebar, "Case Study" in the *Study Guide*. Allow 30 seconds for students to read, then ask for volunteers to answer the question at its conclusion.
   - Have you ever experienced a situation that caused you to question your faith or God's faithfulness? What or who encouraged you to remain faithful?
   - What are some possible dangers of not being honest with God in times of questioning or doubt?

10. Direct students to Psalm 77:19–20. Ask the following, *How does God's action in the lives of His children sometimes leave "unseen footprints"? When are these footprints seen (if at all)?*

11. Close the lesson in prayer, asking for the Holy Spirit to remind the class of God's faithfulness when encountering difficulties in life.

## DISCUSSION PLAN

### Connect With Life

1. Display a picture of Eeyore, the donkey in A.A. Milne's Winnie the Pooh stories. As students arrive, have them brainstorm as many adjectives as possible or emotions to describe the character.

2. After all students arrive, ask for responses. (May include gloomy, sad, down-trodden, self-deprecating, etc.) Ask how many members of the class have experienced these emotions in life. Inform students of the lesson's Question to Explore and then lead the class in prayer.

### Guide Bible Study

3. Provide a 30-second recap of the previous week's lesson, then read Psalm 77:1–6. Ask for responses to the following questions:
   - What was the psalmist's response to his trouble? How is that similar or different to when we face trouble?
   - Why didn't remembering God bring the psalmist comfort during this time? (God seemed far away and quiet.) Remind the class that lament often acknowledges God without immediately bringing comfort.
   - What kind of song do you think verse 6 was talking about? (See Psalm 42:8.) Why do you think the psalmist wanted to have music in his time of need?
   - The psalmist was bold and honest in his prayers. What keeps us from praying in a similar manner?

4. Allow students 30 seconds to silently read the sidebar, "Jesus Sought Reassurance" in the *Study Guide*. Then read Psalm 77:7–10 and ask for responses to the following:

- How are the psalmist's questions similar to Jesus' prayers in the garden of Gethsemane? How are they different? (Matthew 26:36–46)
- Whether the apparent silence from Heaven is the result of personal or community sin, do you think it appropriate to call out to God for mercy? Why or why not? (Cf. Psalm 13:1; 42:9; 44:9, 24; 85:5)
- Did the psalmist allow his emotions to overtake him as he spoke about God? What are some hazards of becoming overwhelmed by emotions as we pray?
- What conclusion did the psalmist arrive at in his contemplation? (When things are out of our control, focus on what is *true*.)

(A copy of this assignment is available in "Teaching Resource Items" for this study at www.gc2press.org.)

5. Read Psalm 77:11–15, then ask the following questions:
   - What are some benefits of being reminded of God's holiness?
   - What attributes of God evidenced in the past can inspire us in the present (or even in the future)? (Responses may include strength, power, faithfulness, etc.)
   - What encouragement can we learn from Jacob and Joseph's life history? (See Genesis 50:15–20. God used unseen plans and actions to bring about great blessings for His people.)

6. Read Psalm 77:16–20 and have students brainstorm responses to these prompts:
   - From these verses, name things that are outside of God's control or sovereignty. Which ones are outside of human control? What implications does this have in considering the lesson's Question to Explore?
   - What stories from the Bible prompt your memory of God's faithfulness?

7. Briefly summarize Exodus 14:15–22 and compare it to Psalm 77:19–20. Have students comment on this question: *If an all-powerful God would*

*act this way for His people Israel, then how do you think He would act for His children today*?

## Encourage Application

8. Direct class to read silently the sidebar, "Case Study" in the *Study Guide*. After 30 seconds, call for responses to the question at its end.

9. Ask, *What are some reasons people might be hesitant to ask God tough questions? How comfortable are you?*

10. Encourage students to use this psalm in their devotional time with God this week. Close in prayer, thanking God for His faithfulness and steadfast love.

FOCAL TEXT
Psalm 46:1–11

BACKGROUND
John 14:15–18;
Romans 8:26

# lesson 13

# Our Refuge and Strength

**MAIN IDEA**

Christians have confidence that God will always be with them regardless of tumultuous times.

**QUESTION TO EXPLORE**

How have I experienced God's presence and strength during challenging times?

**TEACHING AIM**

To lead adults to understand that Jesus promised He would always be with Christians, and He sent the Helper the Holy Spirit to live inside believers

# Bible Comments

## Understanding the Context

The writer of Psalm 46 in his poetic imagination set the stage for God's cover, His protection, and a safe haven for the people of God. The poetic scene, more than likely, comes to the psalmist from a real-world experience. The psalmist remembered a time when he was in danger and chaos swirled about. The psalmist remembered God's protection, provision, and powerful presence.

Suddenly the ink and pen begin to flow from the psalmist's heart, mind, and hand: "God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble" (Psalm 46:1). God became his fortress, like a stone wall protecting a city. The psalm signals distress, agony, worry, and an unsettled spirit. However, the psalmist knew of God's protection and His supply of strength to push through the personal trial. If God did this once, He could provide protection and strength again. If God does this for me, the psalmist indicated, He can do the same for you.

The rhythm of the psalm moves from chaos to stillness, from fear to faith, from life's uncertain, unsettled events that plague the heart, mind, and soul to God's calming hand, as if God calmed a fierce storm. The psalm addresses a simple formula for distress and trying times: affirmation, an invitation, and simple, life-changing information. As to affirmation, the psalm communicates God as refuge, strength, and help for the distressed and weary. As to an invitation, the psalm invites the modern reader to draw near to God and discover both His presence and power, which we can now do through Christ. As to information, the psalm offers a simple guide for the challenges of life: Be still and know that God is God, knowing that in stillness God's presence and comfort act as source of peace and guidance.

## Interpreting the Scriptures

### God's Protection and Strength (46:1–3)

**46:1.** This verse highlights God's help, literally in Hebrew, "he will be found a help beyond compare when in trouble." The Septuagint provides a clear image for the idea of trouble by using the Greek word *thlipsis*—that is, the weight of a rock crushing the grapes in a crucible. Life's burdens weigh and pressure people to the point of worry, literally seeking to crush them, but God as refuge and strength and a present help, lifts the burden.

Today help comes in two different ways. First, real and active help from God as "one called alongside to help," a Comforter. Jesus assured His disciples: "And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever—the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you" (John 14:16–18). Second, quiet and undercover help in the form of the Advocate for you: "In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans. And He who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God's people in accordance with the will God" (Romans 8:26–27).

**46:2–3.** Verses 2–3 demonstrate the transitoriness, instability, and upheaval in the world. The earth shakes. Earthquakes move land masses and mountains into the sea. Tumultuous waters rage, fiercely creating destruction and dread. However, the contrast of God's love and faithfulness stands out as a stabilizing force in the believer's heart, and there is nothing of which to be afraid.

## God's Powerful Presence (46:4–7)

**46:4–5.** The psalmist continues his theme of godly stability versus worldly instability—of God's peace over the world's chaos. In the chaos of the world, there still flows a river whose streams bring gladness to the city of God. The psalmist clarifies the city, Jerusalem, "the holy place where the Most High dwells" (Psalm 46:4).

Here the river indicates God's supply and His provision. Major cities in the world were often built near powerful rivers because water is an essential resource and a vital life-supply necessary for human survival. Great cities have major rivers to supply water: Paris has the Seine River; Cairo, Egypt has the Nile River; London has the Thames River; New York City has the Hudson River. Rivers provide transport for ships delivering food. Rivers provide water to generate electrical power. Since Jerusalem was not built on a river, God—like a river provides spiritual life to the city and to His people (Psalm 105:41; Isaiah 66:12).

Again, God's presence as both daily provision (like a river) and His help as a source of daily strength and guidance create peace, calm, and stability each new morning. Verse 5 offers assurance, like Jeremiah said that God's new morning mercies awaken the day with His encompassing love and tender faithfulness (Lamentations 3:22–23).

**46:6–7.** Still, the nations rage. Political activities fill the marketplace, inviting more chaos and suggesting life's temporariness, yet among a cacophony of multiplying voices, God speaks. He speaks justice. He urges people to "love mercy and to walk humbly with your God" (Micah 6:8).

Yet among this call, in the center of a noisy world and a brutal battle, the psalmist declared, "The LORD Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress" (Psalm 46:7). It is not an army, weapons, or stone walls that would protect the people, God Himself will be among the people and protect them; God's people need to trust and solely rely upon Him.

## God's Personal Glory and Exaltation (46:8–11)

**46:8–9.** The affirmation of God's presence and care shifts to an invitation: Come. Look to God's person in His personal nurture and look to His work in its sovereign power. Come and see. Open your eyes! The enemy is defeated, God makes wars to cease, literally gives "rest, a sabbath rest." God's children in the nation of Israel see evidence of the end of war—shields burning. More evidence appears: scattered weapons, bow and arrows strewn across open fields, and impaled spears left alone with no hands to hold them. God brings peace and calm.

**46:10–11.** In all this the psalmist said, "Be still, and know that I am God" (46:10). In essence it is like Jesus saying, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls" (Matthew 11:28–29).

Simple instruction is given: stop all activity and open your eyes and your heart to God's wonder and work. Be still and know that He is God. Stillness is the key. In quietness and stillness the follower of God gains confidence to rely on God (Isaiah 30:15; 32:17). The poetic refrain reinforces this trust in God in verse 11: God with us; God for us; God in us; God around us as a fortress. Be still.

## Focusing on the Meaning

Faith falls over this psalm as the foundation of the believer's life. Trials come. They came to Moses at the Red Sea and in the wilderness. They came to David as he fought battles, fled from enemies, hid in caves, and even as he faced spiritual battles because of his own sin, while in pursuit of God's forgiveness. The prophet Elijah encountered the highs and lows of ministry, even wishing to die in the draining weariness after contesting with the false god Baal and in the anxiety of running from the wicked Queen Jezebel. Other prophets faced threats, verbal assaults, and the intense struggle of proclaiming God's Word. The disciples confronted many hardships. The apostle Paul

himself encountered stonings, shipwrecks, beatings with a Roman soldier's whip, imprisonment, and an entire list of adversities for preaching the gospel (2 Corinthians 11:16–33).

Each servant of Christ who faced the challenges and difficulties of life felt like hiding in a cave. They expressed their feelings to God in the crisis. They found God to be a refuge and leaned on God for daily strength even when all seemed impossible. They felt weakness, yet also God's presence, and received His help in their time of trouble. They experienced God's provision of grace, strength, help, and comfort. The apostle Paul penned the result of his personal trials as an act of grace: "But he said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.' Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong" (2 Corinthians 12:9–10).

Faith in Christ supplies strength through prayer to increase a person's *faith* in the midst of adversity and unexpected difficulties. Faith in Christ inspires *hope*, the ability to push through and press on, even persevere in life's troubles. Faith in Christ helps the follower of Christ cling to God's *love* as His enduring presence in life's trials. Faith, hope, and love combine to assure the follower of Christ of God's care and to redirect the follower of Christ toward God's plan in the many challenges of life.

But what is the key? Stillness is the key. Be still and know that God is God. Know God in His person and work. Seek God through heartfelt, anguishing, honest prayer (Philippians 4:6–8). Trust God's hand even if you cannot figure out certain aspects of life and trust Him as you reach toward His hand asking Him to lead you as the Good Shepherd. Lift up God in praise and ask Him to lift you up from the mud and muck of life (Psalm 40:2). Be still. Be quiet before God daily. Take time daily to turn your eyes and heart toward Him. Take time regularly to be still before Him.

Simply, stillness is the key to stability, calm, and God's peace in life's anxiety, trouble, and unexpected trials. It was also the key for Jesus: "Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed" (Mark 1:35). If stillness strengthened the Son of God, how much more must we seek it daily?

# Teaching Plans

## DISCOVERY PLAN

### Connect With Life

1. Display images that show action where confidence is needed. (Examples may include students taking an exam; an athletic competition; public speaking; etc.) As students arrive, ask them to consider what the images might have in common, or what emotion is being shown by the images.

   (A copy of this assignment is available in "Teaching Resource Items" for this study at www.gc2press.org.)

2. Once the class arrives, allow a brief time for sharing responses. Ask students to share what might happen in the activities shown if the participants had no confidence in the appropriate thing. Ask students to share what might keep confidence from being present.

3. Direct students to the lesson Main Idea, then have students contemplate how often they have felt unconfident in their lives during troubled times. Lead the group in prayer to begin session.

### Guide Bible Study

4. Provide a 30-second recap of the previous week's lesson, then form listening groups of 3–4 students. Have them read Psalm 46:1–3 and brainstorm responses to the following prompts (allowing time for responses before moving to the next question):
   - What images or feelings come to mind when you hear the word *refuge*? How is it that God is able to provide such a comfort to believers today? (See John 14:16–18.)

- What images or feelings come to mind when you hear the phrase *worst-case scenario*? How did the psalmist utilize this idea in verses 2–3?
- If the psalmist were writing today, how might he describe similar reasons that cause us to lose confidence?
- How do Paul's comments in Romans 8:31 compare to the words of the psalmist?

(A copy of this assignment is available in "Teaching Resource Items" for this study at www.gc2press.org.)

5. Ask the class, *Has the power of the Lord diminished in time since these words were written*? Read Psalm 46:4–7 and have groups answer the following questions:
   - What great cities of the world are associated with a river? (Responses may include London (Thames); Paris (Seine); New York City (Hudson); etc.) What benefits a city from having a river near it?
   - What is the significance of the river mentioned in verse 4? (reference Bible Comments or Study Guide for helps)
   - What is the significance of God being "within her" when talking about the city in verse 5?
   - What is the implication for believers today? (Help note God's provision and protection that comes from His Spirit inhabiting their lives.)

6. Direct students to the sidebar, "Jeremiah, the Weeping Prophet" in the *Study Guide*. Summarize its material, then have groups read Psalm 46:8–11 and brainstorm responses to:
   - How might believers "come and see what the LORD has done" today?
   - How does Almighty God use His power?
   - How do the words of Jesus in Matthew 11:28–30 compare to Psalm 46:10? How are they different?

(A copy of this assignment is available in "Teaching Resource Items" for this study at www.gc2press.org.)

7. Have groups read the material in the sidebar, "Be Still and Know I Am God" in the *Study Guide*, to see which of the activities is most difficult for them to complete. After a few moments of silent contemplation, remind class of the Main Idea and encourage them to rest in God's presence in their everyday actions.

## Encourage Application

8. Provide listening groups with paper and have each group paraphrase the first three verses in modern language. Ask them to brainstorm phrases from Psalm 46 that instill confidence in uncertain times. Allow 3–4 minutes for groups to work, then give time for groups to share results with the class.

9. Remind the class of the Main Idea. Ask for 2–3 responses to the following:
   - Is there any experience of life that is outside of God's ability to walk through with us?
   - What keeps us from feeling confident during difficult times?

10. Close session in prayer, thanking God for His faithfulness to His children.

# DISCUSSION PLAN

## Connect With Life

1. Display the alphabet for the class, and as students arrive, have them try to recite it backwards. Instruct students to try and say it aloud, then try to do so with their eyes closed.

   (A copy of this assignment is available in "Teaching Resource Items" for this study at www.gc2press.org.)

2. After the class assembles, ask for a volunteer to try to say the alphabet backwards (eyes opened or closed). As they do so, stand in front of them or clap your hands loudly as they speak. If they have trouble or stop, ask them to restart, and then do the same things. If time allows, repeat the activity with another student.

3. Say, *It's difficult to do a simple task when faced with a distraction or a challenge.* Transition to the lesson Main Idea, and state, *Today's session will show that God is with us, offering His strength for the challenging moments of life.* Lead the group in prayer.

## Guide Bible Study

4. Provide a 30-second recap of the previous lesson, then read Psalm 46:1–3. Using material in the Bible Comments, guide discussion as class members answer the following questions:
   - What images or feelings come to mind when you hear the word *refuge*?
   - Consider your present life situation. How is God showing Himself to be a refuge and/or strength for you?
   - What things have you tried to substitute for God's refuge or strength in your lives?

5. Read Psalm 46:4–7 and ask for responses from these questions:
   - What is the significance of the river mentioned in verse 4? (Referencing God's provisions or blessings)
   - What, if any, hope is given to the reader knowing that there is a city where the Most High will not be moved? What implications does this have for believers today?
   - In a list of life's priorities, where would you rank "peace?" How can one accomplish bringing peace into their life, based upon this passage?

6. Read the sidebar, "Jeremiah, the Weeping Prophet" in the *Study* Guide, and ask for responses:
   - How did Jeremiah's experience compare to the words of the psalmist?
   - How is it possible that we can experience confidence when it seems as though we are a single (or small) minority in our world?
7. Read Psalm 46:8–11 and have the class respond to the following prompts:
   - What comes to mind when you see how God has to do so much to get fighting nations to be still before Him?
   - Agree or Disagree: It is comforting to know that God can use the same power to stop nations fighting as He can use to fuel righteous living in my life.
   - One area of my life where I can see God be more exalted is _____.

## Encourage Application

8. Have the class silently read the sidebar, "Be Still and Know I Am God" in the *Study Guide*. After a few moments, ask, *Why, despite God's faithfulness in the past, does trouble in the present or anticipated trouble in the future lead us to fear rather than to faith*? (Help students see that poor connections to God always lead us away from faith.)
9. Display a line graph from 1 to 10 (where 1="Never" and 10="Always"). Have students plot on the graph where they rate themselves "being still" before God. Remind students of the lesson Main Idea and encourage them to strengthen their connection to God and build confidence for living.

   (A copy of this assignment is available in "Teaching Resource Items" for this study at www.gc2press.org.)
10. Close in prayer, thanking God for His faithfulness to His children.

FOCAL TEXT
Psalm 93:1–5

BACKGROUND
Revelation 19:6–7; 11:15; Luke 1:33

# lesson 14

# King Above All Kings

**MAIN IDEA**

The Lord God is mightier than any human or natural power.

**QUESTION TO EXPLORE**

Do I consider the awesomeness of God?

**STUDY AIM**

To lead adults to understand that powerful rulers, nations, and institutions rise and fall, but the Lord God has always been and always will be

# Bible Comments

## Understanding the Context

Psalm 93 hails God as the Lord who reigns and God as King. Three psalms (Psalms 90–92) stand directly before Psalm 93 telling of God's powerful presence, protection, and salvation. These three psalms declare God as an Almighty God who displays His steadfast "love" and "faithfulness" (Psalm 92:2). These psalms acknowledge God as a refuge, a rock of stability, and ask His followers to value time in light of God's great works.

Psalms 95–100 each invite the follower of God to sing praise, glorify God, and worship Him. Again, the psalmist announced a key theme of psalms—God's steadfast love and faithfulness. These twin pillars of truth remind the reader of God's *hesed* (Hebrew for "steadfast love," which is God's loving-kindness shown in acts of mercy) and God's faithfulness, that is, God is reliable, trustworthy, and an active presence in His work in the hearts of people (Psalm 98:3; Psalm 100:5).

Psalm 93 appears in the middle of these psalms 90–92 and 94–100 to show God in His almighty presence and the glory of God who is worthy of praise, worship, and adoration. Each of these psalms declares God's love, His faithfulness, and rock-like stability amid the world's instability and chaos. God remains present and active in the world, and He establishes His faithfulness through His steadfast love.

Psalm 93 may be a pause between 90–92 and 94–100. The pause gives rise to sudden exclamation: "The Lord reigns!" It is as if in the danger of the world the psalmist cried out: Lord cover me with your wings, be a refuge for me, and be rock-like in life's storms (Psalms 90–92). Then in Psalms 94–100 the psalmist offered words of praise in longing for God to do a fresh, new thing in his life. Psalm 93 pauses to reflect on God's majesty and grandeur, supplying a strong word of assurance in God's power and strength.

You see the same thing in Luke's gospel in his version of the Christmas story and the advent of Christ: "You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the

Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever; his kingdom will never end" (Luke 1:31–33).

God's majesty in His steadfast love and His glory in His faithfulness also arrive as a guarantee of hope in difficult times: "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Messiah, and he will reign for ever and ever" (Revelation 11:15); "Then I heard what sounded like a great multitude, like the roar of rushing waters and like loud peals of thunder, shouting: 'Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory!'" (Revelation 19:6–7a).

Psalm 93 grants blessed assurance in Christ's presence and glorifies God in praise to help saints endure and thrive in challenging trials. It reminds believers that God's reign is not distant but active and sustaining amid all earthly instability.

## Interpreting the Scriptures

### God as King (93:1–2)

**93:1.** The psalmist introduced the picture of a King wearing a robe, in splendor. In his majesty the king lifts up the people by doing excellent things for them. In his establishment of a kingdom he lays a foundation of provision to supply the people's needs, and he offers strength to protect the people from the enemy. This psalm praises God for His majesty and strength, glorifying Him for His steadfast love and faithfulness.

**93:2.** Subtle contrasts appear: the temporal versus the eternal; the brevity of life versus everlasting life; and humankind's mere breath as weakness versus God's Spirit as eternal power. This verse reminds the reader a second time of God's "established" throne. The King on the throne provides security, an immovable foundation, and an unshakable kingdom.

This Jewish concept of God's steadfast love and His faithfulness in an unshakable kingdom appears in the New Testament book of Hebrews as a testimony to Christ's kingdom: "Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, for our 'God is a consuming fire'" (Hebrews 12:28–29). The King deserves reverence, gratitude, worship, and in His grandeur, majesty, and strength, He invokes praise and a sense of humble awe. God reigns.

## Almighty God and King Inspires Awe (93:3–4)

The next section of this psalm paints the picture of ocean waves cascading toward the shore. The whole scene—a beautiful ocean, a raging storm, waves crashing against the shore, and the mist and spray of the waters—presents a picture that amazes, creates fear, and gives pause for awe at the wonder of creation. As powerful and violently strong as ocean waves can cause chaos, God is more powerful and dwells above the chaos.

In similar fashion, God in His steadfast love and faithfulness remains firm incapable of being tossed about and thus delivers constant protection for His people from the enemy, from the raging storm, and from the crashing waves. Nothing can displace God Almighty. The opposition lifts up their voices like raging, angry waters. However, God the Mighty One calms the storm, brushes aside the raging waters, and demonstrates that God shows Himself mightier than the sea, the storm, and the enemy.

Here Psalm 93 encourages the readers that the Lord who reigns is also the Lord on high who is mighty. The idea reverberates a theme from Psalm 29. God's voice overpowers the voice of enemies. God's voice thunders and flashes like lightning, overtaking the violent attack of the storm. God's voice overshadows the darkness of the storm, acting decisively as a powerful, calm presence of peace in the chaos. "The voice of the LORD is over the waters; the God of glory thunders, the LORD thunders over the mighty waters. The voice of the LORD is powerful; the voice of the LORD is majestic" (Psalm 29:3–4).

The prophet Isaiah made this clear: "The voice of the LORD will shatter Assyria; with his rod he will strike them down" (Isaiah 30:31). The King robed in majesty calms the rough waters, ends the chaos, and generously bestows

upon His Kingdom love, faithfulness, and peace. In the new covenant the peace ends anxiety, draws the follower of Christ to Himself, and provides a grateful heart for a peace that passes all understanding. Such peace guards the heart. Such peace guides the mind toward God's future grace and provision (Philippians 4:6–7).

## The Temple (93:5)

The psalmist turned from the wonder of creation—crushing waves and a high rock—from nature's awe, from outside to inside the beauty of God's holy Temple.

The psalm made a decisive shift from standing in awe at creation, of God's almighty power and His victorious, kingly reign, to bowing down in act of worship in the Temple.

Many voices rage in the world, but one voice conquers all—God's voice. His voice speaks, especially through His "decrees," that is, His Word. The Scripture as God's Word, His laws, His decrees, and His testimonies finds repetition in Psalm 119 and throughout the Psalms. God's Word in the heart of His followers adorns the soul and provide stability in a world of instability. Peter affirmed the eternal Word of God quoting Isaiah: "The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God endures forever" (Isaiah 40:8; cf. 1 Peter 1:24).

The King's Word always shows itself trustworthy, steadfast, faithful, and enduring. The King's Word inspires reverence, awe, obedience, and humble praise. The King's Word, like the Temple, demonstrates beauty, holiness, and encourages holy living. The King's Word echoes eternal hope and life—God's steadfast love and faithfulness (Psalm 119:25, 40, 88, 105; 138:2). God's Word reigns.

## Focusing on the Meaning

If we return to the beginning of this psalm, we confess that God reigns; He is robed in His majesty and strength (Psalm 93:1). Think of robes: bathrobes,

graduation robes worn by professors parading in academic processions at university commencements, clerical robes worn by preachers at weddings, funerals, or in pulpits, and everyday robes worn by people in some countries around the world.

Yet there is no more magnificent and royal robe than that of a king.

Jesus, although not wearing a royal robe, humbly rode a donkey into Jerusalem, bystanders waved palm branches and placed their outer tunics or cloaks—literally, "outer robes"—in front of Jesus on the stone pavement (Matthew 21:7–8). People shouted, "Hosanna!" Praise to God. Christ rode the donkey into Jerusalem as King, even amid a prophetic word, "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the king of Israel! Jesus found a young donkey, and sat on it, as it is written, 'Do not be afraid, Daughter Zion, see, your king is coming, seated on a donkey's colt'" (John 12:13–15). The King comes! He reigns!

In 2 Corinthians Paul praised God in His majesty, a thanks be to God for the *triumph* of Christ. In Colossians Paul acknowledged God in His strength as the victorious warrior over sin, death, and the enemy, a *triumph* of God's steadfast love and faithfulness through the Cross and Resurrection (Colossians 2:15).

In Psalm 93, the psalmist praised God's majesty and strength, His victory over the enemy and the storms of life, and His holiness. God robed Christ in majesty, in strength, and in holiness. All we can do is stand in awe, give Him praise, and rejoice in His triumph on our behalf.

# Teaching Plans

## DISCOVERY PLAN

### Connect With Life

1. Display the phrase "The greatest _____ was _____." As students arrive, direct them to consider how they would complete the sentence using a variety of prompts (athlete, musician, etc.). Choose options based upon how your class will respond.

   (A copy of this assignment is available in "Teaching Resource Items" for this study at www.gc2press.org.)

2. Once the class is present, allow 1–2 minutes for responses to be shared. Ask students why they chose their response instead of a different option; was there a particular criterion that was used?

3. Direct students to the lesson Main Idea. Say, *The lesson will help you consider the majesty of God in your everyday life*. Then lead the group in prayer.

### Guide Bible Study

4. Provide a 30-second recap of the previous week's lesson, then have the class form discussion groups of 3–4 people. During the week prior to the lesson ask a student who enjoys research to provide a 60 to 90-second presentation of the context of Psalm 90–100 from material in the Bible Comments.

5. Read Psalm 93:1–2, then have groups brainstorm responses to the following:
   - What image comes to mind as you read verse 1? How is this description majestic?

- How would you describe the majesty and glory of God in your everyday life?
- How would other nations around Israel feel about *Yahweh* being proclaimed as God? Why would their deity not have the same type of claim?
- What benefit is there to a king sitting on a throne?
- What additional insight does Hebrews 12:28–29 give to Psalm 93:2?
- What additional insight does Luke 1:33 give to Psalm 93:2?

Allow a few moments for groups to present their findings. (A copy of this assignment is available in "Teaching Resource Items" for this study at www.gc2press.org.)

6. Read Psalm 93:3–4. Ask groups to discuss the following prompts:
   - Agree or Disagree: The psalmist's use of a raging sea can help me navigate turbulent times in my life. Please explain your choice.
   - Agree or Disagree: I can prevent God's power from being effective in my life when I allow sin to remain unconfessed. Please explain your choice.
   - Agree or Disagree: I have had times in my life when I have submitted to the Lord, and times when I have rebelled. Please explain your choice.
   - I can see rebellion against God in the world today in _____.
   - What additional insight does Revelation 21:1 give to Psalm 93:4?

   Allow a few moments for each group to report to the class. (A copy of this assignment is available in "Teaching Resource Items" for this study at www.gc2press.org.)

7. Read the sidebar, "The Canaanite Myth of Baal and Yamm" in the *Study Guide*. After doing so, read Psalm 93:5 and have groups discuss:
   - In what ways should the steadfastness of God's Word affect your moral and ethical actions?

- How can this psalm help believers find peace even in a time of natural disaster, such as a flood or devastating fire?
- How can Jesus' words in Matthew 8:23–27 help us better understand Psalm 93?

## Encourage Application

8. Read Psalm 93:5. Ask students, *How does holiness adorn God's house?* Challenge students to take a few moments in quiet reflection and evaluate how their actions in the past week reflected God's character.
   - What is one area of life in which I can show more holiness?
   - What is one area of our corporate gatherings in which we can show more holiness?

   (A copy of this assignment is available in "Teaching Resource Items" for this study at www.gc2press.org.)

9. Have groups read the sidebar, "Experiencing Awe" in the *Study Guide* then consider the following prompts:
   - How might you paraphrase this psalm to someone who is struggling with trusting God with their life?
   - Agree or Disagree: My life reflects a trust in God's sovereignty and rule.
   - Because of today's lesson in Psalm 93, I can apply holiness in my life by_____.

10. Close in prayer, recognizing God's sovereignty and His majesty.

## DISCUSSION PLAN

### Connect With Life

1. Display the phrase, "The strongest thing in the world is _____." As students arrive, have them consider the statement and how they would complete it. Encourage students to brainstorm their thoughts with others.

   (A copy of this assignment is available in "Teaching Resource Items" for this study at www.gc2press.org.)

2. Once the entire class arrives, allow time for students to provide responses to the opening exercise. Encourage discussion from the class as responses are shared. After students have shared, have them rank their responses from greatest strength to lowest strength. Write down their responses for the group to see during the lesson.

3. Direct students to the lesson Main Idea. Say, *Although some things in life are powerful, God's abilities and characteristics exceed all of them*. Lead the group in prayer to begin the lesson.

### Guide Bible Study

4. Provide a 30-second recap of the previous week's lesson, then read Psalm 93:1–2. Use material in the *Study Guide* to help guide discussion, asking for responses to the following questions:
   - Why do you feel that the psalmist chose to use God's covenantal name, *Yahweh*?
   - What images come to mind (if any) as the psalmist described the Lord's appearance?
   - When was God's throne established?

5. Present a definition of "awe" from several sources. Ask students if they would add anything to the definitions, then consider what things in the world today create a sense of awe in their lives. (Allow them to review the listing of items from the opening activity.) Have students consider the following prompts:
   - Agree or disagree: The word "awe" and its impact have been lessened by overuse.
   - Agree or disagree: Natural disasters in the world are an indication of creation rebelling against its Creator.
6. Read Psalm 93:3–4 and ask for reactions to the following:
   - What chaos do people create for themselves when they live an independent life apart from God?
   - What cultural forces and ideas are in direct conflict with God's Word?
   - How is God described in comparison to the raging waves (the lies and influences that dominate entertainment, social media, and philosophies so prevalent in our culture)?
7. Summarize the sidebar, "The Canaanite Myth of Baal and Yamm" in the *Study Guide,* then read Psalm 93:5. Have students answer the following questions:
   - How can this psalm help believers find peace even in a time of natural disaster, such as a flood or devastating fire?
   - How can Jesus' words in Matthew 8:23–27 help us better understand Psalm 93?

## Encourage Application

8. Display a line graph from 1 to 10. Ask students to place themselves on the graph where the number indicates the level of stress felt by the student (lower numbers are better). Use the following prompts for evaluation: when facing temptation, facing a crisis of faith, seeing others

succeed when I do not, making a life-changing decision (or select one of your own).

- How can Psalm 93 provide comfort and peace for you during these times?
- What encouragement from today's lesson could you give to a friend when they face a similar kind of challenge?

9. Read the sidebar, "Experiencing Awe" in the *Study Guide*. Have students provide examples of how they might use Psalm 93 in ways to deepen their time with God in the coming week.

10. Close in prayer, thanking God for His faithfulness and strength in our lives.

**FOCAL TEXT**
Psalm 16:1–11

**BACKGROUND**
Acts 2:24–37;
1 Corinthians 15:51–55

lesson Easter

# The Grave Will Not Hold Us Either

**MAIN IDEA**

Those in Christ will rise again from the dead just as our Lord did.

**QUESTION TO EXPLORE**

Am I uncertain about eternal life?

**TEACHING AIM**

To lead adults to understand since Christ is risen, believers can have the confidence they will rise from the dead also and live eternally with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in Heaven

# Bible Comments

## Understanding the Context

Psalm 16 begins as a prayer, moves toward a pledge, changes to delight, and finally expresses supreme confidence in God. One cannot read the psalm without thinking of three things: simple faith in God as a refuge; God's counsel as guidance for life; and the joy of the Christ-life as it ventures toward Heaven.

Psalm 16, at the beginning, gives the hint of the psalmist, King David, being in danger, facing an unexpected trial or enemy, or perhaps exhausted with the weariness of life's daily struggle. The psalm seems to rotate the eyes toward earth and Heaven—the eyes down in sight of life's drudgeries, pain, and anxiety, and the eyes up toward God's provision, His sustaining strength and joy, and heavenward in anticipation of a fresh reunion with God.

One cannot read the psalm without acknowledging that Peter stood and preached at the Temple in Jerusalem and used verses 8–11 as an integral part of his evangelistic sermon about God's Spirit poured out because of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ when he quoted Joel 2:28–32 (Acts 2:17–21). Peter was proclaiming that Joel's prophecy was beginning to be fulfilled with the Holy Spirit's coming at Pentecost as he explained to the crowd why these Galileans were all speaking other languages (Acts 2:1–13). Acts 2:25–28 recorded how Peter interpreted Psalm 16 in light of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. Luke, writing in Acts 2, celebrated David's words as prophetic and anticipatory regarding Christ as refuge, redeemer, and resilient in the face of death. Peter interpreted this psalm as the fulfillment of the prophecy of the resurrected Christ defeating death and carrying His saints home to Heaven. Acts signals the works, wonders, and signs of the risen Christ as God's provision of grace, hope, and joy for those who follow Christ.

## Interpreting the Scriptures

### Desire and Longing for God (16:1–7)

**16:1–2.** The psalmist began with a prayer and a word of praise. The prayer, literally, says, "Oh God guard me." As king, the psalmist may have been under threat or pressure and may have been under physical, emotional, or spiritual attack. As a follower of God, he may have felt despair, weakness in his faith, or a sense of hopelessness. "In you I take refuge," the psalmist proclaimed. Protect me. Build a wall around me. Cover me with your protective wings (Psalm 91:4). God as a refuge flows as a common theme in the Psalms. "God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble" (Psalm 46:1).

As quickly as a prayer ensues, a word of praise flows from the psalmist's pen: "You are my Lord; apart from you I have no good thing." God's goodness flows all through the Psalms. His goodness overflows, endures forever, is great, and celebrates His love (Psalm 109:21). His goodness and love follow me all the days of my life (Psalm 23:6). In the old covenant this phrase from verse 2 declares God's utmost importance in a person's life (Exodus 20:3; Deuteronomy 4:39).

David announced his allegiance and dependence on God alone by saying, "You are my Lord; apart from you I have no good thing"(Psalm 16:2) In the new covenant the concept involves a single-minded faith in Christ. Acts 4:12 says, "Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved." Even Jesus said, "Apart from me you can do nothing" (John 15:5). God's goodness equips us with a heart of gratitude and service.

**16:3.** This verse indicates that God delights and takes joyful pleasure in His saints because they are noble or, literally, "majestic." The Septuagint highlights the idea that God treasures His saints like a valuable jewel. In the New Testament the apostle Paul often wrote to Jesus followers in specific locations calling them saints (holy people, NASB), those who have been set apart

in Christ's holiness (Romans 1: 7; 1 Corinthians 1:2; 2 Corinthians 2:1; Ephesians 1:1; Philippians 1:1; etc.).

**16:4.** The uplifting delight of verse 3 changed to the sadness of sinners, their sin, and their chasing after false gods. In their rush to gather up and collect other gods they multiply their own sorrows. Sin increases sorrow. The psalmist proclaimed that he would not take part in pagan worship or even mention these false god's names.

**16:5–6.** The psalmist next turned away from the sorrow of sin to his own exclamation of praise and gratitude to God. These celebratory verses connect the psalmist to Israel, and to the wonder and work of God among His people. The emphasis is not so much on material land or wealth as it is on a right relationship with God in the realm of God's covenantal love. One looks back at verse 2, "You are my Lord!" Gratitude flows to God for the joy of sharing in His inheritance, His blessing, and His daily provision. "Inheritance" shared by God's grace appears as both an Old and New Testament theme (Exodus 32:13; Leviticus 20:24; Colossians 1:12; 1 Peter 1:4).

Christ's resurrection makes a shared inheritance a reality for those who believe, both in present time and in eternity beyond time. The writer described the inheritance as "beautiful," or beneficial and good. The psalmist's gratitude implied thanksgiving for a benefit from God.

**16:7.** The good and beautiful gift of God through His inheritance led the psalmist to bless the Lord for His counsel and instruction. In simple obedience and by living a God-centered life the psalmist humbly depended on God. The Psalms often reflect this desire and longing for God. The result of such desire and longing drove the psalmist to his knees, to pray, seek God, and ask God for wise guidance and counsel in life's journey. The verse echoes the prophet Isaiah: "And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace" (Isaiah 9:6).

Here it appears that the psalmist turned his eyes toward Heaven (Psalm 121) praising God for His Spirit's leadership and instruction in his life. The

psalmist could look back and see the surpassing grace of God, the surprising hand of God, and the miraculous work of God all throughout his life.

## Blessings and Assurance (16:8–11)

**16:8.** The psalmist moved from "bless the Lord above me" to "set the Lord before me" to "trust the Lord within me" in these next verses. The psalmist drew strength from God, submitted to His authority, and depended on Him. God was so close to David that He was at his right hand, thus there was no reason for David to fear his enemies. His enemies and struggles had no chance against him with God at David's side. The verse also encourages the reader of assurance of God's provision of daily strength. This assurance allows the psalmist to stand against darkness, to withstand difficulties, to persevere, and to find stability because of God's strength.

Peter in his Pentecost sermon had just proclaimed that God raised Jesus from the dead and quoted David's prophecy about Jesus starting with verse 8 attributing these words of Jesus about and to His Father (Acts 2:25). Jesus is at the right hand of God just as He told the Sanhedrin that He would be (Luke 22:69).

**16:9–10.** The psalmist returned to his own heart (see verse 7), reflecting on his heart's pulse that beats with gladness, joy, and security. The blessings of God spur rejoicing and a sense of secure assurance from God for His unshakable strength that anchors life. This assurance again leads the psalmist to know God will not abandon him, literally, "the psalmist's soul will not sink" into Sheol, the place of the death. God will not let His faithful one see the corruption and darkness of Sheol. God will provide victory over death.

Peter testified that Jesus was able to go to the cross because He trusted His Father that His tortuous crucifixion would not be the end. God would not leave Jesus in the tomb to rot. Jesus with ultimate faith trusted God would raise Him from the dead (Acts 2:26–27). If you are in Christ, God will not let the grave be the end of you either. You will be raised from the dead through the power of the risen Christ.

**16:11.** God's presence is felt in verse 11. God's counsel and instruction (16:7) led to gladness and joy, which caused the psalmist to appreciate God's open door and leadership in the path of life. A doxology of praise follows: in God's presence, joy overflows, and in the closeness of His right-hand pleasures of delight dance in the soul of the saint who looks to Him. The psalmist rejoices. Heaven rejoices. Easter resurrection rejoices. Death cannot keep the saint in the grave.

Remarkably Acts 2:24–37 confirms Jesus as the Messiah. Peter preached in Jerusalem at Pentecost, and three-thousand souls were saved (Acts 2:41). Peter's sermon appealed to three key elements of the gospel: a simple message of Jesus as the Messiah; a Christ-centered proclamation of His death, burial, and resurrection; and the majestic reign of the resurrected Christ at the right hand of God on the throne.

Peter quoted Psalm 16:8–11 in light of David's prophetic word about the Messiah. Peter interpreted David's words as both a description of the Messiah and a fulfilment of prophecy about the Messiah. Peter connected David to Jesus, who was born a descendant of David as a clear message of the fulfillment that the Messiah would come from David's lineage to Peter's mostly Jewish audience.

Peter, along with David, described Jesus as the unshakable Christ at the right hand of God in authority, strength, and support to His followers. Peter connected Christ (and His followers) to gladness, hope, Christ's sinlessness, and the Holy One who was not abandoned to Hades, an underworld of decay.

In contrast, God raised Jesus from the dead, defeating sin, evil, death, hell, and the devil. He resurrected, ascended to Heaven, and provided victory for His followers. The victory opened the door for forgiveness of sins, access to God in prayer, guidance in the path of life, joy, and pleasures forever at the throne of God. In His pleasure, God gives His power, presence (literally, "the joy of His face"), and His perpetual care for those who love Him. Easter celebrates the victorious Christ as alive as the resurrected Hope. Those who are in Christ and have placed their faith in Him are guaranteed resurrection as well (1 Corinthians 15).

## Focusing on the Meaning

Like King David in this psalm, we all face the realities of danger, troubles, and exhaustion, even weariness in the struggles of life. This psalm reminds the reader of God as a refuge, God as a life-changing, transforming power in one's heart, and gives hope and light in the despair and darkness of the world. The existential reality of needing God's help shines through in this psalm.

But a stronger reality exists also in this psalm. Christ, in His death, offers forgiveness though the Cross and His shed blood. God as refuge has far-reaching implications for His followers. Christ, in His resurrection, defeated death and supplies new life for the believer. This new life joins us to God's inheritance, secures stability in a world of instability, delivers gladness and fresh joy from Christ on life's journey, and anticipates Heaven as a final refuge in the fullness of God's joy.

Each believer can face life's trials with hope because of God's presence, His Spirit poured out in your life (Philippians 4:13). Each believer can survive life's darkness by reaching for God's light (Ephesians 5:8). Each believer can overcome life's challenges by seeking God's wisdom, His Word, and His plan in "the path of life" (Psalm 16:11).

What King David the psalmist penned poetically, what Peter experienced, lived, and preached, and what Jesus Himself embodied as the Resurrection and Life should inspire Christ's followers to celebrate the works, wonders, and signs of Christ. David's words, Peter's words, and Jesus' Words should encourage a life of trusting God, receiving His forgiveness, celebrating life with His gladness and joy, anchoring life in Christ, and looking upward in anticipation of Heaven—being with Christ where every knee shall bow before Christ (Philippians 2:5–11). The grave did not hold Jesus, and it will not hold us either when we follow Him. Christ is Risen! He is Risen indeed!

Finally, as we reflect on Easter, let us think about the Easter message. Christ prayed in Gethsemane's garden. Judas betrayed Christ. Peter wept. After six trials, Pilate had Jesus crucified. Jesus gave up His spirit and died. Two earthquakes occurred: one when Jesus died, so violent that it opened the tombs of the dead; a second one when Jesus arose from the grave. Christ rose from the dead—death defeated, new life given, and hope-filled joy exploded.

Easter arrives as an earthquake. It should wake us, shake us, and startle us to belief, hope, and joy.

# Teaching Plans

## DISCOVERY PLAN

### Connect With Life

1. Display the following statement: "Listening to _____ music makes me feel sad." As students arrive, have them consider the statement and how they would complete it. Encourage discussion among students until time to begin.

   (A copy of this assignment is available in "Teaching Resource Items" for this study at www.gc2press.org.)

2. After the entire class arrives, allow 1–2 minutes for sharing. Prior to class, prepare to play the following well-known musical pieces: "Eye of the Tiger" (Rocky III), "Imperial March" (Star Wars), "Jingle Bells." Play each selection, then ask the class to describe their emotions associated with hearing each song. Say, *Music has the ability to affect our souls and stir our emotions into something greater than ourselves*.

3. Say, *Similarly, the Psalms have a way of stirring our emotions and drawing us closer to God.* Direct students to the lesson Main Idea and share how Psalm 16 projects joy equaled to knowing that Christ has risen from the grave. Lead the class in prayer.

### Guide Bible Study

4. Provide a 30-second recap of last week's lesson, then have students form groups of 3–4 people. Read Psalm 16:1–4 and have groups consider the following:
   - How can we "take refuge" in God? Can you name a practical example?
   - What other things do people use for refuge, in place of God?

- What additional insight can be found in James 1:17 to help us understand the psalmist's perspective in verse 2?
- What is the implication to the church in the phrase "holy people who are in the land" as found in verse 3?
- How would you describe the attitude for being connected to other believers in our city? State? Nation?

Allow time for responses and use material from Bible Comments and the *Study Guide* to help guide discussion. (A copy of this assignment is available in "Teaching Resource Items" for this study at www.gc2press.org.)

5. Read Psalm 16:5–8, and have the groups discuss the following prompts:
   - How would you describe the psalmist's emotional state in these verses?
   - Do you think the psalmist was more focused on God's blessings or upon God's presence? Explain your answer.
   - Verse 7 says "I will praise the LORD, who counsels me." How does the Lord counsel His followers? (Cf. Psalm 32:8; Isaiah 30:21; John 16:13)
   - How can believers today experience or share the type of confidence the psalmist stated in verse 8? (See Philippians 4:12 for additional insight.)

   (A copy of this assignment is available in "Teaching Resource Items" for this study at www.gc2press.org.)

6. Direct students to the sidebar, "Case Study" in the *Study Guide*. Have groups role-play the case study, choosing one member to be Toby and the other members to provide support for him. Allow 4–5 minutes for groups to work, then after a brief time to report to the class.

7. Read Psalm 16:9–11 and have groups consider the following prompts:
   - How far did the psalmist's confidence in God's protection go?

- Is verse 10 a statement that the psalmist would not die? Why or why not?
- Who is the "faithful one"? When was this fulfilled? (See Acts 2:24, 31–32.)

(A copy of this assignment is available in "Teaching Resource Items" for this study at www.gc2press.org.)

8. Have groups read Acts 2:24–37. Ask them to consider how Peter quoted Psalm 16:9–11 in his Pentecost sermon in Acts 2:25–28 to declare the resurrected Jesus. Ask, *What does Peter declare to the crowd in Acts 2:36?*

## Encourage Application

9. State, *A life built upon God's faithfulness brings assurance and comfort to more than just this life.* Direct students to read silently the sidebar, "The Promised Messiah" in the *Study Guide*, then ask them:
   - What assurance do we, like David, have that God will bring our lives into His kingdom? (See 1 Corinthians 15:51–55.)
   - How does Jesus' resurrection from the dead apply this promise to believers today?
   - What are the promises made here for living in the world? (See John 10:10 for more insights to Psalm 16:11.)
10. Display the following statement: "My confidence in spending eternity with God has a definite impact on how I am living now." Allow 15–20 seconds for silent contemplation, then ask:
    - If you agree, how would your trust in God be strengthened from studying Psalm 16?
    - If you disagree, what would you change after studying Psalm 16?

    (A copy of this assignment is available in "Teaching Resource Items" for this study at www.gc2press.org.)
11. Close in prayer, thanking God for His faithfulness and for raising Christ from the grave.

## DISCUSSION PLAN

### Connect With Life

1. Display the phrase "_____ brings me joy." As students arrive, have them consider the phrase and how they might complete it. (Responses may include children laughing, balloons, family, etc.)

   (A copy of this assignment is available in "Teaching Resource Items" for this study at www.gc2press.org.)

2. Once the entire class is present, allow several moments for responses to be shared. After all responses have been voiced, ask, *Can all of these things bring lasting joy?* Allow a few moments for discussion.

3. Direct students to the lesson Main Idea and say, *Today's lesson will help you understand a joy that is lasting and complete.* Lead the class in prayer.

### Guide Bible Study

4. Provide a 30-second recap of last week's lesson, then read Psalm 16:1–4. Use material from the *Study Guide* and Bible Comments to foster discussion, asking students to respond to the following prompts:
   - Is it accurate that we have nothing good apart from God? Why or why not? (Compare James 1:17 for additional insight.)
   - The psalmist spoke of his affection for the "holy people who are in the land." How would you describe your affection for being with other believers? Why is this the case?
   - According to verse 4, why did the psalmist reject the company of those who chase after false comfort?

5. Read Psalm 16:5–8. Use material from the *Study Guide* and Bible Comments to continue discussion, have students comment upon these prompts:

- How does the idea of God being your "portion and cup" look today? How is it different from the psalmist's position? How is it similar?
- Agree or Disagree: Being aware of God's blessings in my life doesn't take much work. Explain your choice.
- Agree or Disagree: I find it increasingly difficult to hear God's voice in my life. Explain your answer.

6. Direct students to the sidebar, "Case Study" in the *Study Guide*. Allow a few moments for students to read, then ask them to provide the following:
   - What advice from Psalm 16 could you give to Toby?
   - What advice from other Scripture could you give to Toby?

7. Read Psalm 16:9–11. Use material from the *Study Guide* and Bible Comments to encourage discussion, and have students provide responses for the following:
   - In verse 9, David said, "Therefore my heart is glad." How does *your* heart remain glad in your walk with God?
   - How would you describe life when "my body also will rest secure?"
   - Agree or Disagree: There's no such thing as a "happily ever after." What do you think the psalmist's position would be? Explain your answer.

8. Direct students to the sidebar, "The Promised Messiah" in the *Study Guide*. Allow them a few moments read it, then have them re-read Psalm 16:10. Have them discuss whether or not this verse was fulfilled in someone other than David (see also Acts 2:24, 31–32).

9. Have groups read Acts 2:24–37.
   - How did Peter use Psalm 16:9–11 in his Pentecost sermon in Acts 2:26–28 to declare the resurrected Jesus?
   - What did Peter declare to the crowd in Acts 2:36?

- If Christ has been raised what does that mean for His believers? (See 1 Corinthians 15:51–55.)

(A copy of this assignment is available in "Teaching Resource Items" for this study at www.gc2press.org.)

## Encourage Application

10. Display a line graph from 1 to 10, where 1=Never and 10=Consistently. Have students plot on the graph where they are:
    - I can recognize the counsel of God in my life.
    - I accept the counsel of God in my life.
    - I am encouraged weekly by (and encourage) other followers of Christ.
11. Ask, *How should our confidence in spending eternity with God affect how we live today?* Allow a few moments for responses.
12. Remind the class of the lesson Main Idea, then close in prayer, thanking God for His faithfulness and for raising Christ from the grave.

# God's Intimate Presence

"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble" (Psalm 46:1, ESV).

Father,

I joyfully exalt Your Holy Name above all things and bow my heart before You. I acknowledge Your overwhelming glory, majesty, splendor, and infinite power that is always at work. Your Word says, "Be still, and know that I am God" (Psalm 46:10, ESV). You are on Your throne, Lord, and Your purposes stand firm forever. Help me silence the distractions around me and hear Your still small voice speak to me as I put my focus on You, listening to Your Spirit, as I pray and study Your Word. May I be diligent to hide Your Word in my heart, obey it, delight in it, and allow it to transform my heart and mind.

Thank You for being my refuge and strength, calming my heart and replacing my fear with Your perfect peace. Lord, in times of trouble and heartache I find safety in your hands. You, Oh Lord, have provided me with Your near presence and Your continued help. Your living Spirit lives in my heart. I do not have to be afraid because You are for me, with me, and will never leave me nor forsake me.

Lord, help me to remember, as King David did, that You are bigger and more powerful than any problem I might face. In Psalm 30, David made a deliberate and willful choice to joyfully praise You, to worship You, and fight against the fears, the difficulties, and the heaviness of his heart. King David cried to You from a dark pit, not denying the realities of his hardships but setting his heart firmly on You. Like King David, help me to trust in Your strength, Lord, and not dwell on my trials and disappointments, which enslave my mind. Help me to intentionally

focus on You, with a heart of gratitude and praise, knowing You walk beside me using my good and difficult days for Your glory.

King David cried out to You, Oh Lord, countless times in desperate prayer, knowing You are accessible and could hear him. I read in Mark 10:46–52 how Bartimaeus, a blind beggar, cried out to Jesus to rescue him from his blindness and Jesus heard him among the noisy crowd of people and healed him. Moses cried out to You for deliverance from the vast Egyptian army rapidly approaching the Israelites and You miraculously parted the Red Sea so they could cross on dry ground. When fear grips my heart, give me a steadfast resolve to grab and cling to You and Your promises, remembering Your great faithfulness to me in the past. Lord, I have experienced Your overflowing goodness, kindness, amazing grace, protection, and Your abundant provision for me without end. You always do what is best for me even if Your answer and timing is not what I expect.

Help me Lord, like the psalmist, to develop a lifestyle of unfettered praise and worship, reflecting on Your redeeming love and immeasurable mercies. When it seems as though You are silent or hiding Your face from me, remind me that You are more present than I can imagine and You love me so much You sent Your only Son, Jesus, who willingly gave His life as a sacrifice to pay the price for my sins and reconcile me to You. Thank You for Your surpassing great love toward me and the hope I have in Jesus. May I dwell on this amazing love and live a life that honors and glorifies Your Holy name forever.

In the strong name of Jesus,

Amen

*DLB*

# Our Next New Study

**(Available to use beginning June 2026)**

## *GC2 Strong:*
## *A Great Commandment and Great Commission Awakening*

What does GC2 does it mean? GC2 stands for the **G**reat **C**ommandment (Matthew 22:35–40) and the **G**reat **C**ommission (Matthew 28:16–20) which are the **2** major summary teachings of Christ. Jesus summed up the Law and the Prophets by declaring that the most important commandment is to Love God with all of one's heart, soul, and mind, and the closely related second commandment is to love other people as oneself. Before ascending back to the Father, Jesus who had spent three years training, teaching, demonstrating, and preparing His disciples—gave them His final instruction the Great Commission to carry His message of love to make more disciples for Him throughout the entire world.

Not unlike the people living in Palestine 2,000 years ago, people today are isolated, hurting, and without hope and direction in their lives. Many throughout the world live in fear and without the most basic necessities of life. God showed up then with the ultimate transformative message and mission given to His Son. Jesus' work of reconciliation and forgiveness did not stop after His crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension, He commanded His followers to spread everywhere and to all the good news of God's Kingdom that any who believe in Jesus will be saved from their sin and adopted into God's family.

The Church was birthed to continue this mission of God, and strong, healthy churches will keep GC2 in the forefront of their ministries, missions, worship, preaching, and education. There is an epidemic occurring in churches today. In recent studies, about 85% of all churches have either plateaued

or are in decline. A significant percentage of these will likely close their doors. GC2 Strong is a call for churches to re-evaluate their participation in the Great Commandment and the Great Commission, to listen to God's leading, and follow the Holy Spirit to find new energy and ways to share Christ and show His love. God's mission has not changed. God seeks to reconcile people from every nation, tribe, language, and culture to Himself through a relationship with Jesus Christ. A strong healthy church through the power of the Holy Spirit will be consumed with God's love, grow stronger together through Bible learning, worship, prayer, and fellowship, and from that will vigorously proclaim the gospel and demonstrate love to others by meeting their needs.

Will you and your church pray about having a Great Commandment and Great Commission Awakening? Will you pray for eyes to see how God is inviting your church to a new work to show love to your community and have the opportunities to share Jesus' message of hope and forgiveness? Will you listen and explore ways that you and your church can go and proclaim the gospel to people in another state or country, to a different culture, and maybe in another language? Will you consider what financial, time, and activity priorities you need to change to help accomplish this?

These thirteen lessons seek to help you and your church be filled with God's Spirit and love and grow closer to Him by taking the next step in discipleship. You will learn not only about GC2 but how your church can grow closer together and display your love for God and one another as a testimony to the world. You will discover the missionary God who sent the model missionary Jesus so that all may hear, respond, and receive adoption into God's family. You will explore how God is calling you and your church to be on mission with Christ to go where He sends and show love in actions to whom He wants to reach and love. Many disciples are needed to join God in His great mission. Disciples deny themselves, commit allegiance to the Lord, and go as Christ leads and calls.

What will be your role in the Great Commission and Great Commandment?

**God's Love Is the Foundation**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Lesson 1 | God's Love Fuels His Mission | 1 John 4:7–21 |
| Lesson 2 | The Greatest Commandment | Matthew 22:35–40; John 13:34–35 |

**Church Strong**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Lesson 3 | Devoted to the Apostles' Teaching | Acts 2:42–47; 2 Timothy 3:10–4:8 |
| Lesson 4 | Devoted to Fellowship and the Breaking of Bread | Acts 4:32–37; 1 John 1:6–7; Mark 14:22–26 |
| Lesson 5 | Devoted to Prayer and Worship | Acts 16:11–15, 25–33 |

**Missions Strong**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Lesson 6 | The Missionary God | John 1:1–18; John 3:16 |
| Lesson 7 | Jesus the Model Missionary | Mark 7:24–30; Matthew 8:5–13 |
| Lesson 8 | The Great Commission | Matthew 28:16–20 |
| Lesson 9 | God Is Sending | Romans 10:11–15; Matthew 9:35–38 |

**Leader Strong**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Lesson 10 | Jesus the Humble Servant | Philippians 2:1–11 |
| Lesson 11 | Created for Good Works | Ephesians 2:4–10 |
| Lesson 12 | Disciples Needed | Acts 1:20–26; 6:1–7 |

**Capstone**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Lesson 13 | A Great Commandment and Great Commission Awakening | Acts 10:9–48 |

# HOW TO ORDER
# More Bible Study Materials

It's easy! Just fill in the following information. For additional Bible study materials available in print or digital formats see www.gc2press.org, or get a catalog of available print materials by calling 1-866-249-1799 or e-mailing gc2press@texasbaptists.org.

| Title of item | Price | Quantity | Cost |
|---|---|---|---|
| **This Issue** | | | |
| *Psalms: The Believer's Prayer Book—Study Guide* (GC2001430) | $6.50 | _____ | _____ |
| *Psalms: The Believer's Prayer Book—Teaching Guide* (GC2001431) | $9.00 | _____ | _____ |
| Note: Going forward the Study Guide will be printed with a 13-point font. | | | |
| **Additional Issues Available:** | | | |
| **Thematic Studies** | | | |
| *DiscipleMaking: Patterns of Discipleship and Evangelism for the Church—Study Guide* (GC2001404) | $6.00 | _____ | _____ |
| *DiscipleMaking: Patterns of Discipleship and Evangelism for the Church—Teaching Guide* (Digital) (GC2001405PDF) | $4.50 | _____ | _____ |
| *Heaven and Angels—Study Guide* (GC2001358) | $6.00 | _____ | _____ |
| *Heaven and Angels—Teaching Guide* (Digital) (GC2001360PDF) | $4.50 | _____ | _____ |
| *Sacred Life—Study Guide* (GC20011374) | $6.00 | _____ | _____ |
| *Sacred Life—Teaching Guide* (GC20011375) | $8.00 | _____ | _____ |
| **Old Testament** | | | |
| *Solomon No Ordinary Kind of Wisdom (1–2 Chronicles)—Study Guide* (BWP001312) | $6.00 | _____ | _____ |
| *Solomon No Ordinary Kind of Wisdom (1–2 Chronicles)—Large Study Guide* (BWP001313) | $6.00 | _____ | _____ |
| *Solomon No Ordinary Kind of Wisdom (1–2 Chronicles)—Teaching Guide* (BWP001314) | $8.00 | _____ | _____ |
| *Kingdom Assignment (A Study of Nehemiah)—Study Guide* (GC2001400) | $6.00 | _____ | _____ |
| *Kingdom Assignment (A Study of Nehemiah)—Teaching Guide* (GC2001401) | $8.00 | _____ | _____ |
| *The Search for Wisdom (Proverbs)—Study Guide* (GC20011371) | $6.00 | _____ | _____ |
| *The Search for Wisdom (Proverbs)—Teaching Guide* (Digital) (BWP001372PDF) | $4.50 | _____ | _____ |
| *Faith Under Fire (Daniel)—Study Guide* (GC2001292) | $6.00 | _____ | _____ |
| *Faith Under Fire (Daniel)—Teaching Guide* (GC2001394) | $8.00 | _____ | _____ |
| **New Testament** | | | |
| *Standing by His Word (Luke)—Study Guide* (GC2001420) | $6.50 | _____ | _____ |
| *Standing by His Word (Luke)—Teaching Guide* (GC2001421) | $8.00 | _____ | _____ |
| *Kingdom Power (Matthew—Sermon on the Mount)—Study Guide* (GC2001368) | $6.00 | _____ | _____ |
| *Kingdom Power (Matthew—Sermon on the Mount)—Teaching Guide* (Digital) (GC2001370PDF) | $4.50 | _____ | _____ |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| *The reMARKable Journey Begins (Mark 1–3)—Study Guide* (BWP001307) | $6.00 | _____ | _____ |
| *The reMARKable Journey Begins (Mark 1–3)—Large Print Study Guide* (BWP001308) | $6.00 | _____ | _____ |
| *The reMARKable Journey Begins (Mark 1–3)—Teaching Guide* (BWP001309) | $8.00 | _____ | _____ |
| *The reMARKable Journey Continues (A Study of Mark 4–7)—Study Guide* (GC2001390) | $6.00 | _____ | _____ |
| *The reMARKable Journey Continues (A Study of Mark 4–7)—Teaching Guide* (GC2001391) | $8.00 | _____ | _____ |
| *A Cry for Freedom (Galatians)—Study Guide* (GC2001363) | $6.00 | _____ | _____ |
| *A Cry for Freedom (Galatians)—Teaching Guide* (Digital) (GC2001365PDF) | $4.50 | _____ | _____ |
| *The Immeasurable Love of Christ (Ephesians)—Study Guide* (GC2001381) | $6.00 | _____ | _____ |
| *The Immeasurable Love of Christ (Ephesians)—Teaching Guide* (GC2001382) | $8.00 | _____ | _____ |
| *Hunger for Holiness (1 Peter)—Study Guide* (Digital) (GC20013344–PDFSG) | $3.50 | _____ | _____ |
| *Hunger for Holiness (1 Peter)—Teaching Guide* (Digital) (GC2001346–PDFTG) | $4.50 | _____ | _____ |
| *Find Us Faithful (2 Peter)—Study Guide* (GC2001410) | $6.50 | _____ | _____ |
| *Find Us Faithful (2 Peter)—Teaching Guide* (GC2001411) | $8.00 | _____ | _____ |

**Coming for use beginning December 2025**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| *GC2 Strong: A Great Commandment and Great Commission Awakening—Study Guide* (GC2001440) | $6.50 | _____ | _____ |
| *GC2 Strong: A Great Commandment and Great Commission Awakening—Teaching Guide* (GC2001441) | $9.00 | _____ | _____ |

**PLEASE NOTE**

In addition to these Bible studies, which are available in both print and digital formats, we have several studies available in a digital-only format. See www.gc2press.org for a complete listing of these studies.

CALL your order toll-free: 1-866-249-1799
(Monday—Thursday 8:30 a.m.–5:00 p.m. central time
Friday 8:30 a.m.–12:00 noon central time).

OR, E-MAIL your order to: **gc2press@texasbaptists.org.**

OR, ORDER ONLINE at **www.gc2press.org.**

We look forward to receiving your order! Thank you!