

# Standard LESSON QUARTERLY®

KJV BIBLE  
TEACHER

FALL 2024

WORSHIP IN THE COVENANT  
COMMUNITY

► International Sunday School Lessons

# KJV BIBLE TEACHER

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## FALL 2024 WORSHIP IN THE COVENANT COMMUNITY

### CONTRIBUTORS

Lesson Development . . . . . Jason Hitchcock (1, 10), Mark W. Hamilton (2–3, 12),  
John Mark Hicks (4, 7–9), Doug Hoffer (6, 11),  
Jon Miller (5, 13)

Verbal Illustrations . . . . . Andrew Wood (1–4), Laura McKillip Wood (5–7),  
Chad Summa (8–10), Omar Palafox (11–13)

Involvement Learning . . . . . Andrew Wood (1–4), Jon Miller (5),  
Connie Chandler (6–9), Mark Taylor (10–13)

What Do You Think? . . . . . Andrew Wood (1–13)

### EDITORIAL TEAM

Jane Ann Kenney & Taylor Z. Stamps

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# Worship in the Covenant Community

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# Quarterly Quiz

Use these questions as a pretest or as a review. The answers are on page iv of *This Quarter in the Word*.

## Lesson 1

1. Abram chose to live in the land of Canaan. T/F. *Genesis 13:12*
2. God promised to make Abram's descendants as numerous as \_\_\_\_\_. *Genesis 13:16*

## Lesson 2

1. God had kept His promise with whom? (Abraham, Jacob, David) *1 Kings 8:24*
2. One consequence of the people's sin was that they would be taken captive by enemies. T/F. *1 Kings 8:46*

## Lesson 3

1. Hezekiah asked the Lord to hear the words of \_\_\_\_\_. *2 Kings 19:16*
2. God promised that a remnant would come out of Jerusalem. T/F. *2 Kings 19:31*

## Lesson 4

1. Josiah instructed the Levites to carry the ark on their shoulders. T/F. *2 Chronicles 35:3*
2. How many days was the observance of the feast of unleavened bread? (three, five, seven) *2 Chronicles 35:17*

## Lesson 5

1. The Lord is "my strength and \_\_\_\_\_." *Exodus 15:2*
2. Who was Aaron's prophetess sister? (Miriam, Joanna, Hannah) *Exodus 15:20*

## Lesson 6

1. David asked God, "create in me a \_\_\_\_\_ heart." *Psalms 51:10*
2. David asked God to restore the "joy" of what? (repentance, forgiveness, salvation) *Psalms 51:12*

## Lesson 7

1. "My God, my God, why hast thou \_\_\_\_\_ me?" *Psalms 22:1*

2. David compared himself to what animal? (worm, ant, grasshopper) *Psalms 22:6*

## Lesson 8

1. The psalmist proclaimed that ultimately the weakest people would "glorify" the Lord. T/F. *Isaiah 25:3*
2. The Lord will "swallow up death" and wipe away people's tears. T/F. *Isaiah 25:8*

## Lesson 9

1. The psalmist proclaimed that God is what? (choose two: redemption, salvation, anchor, rock) *Psalms 62:2*
2. The psalmist states that people would pour out their hearts to God. T/F. *Psalms 62:8*

## Lesson 10

1. The Lord's rod and staff will \_\_\_\_\_ David. *Psalms 23:4*
2. What two things will follow David "all the days of [his] life"? (choose two: grace, mercy, goodness, love) *Psalms 23:6*

## Lesson 11

1. The Lord loves the \_\_\_\_\_. *Psalms 146:8*
2. The psalmist directs people to "praise God in his \_\_\_\_\_." *Psalms 150:1*

## Lesson 12

1. The people of God are called "the sheep of his pasture." T/F. *Psalms 100:3*
2. The psalmist directs people to enter the courts of the Lord with thanksgiving. T/F. *Psalms 100:4*

## Lesson 13

1. The Lord had searched and known the psalmist. T/F. *Psalms 139:1*
2. The psalmist asked, "Whither shall I go from thy \_\_\_\_\_?" *Psalms 139:7*

# Quarter at a Glance

by Collin Schlotfeldt

“And ye shall be my people, and I will be your God” (Jeremiah 30:22). God’s covenant—His enduring promise of relationship and presence—is central to the worship of His people. Worship is the act of ascribing worth to and celebrating the glory of something or someone. The truth is, *all people worship*. For the people of God, the question is, *who* will receive our worship? Is the triune God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—the only one we will choose to direct our worship toward?

Scripture reveals a pattern to the worship of God’s people: God reveals himself, and His people respond through their worship. In the stories of Scripture, we read how they responded: they sang songs, raised their hands, played instruments, danced to music, and did good works of service.

The lessons of this quarter examine the worship that God’s people have offered. Although the ways His people worship may have changed throughout history, the reason for their worship remains the same: a faithful response to God.

## Worship as Response

This quarter’s first unit gives examples from the Old Testament of God’s people responding to God’s revelation through worship. Abram (Abraham) built altars to mark an occasion when the Lord called him to greater faithfulness (Genesis 13:8-18, lesson 1). Solomon offered worship upon the awareness of the people’s tendency to sin (1 Kings 8:22-24, 48-50a, lesson 2). Hezekiah worshipped the Lord after being reminded that the Lord alone is God (2 Kings 19:14-20, lesson 3). Josiah demonstrated spiritual leadership by calling the people back to proper worship by adhering to the requirements of the covenant (2 Chronicles 35:1-6, 16-19, lesson 4).

These examples demonstrate how the people’s worship of God is a response to the Lord and His work. Through worship, God’s people proclaim that the Lord truly is the worthy Lamb of God!

## Worship as Song

The songs of the Old Testament were one way for the people of God to respond to the Lord’s work. While we may not know the melody of these songs, their lyrics reveal what the Old Testament people of God may have felt as they experienced His power and goodness.

These songs of worship are found throughout the Old Testament. Moses and Miriam celebrated God’s power to bring the deliverance of the Israelites (Exodus 15:1-21, lesson 5). The prophet Isaiah praised God for His deliverance (Isaiah 25:1-10, lesson 8).

*The truth is, all people worship. For the people of God, the question is, who will receive our worship?*

In the Old Testament book of Psalms, we see examples of confession (Psalm 51, lesson 6), petitions for deliverance (Psalm 22, lesson 7), and proclamations of trust in God (Psalm 62, lesson 9). Thanksgiving and praise were among the main themes of the songs of the Hebrew Psalter.

## Worship as Thanksgiving and Praise

The final unit of the quarter focuses on the Hebrew psalter. The psalmists invite us to “praise the Lord” (Psalm 146:1, lesson 11) by making “a joyful noise unto the Lord” (100:1, lesson 12). The worship of the people of God should be filled with thanksgiving and praise to the Lord, for He is our good shepherd who sustains us (Psalm 23, lesson 10). The Lord is not distant and far off from us. Instead, the Lord is near us and has invited us to have a close relationship with Him (139:1-12, lesson 13). As you study the worship practices of the people of God, consider how your worship is a response to the truth that the Lord is the one who is worthy of praise.

# Get the Setting

by Collin Schlotfeldt

For the ancient Jewish person, music and song had a great deal to do with worship. But worship was not expressed solely through those things. It was more important for the worship of the one true God to include encounters between the spiritual and physical realms. We see the importance of this in various psalms. One example is Psalm 119:105: “Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.” The impact of the Scriptures did not merely result in increased knowledge for the psalmist. The stress on the origin of the Scriptures had real and vital implications too.

## Reminders Through Places

From the altars used in the days of Abraham to the tabernacle carried by the Israelites to the temple built by King Solomon, God’s story was told through physical components. The altar was where sacrifices were offered as acts of worship. The tabernacle and temple that followed—the figurative dwelling places of God himself (1 Kings 8:27; Acts 17:24)—were far more elaborate than the simple altars of earlier days. Rich in symbolism, the tabernacle and the temple were feasts for the senses. As their symbolism brought the story of God to life (or, rather, back to life), worshippers were reminded of the covenant between them and God. The two proper responses to this reminder were worship and obedience.

## Reminders Through Feasts

The most valuable reminders are those that influence behavior. And one of the best kinds of reminder in this regard is *reenactment*. A primary vehicle for these were the various feasts of ancient Israel, the Feast of Passover undoubtedly being the most important. We see this feast’s importance in 2 Chronicles 35, where Josiah reinstated this celebration, which had been established more than 800 years earlier!

Passover was one of three annual pilgrimage feasts, the other two being Pentecost and Tabernacles (they go by various other names as well; compare Exodus 23:14-16; Numbers 28:16-31; 29:12-34). By involving a meal, the reenactment was enhanced by taste and smell. Unleavened bread, bitter herbs, lamb bones, etc., all played their part in bringing the story of God’s provisioning back to life.

## Worship Through Actions

Under the old covenant, the psalms often connected worship of the spiritual God with the physical actions of the earthly worshipper. Just two examples are Psalm 47:1 (“O clap your hands, all ye people; shout unto God with the voice of triumph”) and Psalm 149:3 (“Let them praise his name in the dance: let them sing praises unto him with the timbrel and harp”). How many such actions still apply under the new covenant yet have been bones of contention throughout the centuries? But as the revelation of God’s words, God’s works, and even God himself prompted acts of worship, so must it be with us.

## Worship in Truth

We take care, however, not to worship God as we imagine Him to be (Isaiah 44:13-20; Romans 1:25; etc.). Instead, we worship as Scripture reveals Him to be (1 Samuel 3:21; Acts 17:26-31). Our worship “in truth” (John 4:23-24) will be revealed not only in our verbal confession (Romans 10:9-10) but also in and through our actions (1 John 3:17; 5:2; etc.).

True worship, whether in word or deed, focuses on the true God. “I [John] fell at his feet to worship him [an angel]. And he said unto me, See thou do it not: I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy” (Revelation 19:10).

Mon, Nov. 11     **The Earth Is the Lord's**     Psalm 24  
 Tue, Nov. 12     **Psalms, Hymns, and Spiritual Songs**  
                          Ephesians 5:1-2, 15-20  
 Wed, Nov. 13     **Magnify God with Thanksgiving**     Psalm 69:1-6, 30-36  
 Thu, Nov. 14     **God Is the Righteous Judge**  
 Fri, Nov. 15     **Thanks for the Faithful**     Psalm 7:1-2, 6-17  
                          1 Thessalonians 1  
 Sat, Nov. 16     **The God of Peace**     Philippians 4:4-9  
 Sun, Nov. 17     **Worship with Gladness**     Psalm 100  
  
 Mon, Nov. 18     **God with Us**     Matthew 1:18-23  
 Tue, Nov. 19     **My Presence Will Go with You**     Exodus 33:12-23  
 Wed, Nov. 20     **A Glimpse of the Merciful God**     Exodus 34:1-9  
 Thu, Nov. 21     **Joy in God's Presence**     Psalm 16  
 Fri, Nov. 22     **Where Two or Three Are Gathered**     Matthew 18:15-20  
 Sat, Nov. 23     **I Am with You Always**     Matthew 28:16-20  
 Sun, Nov. 24     **God Searches and Knows Us**     Psalm 139:1-12

### Answers to the Quarterly Quiz on page 2

**Lesson 1**—1. Lot. 2. True. **Lesson 2**—1. David. 2. True.  
**Lesson 3**—1. Sennacherib. 2. True. **Lesson 4**—1. False.  
 2. seven. **Lesson 5**—1. song. 2. Miriam. **Lesson 6**—1. clean.  
 2. salvation. **Lesson 7**—1. forsaken. 2. worm. **Lesson 8**—  
 1. False. 2. True. **Lesson 9**—1. rock, salvation. 2. True. **Lesson 10**—1. comfort. 2. goodness, mercy. **Lesson 11**—1. righteous. 2. sanctuary. **Lesson 12**—1. True. 2. False. **Lesson 13**  
 —1. True. 2. spirit.

# This Quarter in the Word

Mon, Aug. 26     **God's Promises Are Always "Yes"**     2 Corinthians 1:16-24  
 Tue, Aug. 27     **A New Life of Obedience**     Genesis 12:1-9  
 Wed, Aug. 28     **Fear, Not Faith**     Genesis 12:10-20  
 Thu, Aug. 29     **God Will Fully Satisfy Your Needs**     Philippians 4:10-19  
 Fri, Aug. 30     **Walk in Christ with Thanksgiving**     Colossians 2:6-12  
 Sat, Aug. 31     **God Fills Us with Joy**     Psalm 16  
 Sun, Sep. 1     **Gratefulness for God's Promises**     Genesis 13:8-18  
  
 Mon, Sep. 2     **Sighs Too Deep for Words**     Romans 8:18-28  
 Tue, Sep. 3     **God Hears Our Cry for Help**     Psalm 34:11-22  
 Wed, Sep. 4     **Celebrate with Thanksgiving**     Nehemiah 12:27-30, 44-47  
 Thu, Sep. 5     **Bring Your Requests Before the Lord**     2 Chronicles 7:12-22  
 Fri, Sep. 6     **Lord, Teach Us to Pray**     Luke 11:1-13  
 Sat, Sep. 7     **God the Promise Keeper**     1 Kings 8:22-24, 27-30, 37-43  
 Sun, Sep. 8     **Hear Our Plea**     1 Kings 8:44-53  
  
 Mon, Sep. 9     **More than Conquerors**     Romans 8:29-39  
 Tue, Sep. 10     **Do Not Lose Heart**     2 Corinthians 4:8-18  
 Wed, Sep. 11     **Save Me, O God**     Psalm 69:1-15  
 Thu, Sep. 12     **The Heavens and Earth with Praise**     Psalm 69:16-21, 29-36  
 Fri, Sep. 13     **God Will Strengthen and Guard You**     2 Thessalonians 3:1-5  
 Sat, Sep. 14     **A Humble Prayer for Help**     2 Kings 19:14-19  
 Sun, Sep. 15     **God Is a Powerful Defender**     2 Kings 19:20-31

Mon, Sep. 16 **Abstain from Immorality** 1 Corinthians 5  
 Tue, Sep. 17 **Worthy Is the Lamb!** Revelation 5:6-14  
 Wed, Sep. 18 **God Forgives Those Who Repent** 2 Chronicles 34:8, 14-27  
 Thu, Sep. 19 **Restore Us Again, O God** Psalm 85  
 Fri, Sep. 20 **Living in the Light of Christ** Ephesians 5:3-14  
 Sat, Sep. 21 **A Day of Celebration** Exodus 12:3-17  
 Sun, Sep. 22 **Sanctify Yourselves** 2 Chronicles 35:1-6, 16-19  
 Mon, Sep. 23 **God Goes Forth like a Warrior** Isaiah 42:13-17  
 Tue, Sep. 24 **Be Patient, the Lord Is Coming** James 5:7-11  
 Wed, Sep. 25 **Saved Through Water** 1 Peter 3:18-22  
 Thu, Sep. 26 **Victory at the Sea** Exodus 14:21-31  
 Fri, Sep. 27 **God Protects Creation** Psalm 104:1-9  
 Sat, Sep. 28 **Our Worship Gives God Joy** Psalm 147:1-12  
 Sun, Sep. 29 **Sing of God's Glorious Triumph** Exodus 15:1-13, 20-21  
 Mon, Sep. 30 **Do Not Persist in Sin** Hebrews 10:26-35  
 Tue, Oct. 1 **Godly Grief Leads to Repentance** 2 Corinthians 7:5-11  
 Wed, Oct. 2 **The Righteous and the Wicked** Proverbs 28:4-18  
 Thu, Oct. 3 **Sin's Deadly Spiral** 2 Samuel 11:1-5, 14-24  
 Fri, Oct. 4 **God, Restore Us** Lamentations 5:1-3, 15-22  
 Sat, Oct. 5 **Follow Christ** John 21:15-19  
 Sun, Oct. 6 **Create in Me a Clean Heart** Psalm 51:1-13, 16-17  
 Mon, Oct. 7 **Set Free from Bondage** Luke 13:10-17  
 Tue, Oct. 8 **Our God Is Able to Deliver** Daniel 3:8-18  
 Wed, Oct. 9 **Our God Is Unstoppable** Daniel 3:19-27  
 Thu, Oct. 10 **Jesus, the One Who Heals** Matthew 8:5-17  
 Fri, Oct. 11 **Have Mercy on Me!** Mark 10:4:6-52  
 Sat, Oct. 12 **God Delivers Us from Our Distress** Psalm 107:23-32  
 Sun, Oct. 13 **Deliver Me, O God** Psalm 22:1-11, 19-22

Mon, Oct. 14 **Redemption Through Christ's Blood** Ephesians 1:3-14  
 Tue, Oct. 15 **Praise God for New Birth** 1 Peter 1:3-12  
 Wed, Oct. 16 **May Your God Deliver You** Daniel 6:10-17  
 Thu, Oct. 17 **God Shut the Lions' Mouths** Daniel 6:18-28  
 Fri, Oct. 18 **Deborah's Song of Deliverance** Judges 5:1-5, 12-22  
 Sat, Oct. 19 **Praising God with a Loud Voice** Luke 17:11-18  
 Sun, Oct. 20 **God's Victory Feast** Isaiah 25:1-10a  
 Mon, Oct. 21 **I Believe, Help My Unbelief!** Mark 9:14-27  
 Tue, Oct. 22 **God Is My Strength and Shield** Psalm 28  
 Wed, Oct. 23 **Trust God with All Your Heart** Proverbs 3:1-8, 13-14  
 Thu, Oct. 24 **God Lives in Us** 1 John 4:4-13  
 Fri, Oct. 25 **God Is Love** 1 John 4:14-21  
 Sat, Oct. 26 **Blessed Are Those Who Trust God** Jeremiah 17:5-11  
 Sun, Oct. 27 **Wait upon God's Salvation** Psalm 62  
 Mon, Oct. 28 **Sheep Without a Shepherd** Ezekiel 34:1-6  
 Tue, Oct. 29 **God Opposes Unfit Leaders** Ezekiel 34:7-16  
 Wed, Oct. 30 **God Will Appoint a Shepherd** Ezekiel 34:17-31  
 Thu, Oct. 31 **The Good Shepherd Defends the Flock** John 10:1-10  
 Fri, Nov. 1 **The Good Shepherd Gives His Life** John 10:11-18  
 Sat, Nov. 2 **The Lamb Will Be the Shepherd** Revelation 7:1-4, 9-17  
 Sun, Nov. 3 **The Lord Is My Shepherd** Psalm 23  
 Mon, Nov. 4 **The Lord God Almighty Reigns** Revelation 19:1-10  
 Tue, Nov. 5 **How Good to Sing Praises** Psalm 147:1-6, 12-20  
 Wed, Nov. 6 **All Creation Praises God** Psalm 148  
 Thu, Nov. 7 **My Soul Magnifies the Lord** Luke 1:46-55  
 Fri, Nov. 8 **Blessed Be the God of Israel** Luke 1:68-79  
 Sat, Nov. 9 **Praise the Lord, O My Soul!** Psalm 146  
 Sun, Nov. 10 **Let Everything that Breathes Praise God!** Psalms 149-150



# Lesson Cycle Chart

*International Sunday School Lesson Cycle, September 2022–August 2026*

Year	Fall Quarter (Sep, Oct, Nov)	Winter Quarter (Dec, Jan, Feb)	Spring Quarter (Mar, Apr, May)	Summer Quarter (Jun, Jul, Aug)
2022– 2023	<b>God's Exceptional Choice</b>  Genesis, Exodus, Deuteronomy, Judges, 1 Samuel, Ephesians	<b>From Darkness to Light</b>  2 Chronicles, Isaiah, Joel, Luke, 1 Corinthians, 2 Timothy, James, 1 Peter	<b>Jesus Calls Us</b>  Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Acts	<b>The Righteous Reign of God</b>  Prophets, Matthew, Romans, 1 Corinthians, Galatians
2023– 2024	<b>God's Law Is Love</b>  Luke, John, Acts, Romans, 1 Corinthians, Galatians, Colossians	<b>Faith That Pleases God</b>  Ruth, 1 Samuel, 2 Chronicles, Proverbs, Prophets, Matthew, Luke, Romans, Hebrews	<b>Examining Our Faith</b>  Matthew, Mark, Luke, Acts, Romans, 2 Corinthians, 1 Peter, Jude	<b>Hope in the Lord</b>  Psalms, Lamentations, Acts, Epistles
2024– 2025	<b>Worship in the Covenant Community</b>  Genesis, Exodus, 2 Samuel, 1 & 2 Kings, 2 Chronicles, Psalms, Isaiah, John	<b>A King Forever and Ever</b>  Ruth, 2 Samuel, Psalms, Matthew, Luke	<b>Costly Sacrifices</b>  Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, 1 & 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Matthew, Hebrews, 1 John, Revelation	<b>Sacred Altars and Holy Offerings</b>  Genesis, Gospels, Romans, 1 Corinthians, Ephesians, Hebrews, 1 Peter
2025– 2026	<b>Judah, From Isaiah to Exile</b>  2 Kings, 2 Chronicles, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel	<b>Enduring Beliefs of the Church</b>  Exodus, Psalms, Gospels, Acts, Epistles, Revelation	<b>Social Teachings of the Church</b>  Genesis, Exodus, Deuteronomy, Nehemiah, Psalms, Prophets, Gospels, Acts, Epistles	<b>Faithful Witnesses</b>  Judges, 1 Samuel, Amos, Gospels, Acts, 2 Timothy, Philemon

# Handling Doctrinal Differences

*Teacher Tips by Ronald L. Nickelson*

The teacher of the Bible class I attended asked me if I would take the teaching duty for a few Sundays in his absence. I agreed to do so.

The long-standing practice of the class was to study through books of the Bible, and I thought a temporary change of pace would be beneficial. So I announced that we were going to consider what the Bible said regarding a particular doctrine.

The announcement immediately drew a cry of protest. One participant, obviously in distress, stated that doctrine was divisive—every church she had ever been involved with had had fights and splits over doctrine. So before I encountered any disagreements over the truth of any particular doctrine, I was confronted with an objection to studying doctrine at all! And what the person didn't realize was that even a through-the-books approach involves the study of doctrine.

## Why Study Doctrine?

As used in the Bible, the word *doctrine* simply means “what is taught,” referring to the content of teaching. There is such a thing as sound doctrine (1 Timothy 1:10; 2 Timothy 4:3; Titus 1:9; 2:1); its opposite is false doctrine (1 Timothy 1:3; 6:3). To distinguish between the two is to separate what is true (that is, conforms to reality) from what is false. Therefore, one reason that we study doctrine is to discern the existence of false doctrine.

The Bible is God's communication with us. And, as one writer has noted, “He intends for everything He says to have one specific true and right meaning.” Therefore, whenever two Christians disagree about the meaning of a statement in the Bible, one (or both!) of them must be wrong. Think about it: one person believes that tithing still applies in the New Testament era, and another person does not. They can't both be right! And a false doctrine that spreads can be a cancer within the church (Titus 1:11). How should we as teachers approach this kind of problem when it presents itself?

## A Starting Point

One popular starting point for handling doctrinal differences is to distinguish between “essential” doctrines and “nonessential” ones. This distinction has been sloganized in various ways. One example is “In matters of faith, unity; in matters of opinion, liberty; in all things, love.”

This slogan is appealing. And it can be useful if its terms are carefully defined. We shouldn't have much problem with the phrase “matters of faith” meaning “doctrinal beliefs that are essential for salvation” (example: Hebrews 11:6). The main challenge concerns the second phrase since the word *opinion* can be understood in more than one way (check online dictionaries). We are also cautious about using the word *nonessential*. If it's addressed in the Bible, then it is, in some sense, “essential.”

## A Preventative Approach

The best way to handle doctrinal disagreements during your teaching is to address them before they arise. The Standard Lesson Commentary will often alert you to “hot-button issues” in this regard. That way, you can disarm a doctrinal bomb before it has a chance to be dropped by a class member.

You may have noticed that this commentary doesn't stake out doctrinal positions on such issues. The approach, instead, is (1) to acknowledge and describe the issue, then (2) to give one or two of the strongest arguments for each side in an even-handed way and (3) let you, the reader, decide. This can be the model for approaching doctrinal disagreements in your class. As you do so, let 1 Corinthians 1:10 undergird your effort: “I [Paul] beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.”

# Abram Builds an Altar

Devotional Reading: Philippians 4:10-19

Background Scripture: Genesis 12–13

## Genesis 13:8-18

8 And Abram said unto Lot, Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen; for we be brethren.

9 Is not the whole land before thee? separate thyself, I pray thee, from me: if thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left.

10 And Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered every where, before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, even as the garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt, as thou comest unto Zoar.

11 Then Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan; and Lot journeyed east: and they separated themselves the one from the other.

12 Abram dwelled in the land of Canaan, and Lot dwelled in the cities of the plain, and pitched his tent toward Sodom.

13 But the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the LORD exceedingly.

14 And the LORD said unto Abram, after that Lot was separated from him, Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward:

15 For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever.

16 And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth: so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered.

17 Arise, walk through the land in the length of it and in the breadth of it; for I will give it unto thee.

18 Then Abram removed his tent, and came and dwelt in the plain of Mamre, which is in Hebron, and built there an altar unto the LORD.

## Key Text

*Abram removed his tent, and came and dwelt in the plain of Mamre, which is in Hebron, and built there an altar unto the LORD. —Genesis 13:18*

# Worship in the Covenant Community

## Unit 1: Leaders Set Worship Example

Lessons 1–5

### Lesson Aims

After participating in this lesson, each learner will be able to:

1. Outline the events that led to Abram's building an altar.
2. Explain the significance of Abram's actions.
3. Create a physical reminder of a time when God worked in his or her life.

### Lesson Outline

#### Introduction

- A. Sacred Spaces
- B. Lesson Context

#### I. Abram's Offer (Genesis 13:8-9)

- A. To Avoid Arguing (v. 8)
- B. To Avoid Crowding (v. 9)  
*Wisdom or Experience?*

#### II. Lot's Choice (Genesis 13:10-13)

- A. His Inspection (v. 10)
- B. His Selection (v. 11)
- C. His Destination (v. 12)
- D. His Environment (v. 13)

*A Cautionary Tale*

#### III. God's Promises (Genesis 13:14-16)

- A. Of Land (vv. 14-15)
- B. Of Progeny (v. 16)

#### IV. Abram's Tour (Genesis 13:17-18)

- A. Receives the Directive (v. 17)
- B. Responds by Building (v. 18)

#### Conclusion

- A. That Was Then
- B. This Is Now
- C. Prayer
- D. Thought to Remember

## Introduction

### A. Sacred Spaces

With our signatures on the contract and an offer accepted, the deal was done. We had sold our house. It was only a small condo on a quiet cul-de-sac, but we had been there for over ten years. While saying goodbye, we realized how the space had become more than four walls and a roof to our family; it had become our home.

Sure, the place had its problems when we arrived. My spouse and I had primed and painted over the worn trim; we had fixed the ceiling crack in the kitchen, and—the proudest project of all—we spent a summer tiling a bathroom. That was one of those projects we would never have started had we known the time and effort required.

But when we stepped back and looked around the place, every corner held some special significance and a memory to replay. We thought of our kids who learned to crawl across the carpet. We thought of the family dance parties that woke the neighbors. We thought of our friends who shared griefs and joys around our table. If the walls could talk, they had a decade of stories to tell.

In the narrative of Genesis 13, Abram begins to call a new land his home. He probably had projects on his mind and things he wanted to improve. But he took the time to thank God and claim a space as sacred, meaning set apart for God's purpose. For generation after generation, the descendants of Abram (renamed Abraham in Genesis 17:5) would tell his stories and would refer to this place.

### B. Lesson Context

Since the day Adam and Eve were expelled from Eden, the fact of humanity's sinfulness has been nothing new in any era. It was and is a persistent problem. Thus, it was left up to God to restore creation.

The divine restoration plan started in Genesis through a series of covenants and promises made to 75-year-old Abram and his wife (Genesis 12). Their descendants—the nation of Israel—would be the instrument through which God would send the Messiah into the world to inaugurate the new creation. Jesus fulfilled God's cosmic design. Through

Jesus, a person can become a child of Abraham, joining the family of God by faith rather than physical birth (Galatians 3:7; compare Romans 4:16).

Abraham—known as Abram in today’s lesson—is a hero of faith (Hebrews 11:8-12). He is described that way not because he was perfect or sinless, but because by faith, he left his home when called to do so by God (Genesis 12:1). God’s covenant with Abram included promises of land, progeny, and blessing. It took centuries for all this to become a reality. The conversations between God and Abram that begin in Genesis 12 are instrumental in revealing the development of a personal relationship between the two.

But the text under consideration for today deals with a distraction detailed in Genesis 13:1-7. Abram had decided to take his nephew Lot on the journey to Canaan (Genesis 12:5), a decision that resulted in problem after problem. One such problem is the immediate context of today’s lesson:

Lot also, which went with Abram, had flocks, and herds, and tents. And the land was not able to bear them, that they might dwell together: for their substance was great. . . . And there was a strife between the herdmen of Abram’s cattle and the herdmen of Lot’s cattle.

—Genesis 13:5-7.

## I. Abram’s Offer

(Genesis 13:8-9)

### A. To Avoid Arguing (v. 8)

**8. And Abram said unto Lot, Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen; for we be brethren.**

To be a nomadic *herdmen* was a common occupation in the ancient Near East. The success of this lifestyle depended upon the land’s ability to provide. The territory of Canaan and the Jordan River valley was quite suitable for such an occupation; the Old Testament describes this land about 20 times as flowing “with milk and honey” (examples: Exodus 3:8; Numbers 13:23-27).

The problem here was what might be called “too much of a good thing.” Despite the land’s abundance, Abram and Lot had too much livestock for the area to support (see Lesson Context;

compare Genesis 26:19-22). Thus their respective herds came into competition for a fixed set of resources. To prevent any *strife* that could have endangered their herds, Abram suggested a resolution predicated on their shared kinship.

This instance is not the first time in Genesis that competition between close relatives presents itself (consider Cain and Abel in Genesis 4). Nor is it the last (consider Esau and Jacob in Genesis 26–28, Laban and Jacob in Genesis 29–31, etc.).

### What Do You Think?

How should believers deal with conflict and quarrels that arise with family members?

### Digging Deeper

How might Matthew 18:15-17; Ephesians 4:25-32; and Colossians 3:12-15 inform how you deal with conflict?

### B. To Avoid Crowding (v. 9)

**9. Is not the whole land before thee? separate thyself, I pray thee, from me: if thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left.**

The location where Abram made this offer was “between Bethel and Hai” (Genesis 13:3). At an elevation of 2,900 feet, Bethel is one of the highest places in the region. Taking the square root of that number and multiplying the result by 1.22459 yields approximately 66—that is the distance in miles that Abram and Lot can see before the horizon makes things no longer visible. Therefore, it’s easy for us to imagine the two men standing on a high vista as Abram makes this offer to Lot.

## How to Say It

Canaan	<i>Kay-nun.</i>
Esau	<i>Ee-saw.</i>
Gomorrah	<i>Guh-more-uh.</i>
Laban	<i>Lay-bun.</i>
Mamre	<i>Mam-reh.</i>
Sodom	<i>Sod-um.</i>
Zoar	<i>Zo-er.</i>



Visual for Lesson 1. Show this visual as you discuss the lesson conclusion regarding the faith of Abraham as described in Hebrews 11.

The offer assures that they will separate, but Abram risks a great deal by allowing Lot his choice. The text says nothing of God's direction in the affair, but Lot's self-interest will lead to his unraveling after his departure from the land of Canaan.

We may wonder if Lot is counted as part of Abram's "father's house" (Genesis 12:1) and thus shares the promise of Genesis 12:2-3. The text merely says, "Lot went with him" as Abram departed for Canaan (12:4). Thus, we do not know whether Lot accompanied Abram by invitation to do so or if he merely was a tag-along party crasher.

### Wisdom or Experience?

The animal kingdom is often harsh and unforgiving to its younger generations. For example, spotted hyenas are highly aggressive to their cubs, often killing all but the strongest soon after their birth. Cubs continue to compete with one another and adult members of the pack so that only the strongest survive to adulthood. Then, the clan runs off any young males, who must find a new pack or create one of their own when they reach maturity.

You would expect emperor penguins to be a gentler species, right? They're so cute on TV! The parents cooperate as they swap tending and hunting roles while their expected offspring develops inside its single egg in the winter. But once the chick is old enough to survive without help, the parents abandon it to fend for itself along with other young penguins.

Hyenas and penguins are just two examples from nature. Humans don't have to act like animals, though. Abraham is an example of how the older generation can teach someone of a younger generation by offering choices that result in the older person's making sacrifices. It's been said that there are two ways to learn things: through wisdom and through experience. *Wisdom* is when you learn from the mistakes of others; *experience* is when you learn from your own mistakes. Lot's choice eventually resulted in the latter. What can you do to switch from learning by experience to learning by wisdom? —A. W.

## II. Lot's Choice

(Genesis 13:10-13)

### A. His Inspection (v. 10)

**10. And Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered every where, before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, even as the garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt, as thou comest unto Zoar.**

Much like the present day, access to water was a requirement for survival in ancient times. No water means no livestock. Moreover, in ancient times, all wells had to be dug by hand (compare Genesis 26:12-22, 32-33). An abundance of watering springs was part of God's original creation (2:6), which is what the verse means by the phrase *the garden of the Lord*. The Jordan River valley is compared to *the land of Egypt*, where annual flooding of the Nile River makes the land fertile.

The town of *Zoar* is about 64 miles from where Lot and Abram were standing. The town played an important role for Lot and his family when *the Lord* destroyed *Sodom and Gomorrah* (see Genesis 19:18-30). Furthermore, the reference to the destruction of these cities suggests that this event was widely known among the original audience of Genesis. The placement of this reminder in the text likely prompted the original audience to recall that, although Lot initially seemed to have chosen the most favorable land for selfish reasons, it did not ultimately lead to a positive outcome for him.

## B. His Selection (v. 11)

**11. Then Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan; and Lot journeyed east: and they separated themselves the one from the other.**

As Lot stood next to his uncle, he undoubtedly thought he had the better deal regarding the choice of land. But as events of Genesis 18–19 unfold, he may have come to realize how poor his choice was! Lot's selected territory means that he will be moving *east*, given the reference point in 13:3. In the Genesis narrative, traveling to the east has been associated with moves away from God. First, Adam and Eve were driven eastward from the garden (Genesis 3:24). Next, Cain moved east to the land of Nod, "out from the presence of the Lord" (4:16). Finally, the builders of the city of Babel are reported to have an eastward orientation or destination (11:2).

## C. His Destination (v. 12)

**12. Abram dwelled in the land of Canaan, and Lot dwelled in the cities of the plain, and pitched his tent toward Sodom.**

Lot's departure to *the cities of the plain* identifies his new home as being just barely inside *the land of Canaan*, according to the boundary designations in Genesis 10:19. The phrase *pitched his tent* points to a nomadic lifestyle (Isaiah 13:20). The Hebrew preposition of the verse at hand describes this action as being *toward Sodom*. Soon enough, however, the preposition changes: in Genesis 14:12, he is described as living "in Sodom." In 19:1, he is described as sitting at the city gates, a place of importance. These verses depict Lot's transition from being a nomad to becoming a permanent foreign resident, as evidenced by his living in a house (19:2).

## D. His Environment (v. 13)

**13. But the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the LORD exceedingly.**

In selecting where to live, Lot had apparently not considered the moral climate, only the availability of water (Genesis 13:10, above). Specific information regarding the nature and depravity of *the men of Sodom* is found in Genesis 19:4-5 and Ezekiel 16:49-50.

### What Do You Think?

How can believers safeguard themselves from sinful behavior while living or working in an environment hostile to God and righteousness?

### Digging Deeper

How can believers be a humble and godly influence in such an environment? How might Matthew 5:3-16 and 1 Peter 3:15-16 inform your response?

## A Cautionary Tale

The talent of Whitney Houston (1963–2012) was evident from when she was a small child. From an early age, she was an energetic choir member and soloist who raised the roof of her church with a powerful voice and confident stage presence.

She was discovered by a music executive and signed her first record deal in 1983 at 20 years old. She went on to become one of the most popular stars of the 1980s and 1990s. She sold over 200 million records, won numerous awards, and starred in various films.

Unfortunately, superstardom also had its dark side, and it eventually engulfed Whitney. She struggled with addiction and a troubled marriage that brought negative publicity and kept her in a downward spiral. Tragically, she passed away at age 48 when she drowned in a bathtub; heart disease and cocaine were determined to be contributing factors.

The experience of stardom for a young person can lead to overwhelming pressure as various voices attempt to speak into his or her life. We can't know whether or not Whitney's downward spiral came about because of questionable influences. Regardless, it is true that poor choices can lead to disastrous outcomes.

Lot's decision to live near Sodom was one such poor choice; it opened the door to destructive people and influences. The apostle Paul, quoting the Greek poet Menander (342–292 BC), reminds us to "be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners" (1 Corinthians 15:33). What kind of company do you keep? Do Paul's directives in 1 Corinthians 5:9-10 offer clarity? —A. W.

### III. God's Promises

(Genesis 13:14-16)

#### A. Of Land (vv. 14-15)

**14-15. And the LORD said unto Abram, after that Lot was separated from him, Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward. For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever.**

With Abram alone, God makes a more expansive promise of territory in the land of Canaan (compare Genesis 12:7). If we assume the same location as in Genesis 13:3, then the visibility computations of 13:9 above still apply. Thus, when God invites Abram to look *northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward*, that man can see as far as 66 miles in any direction. If we imagine Abram standing in the middle of a circle with a visibility radius of 66 miles, the result is Abram's potentially being able to view about 13,700 square miles. That's about one-third the size of the state of Tennessee.

We also note the second mention of Abram's *seed* (compare Genesis 12:7). The word *seed* is often used as a collective singular noun to refer to a line of descendants, but it can also be used of an individual; Isaac will become this "seed" to Abram, the child of promise from God (21:12). Centuries later, the apostle Paul will note the difference between the singular and plural uses of this word regarding Abraham's descendants (see Galatians 3:16).

#### B. Of Progeny (v. 16)

**16. And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth: so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered.**

Here the word *seed* is used as a collective noun, standing for the enormous number of Abram's future family. The verse contains a complex hyperbole: if *the dust of the earth* could be counted (and it can't), then Abram's future descendants could be counted as well (and they can't either; compare Genesis 15:5). We should keep in mind that at this point childless Abram is 75 years old (12:4).

### IV. Abram's Tour

(Genesis 13:17-18)

#### A. Receives the Directive (v. 17)

**17. Arise, walk through the land in the length of it and in the breadth of it; for I will give it unto thee.**

In the ancient world, walking the length and breadth of a land was equivalent to claiming ownership of it. Therefore, in accordance with legal tradition, God instructed Abram to survey the land by walking through it. We note that the boundaries with which Abram was familiar in Genesis 10:19 have mismatches with the borders described in Numbers 34:1-12. We keep two things in mind as we compare and contrast those differences. First, God promised in Genesis 17:8 to give "all" the land of Canaan to Abram and his descendants. What God gave to the Israelites in Numbers 34 probably reflected the Israelites' track record of rebellion at the time (compare and contrast Ezekiel 47:13-23). They could have had "all" the land of Canaan had they obeyed fully. But they didn't (Judges 1:27-35).

Second, several centuries elapse between the time of Genesis 13 and Numbers 34. Boundaries can change in location and name, given the rise and fall of cities and various other currents of history.

#### What Do You Think?

What steps can you take to ensure that the material blessings God gives you will be used to serve Him and love others?

#### Digging Deeper

How might you use non-material blessings (such as wisdom, time, or expertise) to serve God and others?

#### B. Responds by Building (v. 18)

**18. Then Abram removed his tent, and came and dwelt in the plain of Mamre, which is in Hebron, and built there an altar unto the LORD.**

*Abram* responded to the directive and chose to live about 30 miles south-southwest of his location of Bethel stated in Genesis 13:3. The elevation of *Hebron* allows viewing of Sodom, Gomorrah, and Zoar. Perhaps Abram chose this location to keep an eye on Lot (see Genesis 14). The importance of



Hebron is reflected in its being mentioned by name more than 60 times in the Old Testament.

An additional reference is the nearby *plain of Mamre*. The word translated as “plain” can also refer to trees, as it does in Genesis 35:8 and Hosea 4:13. In gratitude for God’s provision and attention, Abram constructed *an altar* to offer sacrifices in worship. Stone altars were common to ancient Near Eastern religions, and Abram would have been familiar with their use. They also serve as monuments and places of memory (compare and contrast Joshua 22:26-28). They remind the observer of commitment and significance. Abraham and his wife, Sarah, were buried in a cave near their home in Mamre (Genesis 23:17-20; 25:7-10).

### What Do You Think?

How can you create a “monument” or another reminder to help you remember God’s provision and attention?

### Digging Deeper

Who will you recruit to help you plan and establish such a “monument”?

## Conclusion

### A. That Was Then

God’s first words to Abraham (as Abram) were a directive to leave home (Genesis 12:1). He left his extended family behind as he journeyed toward and within the land God had designated. God deliberately separated him from his past to create a new nation from him—a nation to usher in the Messiah. We may wonder how homesick Abraham became from time to time. We may also wonder if Abraham ever wished he hadn’t taken Lot along!

The importance of Abraham (lived about 2000 BC) in salvation-history should not be overlooked. His names “Abram” and “Abraham” appear on the pages of the Old and New Testament nearly 300 times, with about 28 percent of those occurring in the New Testament. In Hebrews 11, Abraham is enshrined in “Faith’s Hall of Fame.” His example has much to teach us yet today.

### B. This Is Now

In a sense, Abraham’s story is ours as well. God

wants us to know the Messiah He has sent. But for that to happen, sometimes God has to separate us from relationships, events, jobs, etc., that stand in the way (Mark 10:28-31; Luke 5:27-28). Those separations may come either *in order that* we may know Jesus or *as a result of* knowing Him.

Those who have experienced such severances may have an inkling of Abraham’s faith. His willingness to place faith in God before all else makes him stand apart, a hero of faith (Hebrews 11:8-10; compare Galatians 3:9). God expects similar faith even today. When we believe we are called to a different situation, God may not reveal all the details of how to do so and why. If He did, then there would be no room for faith!

We should not be surprised if our journey involves taking a “Lot” along. In the Genesis narrative, that man was nothing but trouble for his uncle. More importantly, it’s vital that we not *be* a “Lot”!

### What Do You Think?

How will today’s Scripture text inform your response when you experience a difficult situation on your faith journey?

### Digging Deeper

Who is a “Lot” that God might be asking you to take along on your faith journey?

### C. Prayer

Father God, send us into the troubled world as Your ambassadors so that we may make disciples as we remind others of what You have done for us. Give us eyes like Abraham to perceive the nature of faith. May we not be a short-sighted “Lot”! We ask this in the name of Jesus. Amen.

### D. Thought to Remember

Be ready to exercise a faith like Abraham’s.

## Visuals FOR THESE LESSONS

The visual pictured in each lesson (example: page 12) is a small reproduction of a large, full-color poster included in the *Adult Resources* packet for the Fall Quarter. Order No. 9780784739136 from your supplier.

# Involvement Learning

Enhance your lesson with KJV Bible Student (from your curriculum supplier) and the reproducible activity page (at [www.standardlesson.com](http://www.standardlesson.com) or in the back of the KJV Standard Lesson Commentary Deluxe Edition).

## Into the Lesson

Announce a “Pictionary”-style game wherein one or more volunteers sketch examples of “major sources of conflict” on the board. Class members are invited to discern that topic.

*Alternative.* Distribute copies of the “Conflict Resolution” exercise from the activity page, which you can download. Have learners work in pairs to complete the exercise as indicated. After sufficient time to do so, reconvene for a whole-class discussion.

After either activity and discussion, say, “Conflict is as old as humanity. Let’s see how one conflict recorded in the Bible was settled unselfishly.”

## Into the Word

Ask two learners to take turns reading aloud the verses of Genesis 13:8-18. Then break into pairs or small groups to evaluate the reason(s) for the dispute between Abram and Lot. Distribute handouts (you prepare) with one or more of the following questions printed on them. (Expected responses are in italics—do not put them on the handouts):

1. When, if ever, did God instruct Abram to take his nephew Lot with him to the promised land? (*God never did.*)
2. Since Lot and Abram were close relatives, why did they keep their livestock property separate? (*This is a matter of speculation, but see Genesis 30:25-43 for cultural clues.*)
3. What factors are not recorded as playing a part in Lot’s choice to settle near Sodom and Gomorrah? (*There is no mention of Lot’s having considered the moral climate of the area he chose.*)

After discussion, transition by saying, “It would not be right for us today to build altars to make sacrifices, now that Jesus has provided the full and final sacrifice for our sins. However,

in Old Testament times, an altar or other structure was erected to commemorate something important.” Refer to one or more of these texts as examples: Genesis 28:18-22; 35:1, 14; Joshua 4:1-7; 1 Samuel 7:12.

## Into Life

Ask the class to share some of the great things God has done for them. Follow that discussion by asking how those blessings could be memorialized in some way that honors God—a way of informing others of those blessings. (*Teacher tip:* don’t ask more than one question at a time; allow responses to the first question before asking the second.)

If participants seem to have a hard time getting started here, follow by saying, “Imagine if you were to place a few items on a shelf or in a scrapbook as a reminder of God’s aid in a victory. What might some of those items be?” Expect learners to mention things such as an expired driver’s license to recall how God has kept you safe in your travels or a photo of your family to recall an event when family members worked together to overcome a financial challenge.

*Option.* Form participants into study triads. Then distribute copies of the “Creative Problem-Solving” activity from the activity page, which you can download, to discuss and complete as indicated. (Feel free to delete, add, or modify the questions and options in advance.)

After discussions in triads, reconvene for whole-class sharing. Encourage participants to share examples of issues they are still trying to resolve. *Cautions:* (1) don’t put anyone on the spot to share information that is too personal, and (2) stress that the sharing is a time for encouragement, not a time for “giving advice.” Ask learners for commitments to pray for those who request it. Conclude with a minute of silent prayer in that regard.

# Solomon Dedicates the Temple

Devotional Reading: Psalm 34:11-22  
Background Scripture: 1 Kings 8:22-53

1 Kings 8:22-24, 37-39,  
46, 48-50a

22 And Solomon stood before the altar of the LORD in the presence of all the congregation of Israel, and spread forth his hands toward heaven:

23 And he said, LORD God of Israel, There is no God like thee, in heaven above, or on earth beneath, who keepest covenant and mercy with thy servants that walk before thee with all their heart:

24 Who hast kept with thy servant David my father that thou promisedst him: thou spakest also with thy mouth, and hast fulfilled it with thine hand, as it is this day.

37 If there be in the land famine, if there be pestilence, blasting, mildew, locust, or if there be caterpillar; if their enemy besiege them in the land of their cities; whatsoever plague, whatsoever sickness there be;

38 What prayer and supplication soever be made by any man, or by all thy people Israel, which shall know every man the plague of his own heart, and spread forth his hands toward this house:

39 Then hear thou in heaven thy dwelling place, and forgive, and do, and give to every man according to his ways, whose heart thou knowest; (for thou, even thou only, knowest the hearts of all the children of men;)

46 If they sin against thee, (for there is no man that sinneth not,) and thou be angry with them, and deliver them to the enemy, so that they carry them away captives unto the land of the enemy, far or near;

48 And so return unto thee with all their heart, and with all their soul, in the land of their enemies, which led them away captive, and pray unto thee toward their land, which thou gavest unto their fathers, the city which thou hast chosen, and the house which I have built for thy name:

49 Then hear thou their prayer and their supplication in heaven thy dwelling place, and maintain their cause,

50a And forgive thy people that have sinned against thee.

## Key Text

*What prayer and supplication soever be made by any man, or by all thy people Israel, which shall know every man the plague of his own heart, and spread forth his hands toward this house: Then hear thou in heaven thy dwelling place. —1 Kings 8:38-39a*

# Worship in the Covenant Community

## Unit 1: Leaders Set Worship Example

Lessons 1–5

### Lesson Aims

After participating in this lesson, each learner will be able to:

1. Summarize Solomon's prayer.
2. Analyze the structure and movement of Solomon's prayer at the temple dedication.
3. Write a prayer to dedicate the congregation's meeting place(s) to the Lord.

### Lesson Outline

#### Introduction

- A. Consecration? Dedication?
- B. Lesson Context

#### I. Impassioned Prayer (1 Kings 8:22-24)

- A. Solomon's Postures (v. 22)
- B. God's Uniqueness (vv. 23-24)

#### II. Oppressive Circumstances (1 Kings 8:37-39)

- A. Sword, Famine, Plague (vv. 37-38)  
*Turn First?*
- B. Hear, Forgive, Act (v. 39)

#### III. Inevitable Sin (1 Kings 8:46, 48-50a)

- A. Anger, Captivity, Exile (v. 46)
- B. Hear, Sustain, Forgive (vv. 48-50a)  
*Forgiveness and Reconciliation*

#### Conclusion

- A. People as Sinners
- B. God as Defender
- C. Prayer
- D. Thought to Remember

## Introduction

### A. Consecration? Dedication?

Years ago, a young preacher just out of seminary was setting up for an evening audio-visual presentation in the church sanctuary. He needed a place to put the equipment, and he eventually spotted the ideal place: the communion table. But as he began moving it into place, his wife warned him, "That's the communion table."

The self-confident preacher knew that, of course. But he also knew that, ultimately, the table was just an ornate piece of wood. So what if its normal use was to hold the trays of the communion elements? Couldn't it serve other functions as well?

But his wife stepped up her caution by stressing again that "*That's the communion table!*" In so doing, she recognized something that her husband hadn't: the existence of a disposition of many in the congregation who considered some things to be consecrated (or set apart) for certain tasks only.

Various words describing the concept of consecration occur over 250 times in the Old Testament. It is an act by which a person or thing is set apart for service to God (examples: Exodus 29:44; Leviticus 8:10). In the New Testament era, however, the idea of consecration applies to just people, not to things. Even so, there exist issues of conscience in this regard. So the preacher wisely heeded his wife's warning.

### B. Lesson Context

The ceremony in 1 Kings 8 consecrated the newly built temple in Jerusalem. Temple construction had begun in 966 BC and required seven years for completion (1 Kings 6:1, 38). That completion in 959 BC marked an important transition in Israelite history, as the location of encounter with the holy God became immovable, with the temple replacing the portable tabernacle. The first half of Solomon's 40-year reign was focused on building the temple and palace (9:10). Today's lesson from 1 Kings 8 considers a portion of the dedication prayer at the ceremony for the finished temple, over which King Solomon presided.

Several preparatory elements led up to this prayer: the temple had been completely furnished

(1 Kings 7:13-51), the ark of the covenant had been brought into the temple (8:1-9), and the king had “blessed all the congregation of Israel” (8:14). The prayer of dedication that followed (8:23-53) is the second longest prayer in the Bible—in the neighborhood of 1,000 words! (The parallel in 2 Chronicles 6:14-42 is of similar length.) Only the prayer in Nehemiah 9:5-38 is longer.

But the prayer’s oversized length doesn’t mean that King Solomon merely rambled on and on (compare Matthew 6:7). Quite the opposite: the prayer is clearly organized. We see that organization in 9 of the prayer’s 31 verses selected for today’s study.

## I. Impassioned Prayer

(1 Kings 8:22-24)

### A. Solomon’s Postures (v. 22)

**22. And Solomon stood before the altar of the LORD in the presence of all the congregation of Israel, and spread forth his hands toward heaven.**

The standing posture of prayer Solomon adopts is the most commonly seen in ancient Near Eastern art. Other postures, especially kneeling or prostration, were legitimate, of course (examples: 1 Chronicles 29:20; 2 Chronicles 29:29). And by the time Solomon concludes the prayer, he will have switched from standing to kneeling (1 Kings 8:54; the changeover is explained more fully in 2 Chronicles 6:12-13).

In both postures, the fact that Solomon extended *his hands toward heaven* adds an aura of solemnity and earnestness (compare Exodus 9:29; Deuteronomy 32:40-41; Lamentations 3:41; Daniel 12:7). It reflects the idea of God as being far “above” creation, not just spatially but also figuratively. Humans look “up” to God, seeking help during their hour of need (Deuteronomy 4:39; John 8:23).

Solomon voiced his prayer not just for his own benefit but on behalf *of all the congregation of Israel*. These were especially those Israelites who were in attendance personally for the temple dedication (1 Kings 8:1-2). Their presence is important partly because they must overhear the exhortations to avoid sin and partly because God wishes to empha-



Visual for Lesson 2. Allow one minute for individuals to follow the visual’s prompting to pray to the Lord who keeps promises.

size the relationship with the people of Israel. They were united with each other and God by their history, present life, and hope for a blessed future. In a sense, they are being dedicated as much as the temple when we note the blessing mentioned in 1 Kings 8:14 (compare 2 Samuel 6:18).

### B. God’s Uniqueness (vv. 23-24)

**23. And he said, LORD God of Israel, there is no God like thee, in heaven above, or on earth beneath, who keepst covenant and mercy with thy servants that walk before thee with all their heart.**

The following two verses are worded almost identically with 2 Chronicles 6:14-15. The confession emphasizes the uniqueness of God, an idea that appears in many biblical texts (examples: Psalms 115:3-8; 135:15-18). *The Lord God of Israel* brooks no rivals (Deuteronomy 4:15-20; 5:7; etc.).

One area of His uniqueness appears in keeping a *covenant* in His merciful love. This language comes from Deuteronomy 7:9, 12, and it reflects the direction of that book. While Israelites were responsible for obeying God’s commandments, their relationship with God rested primarily upon His covenant promise. It was not earned by human merit.

Even so, the verse at hand emphasizes the attitude of the people. As indicated by “the Shema” (which means “hear”) in Deuteronomy 6:4-5, the people should hear and receive the Law of Moses with enthusiasm, commitment, and even

rejoicing, as emphasized throughout Deuteronomy. Mindless, routine obedience cannot be the goal of the relationship because it is not sustainable. Those who follow God without enthusiasm will stop following at a slight provocation (Matthew 13:1-9).

**24. Who hast kept with thy servant David my father that thou promisedst him: thou spakest also with thy mouth, and hast fulfilled it with thine hand, as it is this day.**

The promise to *David* that his offspring would build the temple (2 Samuel 7:13), now fulfilled, is evidence of God's faithfulness. The eventual destruction of kingship and even that of the temple did not cancel God's plan for Israel; rather, God used those events to symbolize His presence as they pointed to greater, eternal realities regarding spiritual and heavenly kingship and temple. God may carry out His promises in various ways, but the promises always remain just that.

### What Do You Think?

Which of God's scriptural promises has He already fulfilled?

### Digging Deeper

How does recalling His fulfilled promises encourage your faithfulness in waiting for the fulfillment of the rest?

## II. Oppressive Circumstances

(1 Kings 8:37-39)

### A. Sword, Famine, Plague (vv. 37-38)

**37. If there be in the land famine, if there be pestilence, blasting, mildew, locust, or if there be caterpillar; if their enemy besiege them in the land of their cities; whatsoever plague, whatsoever sickness there be.**

The Old Testament often summarizes the calamities that may befall God's people in terms of "sword," "famine," and "pestilence" (examples: 1 Chronicles 21:11-12; Jeremiah 14:12). These three general categories speak to oppression and/or fatalities caused by human adversaries, meager harvests, and disease, respectively. *Blasting* (blight), *mildew*, *locust*, and *caterpillar* result in famine as crops are destroyed (compare Psalm

78:46; Amos 4:9; Joel 1:4). These predictions of calamities come from the greatly expanded listing in Deuteronomy 28:15-68.

### What Do You Think?

What are some examples of disasters or crises modern people fear and need God's help to withstand?

### Digging Deeper

When we pray to God for help with these kinds of issues, what is our responsibility to act? Consider James 2:16.

**38a. What prayer and supplication soever be made by any man, or by all the people Israel.**

Solomon asks God to reply to any prayer offered by those either in the temple or mindful of it. You may notice that the word *or* is italicized in your edition of the *King James Version*. That's how the *KJV* indicates that there is no word in the text of the Hebrew language being translated. Thus the word *or* is the translators' best judgment for smooth reading.

On the other hand, the ancient Greek translation (the Septuagint) omits the phrase *by all the people Israel*. The prayer does envision Gentiles praying, beginning in 1 Kings 8:41. But here the focus remains on Israelites as those especially subject to the curses following a violation of the covenant (again, see Deuteronomy 28).

**38b. Which shall know every man the plague of his own heart, and spread forth the hands toward this house.**

The phrase *the plague of his own heart* speaks to pangs of conscience (compare 1 Samuel 24:5; Romans 2:15; etc.). Each person knows his or her own troubles and can express them in prayer as *hands* are lifted *toward this house* (compare and contrast Exodus 9:29; Job 11:13; Psalm 88:9; Isaiah 1:15). This may work on two levels: (1) the suffering of the people as a whole may be expressed in different ways by different individuals, and (2) each person should be aware of his or her details and ably communicate about them to God. In other words, prayer can take many forms. On the one hand, it depends partly on forms shared by the community as a whole over time. On the other

hand, it depends partly on individual experience and perception.

### Turn First?

One of the many tragedies of World War II was the Bengal Famine of 1943. India at the time was still part of the British Empire and engaged in the global struggle against the Axis powers. The Japanese Empire had already conquered neighboring Burma (present-day Myanmar) and was poised to invade India. Much of the local harvest was diverted to the needs of the global military effort, leading to the starvation of at least two million people in the Bengal province.

Mahatma Gandhi, a leader in India's growing independence movement, refused to accept aid from the British government or foreign aid agencies because he believed that would compromise India's self-sufficiency. He didn't want to perpetuate a cycle of dependence on foreign powers. Instead, he urged India's population to use their own resources to help one another through the crisis. This effort was very controversial and only partially successful.

Where do you turn first for help during a crisis? Is your first impulse to cry out to governmental agencies? Is it to rely on your own resources in the pride of "rugged individualism"? Or is your first turn toward God? —A. W.

### B. Hear, Forgive, Act (v. 39)

**39. Then hear thou in heaven thy dwelling place, and forgive, and do, and give to every man according to his ways, whose heart thou knowest (for thou, even thou only, knowest the hearts of all the children of men).**

Humans do well to know their own hearts and minds as God knows them (compare Hebrews 4:12-13). That's an ideal to strive for, although it is impossible to attain since God knows us better than we know ourselves (1 Corinthians 11:28-32; 2 Corinthians 10:12). Indeed, we humans have a tendency toward self-deception (1 John 1:8). If God responds to prayer based on an assessment of need (and He does; see Matthew 6:8, 32), how much more are His responses in reaction to the direction of one's heart (13:58)!

The divine response follows a sequence that

begins with an appeal for God to "hear"; this is a feature in ancient Israelite prayers (examples: Psalms 5:1; 27:7; 28:2; 54:2; 64:1; contrast 22:2; Lamentations 3:8, 44). Then God forgives, since a request for help usually accompanies self-assessment and turning away from sin. Then God acts appropriately. This sequence is relevant because the moral and spiritual ground must be cleared before action occurs.

At the same time, God does assess the *ways* of the person praying. Wicked people who defy God's call cannot utter legitimate prayers. That's because their intention is not to change their ways but to escape some immediate trial (see Proverbs 15:29; Isaiah 58:1-9; Hosea 6:1-7:16; 1 Timothy 2:8).

The verse also insists that God knows the thoughts of all people, not just Israelites. This insight leads to the expectation that Gentiles may also pray toward the temple and ask for God's help.

## III. Inevitable Sin

(1 Kings 8:46, 48-50a)

### A. Anger, Captivity, Exile (v. 46)

**46. If they sin against thee, (for there is no man that sinneth not,) and thou be angry with them, and deliver them to the enemy, so that they carry them away captives unto the land of the enemy, far or near.**

The prayer takes an important turn, assuming that the people may sin so grievously that the covenant might fail as the Israelites are removed from their promised land. This event did occur. However, the prediction goes beyond the curses for disobedience in Deuteronomy 28:15-68 to promises

## How to Say It

apartheid	uh- <i>par</i> -tate.
Babylon	<i>Bab</i> -uh-lun.
Corinthians	Ko- <i>rin</i> -thee-unz ( <i>th</i> as in <i>thin</i> ).
Deuteronomy	Due-ter- <i>ahn</i> -uh-me.
Gentiles	<i>Jen</i> -tiles.
Mahatma Gandhi	Muh- <i>hot</i> -muh <i>Gone</i> -dee.
Septuagint	Sep- <i>too</i> -ih-jent.

of prosperity in Deuteronomy 30:1-10. These envision the loss of the land as a punishment, and the return to it as an effect of God's mercy, respectively. The relationship between Israel and God was not based on human achievement but on God's love and kindness.

So the prayer ends with a request that God will renew the people even after their communal sins have resulted in the curses of Deuteronomy 28:15-68. Even the collapse of their culture ought not to be the last word. God remains just and punishes sin, but He also shows mercy.

This verse should not be read as an excuse for sin. "God knows I'm human and will forgive me," a sentence often heard in Christian circles, is a statement of extreme arrogance and careless indifference to the moral and spiritual demands of faith. It is not a statement honoring God or taking human duties or capacities seriously. It distorts Solomon's point here. The prayer does not ask for cheap grace because it accepts the reality of punishment for sin.

### What Do You Think?

Is it possible to know that a hardship is God's judgment in your life? Explain your answer with biblical evidence.

### Digging Deeper

What danger does assuming another person's hardship is God's judgment pose to presenting the gospel?

## B. Hear, Sustain, Forgive (vv. 48-50a)

**48. And so return unto thee with all their heart and with all their soul, in the land of their enemies, which led them away captive, and pray unto thee toward their land, which thou gavest unto their fathers, the city which thou hast chosen, and the house which I have built for thy name.**

This part of Solomon's prayer assumes that suffering will cause people to reflect on their lives and amend them. It also assumes that God will hear their prayers of repentance when uttered in a land of exile. This means, in turn, that God's presence is universal and that He is interested in the prayers of people seeking change and redemption.

The verse also reveals the idea of praying toward the temple in Jerusalem. It may be the earliest evidence for that practice. Much later, Daniel prayed, facing Jerusalem while in Babylon (Daniel 6:10). This practice shows how posture indicates the direction of the heart. A good (and bad) example of this is Ezekiel 8:16, which describes "about five and twenty men, with their backs toward the temple of the Lord, and their faces toward the east; and they worshipped the sun toward the east."

### What Do You Think?

What does it look like to turn back to God with all your heart and soul?

### Digging Deeper

Who do you trust to help you identify when you need to repent and return to the Lord?

**49. Then hear thou their prayer and their supplication in heaven thy dwelling place, and maintain their cause.**

It's one thing to *hear*, but another thing to *heed* (see the distinction in Ezekiel 33:4-5). We see both elements in this prayer, with the request to *maintain their cause* as the heeding part. The "cause" has been given to the Israelites by God; it is the very reason for the existence of their nation (Deuteronomy 7:6). Thus, the prayer ultimately is that God's will be done as the nation of Israel fulfills its divine purpose. And God is certainly interested in having His will done!

**50a. And forgive thy people that have sinned against thee, and all their transgressions wherein they have transgressed against thee.**

God takes no pleasure in our suffering, even when we have earned it (Ezekiel 18:32; 33:11). Spiritual reform sometimes results in suffering, since we need to eliminate certain attitudes and behaviors. But even the suffering draws the compassion of God and of righteous people. We hasten to add that neither this verse nor any other Bible text implies that all suffering is deserved. Much is not (compare Luke 13:1-5; John 9:1-3).

## Forgiveness and Reconciliation

The collapse of the apartheid regime in South



Africa in the early 1990s could easily have resulted in revenge-filled ethnic warfare. We need to look no further than the Rwandan genocide of 1994 to see a brutal outcome to such a war. Yet this did not happen, in large part due to the work of South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission in 1996.

Chaired by Desmond Tutu, the commission made a point to listen to the stories of victims and perpetrators alike. Both groups were encouraged to work through a process of forgiveness and reconciliation.

We should want both of those two things not only from others but also from God. Forgiveness and reconciliation involving one will often be inseparable from forgiveness and reconciliation involving the other. Which of these five passages convict you the most in that regard: Matthew 5:23-24; 6:14-15; 25:45; 1 Corinthians 8:12; and Colossians 3:13? Why? —A. W.

### What Do You Think?

What gives you confidence that God has forgiven your sins?

### Digging Deeper

How do you offer the gift of forgiveness to others?

## Conclusion

### A. People as Sinners

One of the most puzzling features of prayer in the Bible occurs in this prayer at the dedication of the temple. Here, Solomon voiced the nation's prayer for forgiveness as part of its ongoing life together. In this case, Solomon prayed for forgiveness of sins that had not yet been committed!

In that regard, the prayer serves as a reflection on the entire history of Israel, from the time of the exodus of 1447 BC (481 years in the past as Solomon uttered this prayer) to Nebuchadnezzar's forced removal of the citizens of Judah in 586 BC (380 years after the prayer). For us to understand the prayer, we must place it within this larger context, the story of Israel in the promised land, covering the entire books of Joshua through 2 Kings. Both that history and Solomon's prayer reflect a realistic assessment of the human condition and the ten-

dency of human beings to fail. The Bible does not try to pretend that a perfect, sinless time existed at some point after the Garden of Eden. Idolatry and oppression occurred regularly; they still do. Solomon's prayer foreshadowed the outcome found in 2 Kings 25. Even so, Israel's story, as recorded in the books of Joshua through 2 Kings, is not an obituary but a warning and an invitation to a better life.

### B. God as Defender

Solomon's prayer rests on the assumption that God seeks to heal and forgive, even when (or especially when) sins threaten to overcome the sinners. God defends penitent people from those who would oppress them—and even from themselves. The worship by Old Testament Israel and the New Testament church celebrates the expansive nature of God's mercy. We are thereby reminded to beware of the traps that require it.

The prayer in 1 Kings 8 is, therefore, realistic but also hopeful. The dedication of the holiest spot on earth (at the time) was connected to the reality of unholiness. Solomon cast the nation of Israel as a whole on the mercy of God. In so doing, Solomon sought God's commitment to continue working with the people continuously as part of their centuries-long process of learning and obeying.

Today, the church would do well to recover the biblical practice of confession of sins, both of individuals and of the church as a whole. Part of that recovery would involve acknowledgment that the temptations to harm others or dishonor God do not go away. We will need forgiveness in the future, and we need humility in the present. Solomon's prayer shows us a way forward.

### C. Prayer

God of mercy, Lord of love, hear the cries of all who need You. Even when our sins have trapped us in suffering, show us mercy. Do not let us be overwhelmed by our bad decisions or those of others. As Jesus called even those who betrayed Him to feed His sheep, call us into Your eternal kingdom. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

### D. Thought to Remember

Sin is real, but so is God's mercy.

# Involvement Learning

Enhance your lesson with KJV Bible Student (from your curriculum supplier) and the reproducible activity page (at [www.standardlesson.com](http://www.standardlesson.com) or in the back of the KJV Standard Lesson Commentary Deluxe Edition).

## Into the Lesson

**Brainstorming.** Ask learners to name things (not people) that are important to them. The responses can include physical items, good causes, intangible things that affect them, etc. Create a list on the board as responses are voiced. (You may wish to limit responses to one or two per person, depending on class size.)

Wrap up the brainstorming by saying, “Things that are important to us are usually dedicated to a specific purpose—one purpose and one purpose only.” Then work through the list as a class to determine which entries are considered “dedicated” in this sense.

After a few minutes of discussion, say, “In our lesson, we are going to look at Solomon’s dedication of the Jewish temple and think about what parallels there may be to ‘dedications’ today.”

## Into the Word

Ask three volunteers to read aloud the three segments of today’s lesson text, one segment each. Then divide the class into three groups, designating them as the **Confession Group**, the **Disaster Group**, and the **Repentance Group**. Distribute handouts (you create) of the following questions.

**Confession Group.** Read 1 Kings 8:22-24. 1—In what posture was Solomon praying? 2—What did Solomon confess about God? 3—What was Solomon emphasizing about the Israelite’s relationship with God?

**Disaster Group.** Read 1 Kings 8:37-39. 1—What did Solomon ask God to do in various circumstances? 2—What do these verses say about God’s power? 3—What do these verses say about the people’s relationship with God?

**Repentance Group.** Read 1 Kings 8:46, 48-50. 1—Under what circumstances was God requested to act mercifully? 2—What do these verses say about God? 3—What do these verses say about the people’s relationship with God?

After allowing for eight minutes of discussion, reconvene for whole-class interaction. The answers to the questions should be obvious from the texts at hand. Talk through the different things that are in Solomon’s prayer, including praise and submission to God, along with requests for the practical and spiritual needs of the people. Have on hand a dozen or so blank pieces of letter-size paper. Use them to list responses as participants voice them, one response per sheet of paper. Tape them to the board, arranging them in a way that results in an outline or structure of how Solomon prayed.

## Into Life

Gesturing toward the outline just created, ask, “What elements in Solomon’s prayer should we adopt into our own personal prayer lives?” Dig deeper by challenging every answer with a response that begins with “But what about . . . ?” Here are some *examples*: For a response regarding conclusions about Solomon’s prayer posture, you could ask, “But what about his change in posture in 1 Kings 8:54?” For a response regarding conclusions about God’s hearing of prayers, you could ask, “But what about times when God refuses to listen, as in Lamentations 3:8, 44?”

Stress at some point that although our meeting places for worship are not parallel to the temple as the ancient Israelites’ meeting place for worship, we can still dedicate our church buildings for holy purposes. Allow learners one minute to write a simple prayer in that regard; allow an opportunity to share. *Option:* Dig deeper by distributing copies of the “Dedicating Your Temple” exercise from the activity page, which you can download. Allow work in triads to complete as indicated, followed by whole-class interaction.

*Option.* Distribute copies of the “Inspirational Places” exercise from the activity page. Have learners complete it individually in a minute or less. This can be a take-home if time is short.

# Hezekiah's Prayer

Devotional Reading: Romans 8:29-39  
Background Scripture: 2 Kings 19:1-34

## 2 Kings 19:14-20, 29-31

14 And Hezekiah received the letter of the hand of the messengers, and read it: and Hezekiah went up into the house of the LORD, and spread it before the LORD.

15 And Hezekiah prayed before the LORD, and said, O LORD God of Israel, which dwellest between the cherubims, thou art the God, even thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth; thou hast made heaven and earth.

16 LORD, bow down thine ear, and hear: open, LORD, thine eyes, and see: and hear the words of Sennacherib, which hath sent him to reproach the living God.

17 Of a truth, LORD, the kings of Assyria have destroyed the nations and their lands,

18 And have cast their gods into the fire: for they were no gods, but the work of men's hands, wood and stone: therefore they have destroyed them.

19 Now therefore, O LORD our God, I

beseech thee, save thou us out of his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that thou art the LORD God, even thou only.

20 Then Isaiah the son of Amoz sent to Hezekiah, saying, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, That which thou hast prayed to me against Sennacherib king of Assyria I have heard.

29 And this shall be a sign unto thee, Ye shall eat this year such things as grow of themselves, And in the second year that which springeth of the same; And in the third year sow ye, and reap, And plant vineyards, and eat the fruits thereof.

30 And the remnant that is escaped of the house of Judah Shall yet again take root downward, and bear fruit upward.

31 For out of Jerusalem shall go forth a remnant, And they that escape out of mount Zion: The zeal of the LORD of hosts shall do this.

## Key Text

*O LORD our God, I beseech thee, save thou us out of his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that thou art the LORD God, even thou only. —2 Kings 19:19*

# Worship in the Covenant Community

## Unit 1: Leaders Set Worship Example

Lessons 1–5

### Lesson Aims

After participating in this lesson, each learner will be able to:

1. Explain the historical circumstance behind Hezekiah's prayer.
2. Distinguish Hezekiah's response to God from the responses of other Old Testament kings.
3. Create a plan to respond to any crisis with immediate prayer to the Lord.

### Lesson Outline

#### Introduction

- A. "Spare Tire" Prayer Life?
- B. Lesson Context

#### I. Hezekiah's Prayer (2 Kings 19:14-19)

- A. Preparation (v. 14)
- B. Adoration (v. 15)
- C. Supplication, Part 1 (v. 16)
- D. Agreement (vv. 17-18)  
*The Non-Gods of Kiev*
- E. Supplication, Part 2 (v. 19)  
*Leave It on God's Desk*

#### II. God's Response (2 Kings 19:20, 29-31)

- A. Prayer Heard (v. 20)
- B. Sign Promised (vv. 29-31)

#### Conclusion

- A. ACTS in Action
- B. Prayer
- C. Thought to Remember

## Introduction

### A. "Spare Tire" Prayer Life?

Have you ever heard of a "spare tire" prayer life? A person with such a prayer life uses prayer just as people use spare tires—only in emergencies.

The *how*, *when*, and *why* of a Christian's prayers constitute a major indicator of his or her spiritual maturity. A spiritually healthy individual has a regular (daily) practice of prayer that draws heavily on Scripture. Such a prayer life begins by listening to God through His written Word. The spiritually mature Christian realizes that prayer is less about talking and more about listening to what God has already said. There's no sense in seeking God's approval on, say, an adulterous relationship since God has already said, "Thou shalt not commit adultery" (Exodus 20:14; compare Matthew 5:27-30).

God will not answer certain types of prayers in a positive way—or even at all (examples: Psalm 18:41; James 4:3). We must ask according to His will (1 John 5:14-15). These facts apply to times of crisis as well—today's lesson.

### B. Lesson Context

The reign of godly King Hezekiah (716–687 BC) over the southern kingdom of Judah was a time of trouble. Previously, in 722 BC, the Assyrian Empire had annexed the northern kingdom of Israel along with areas to the north and east of it. In 702 BC, the Assyrian ruler Sennacherib invaded Judah, destroyed the major city of Lachish, and besieged Jerusalem itself (the two cities being about 30 miles apart). Jerusalem survived only after Hezekiah agreed to pay tribute to the Assyrian king (2 Kings 18:13–19:13; 2 Chronicles 32:1-19; Isaiah 36:1–37:13).

The account in today's printed text also appears in Isaiah 37, almost word for word. This double placement reflects the close relationship between the king and the prophet, which appears in the story itself.

The text under consideration reports a conversation between Hezekiah and God, with the prophet Isaiah as the go-between. In 2 Kings 19:1-5, the king sent messengers to the prophet ask-

ing for his help communicating with God. Isaiah’s answer promised that God would create a distraction to the Assyrians (19:6-7). The blasphemous and arrogant statements by the Assyrians did not help their cause (19:8-13)!

Texts that are parallel to those in today’s lesson are Isaiah 37:14-20, 30-32, and 2 Chronicles 32:20. On the godly character of King Hezekiah, see 2 Kings 18:1-8.

## I. Hezekiah’s Prayer

(2 Kings 19:14-19)

### A. Preparation (v. 14)

**14a. And Hezekiah received the letter of the hand of the messengers, and read it.**

The contents of *the letter* that *Hezekiah* received are found in 2 Kings 19:10-13. The letter is only about 100 words long in English and 60 in Hebrew; its contents are threatening. The hostile sender was Sennacherib of Assyria. Being able to read and write was unusual at the time, although Israel’s leaders apparently were all literate (Deuteronomy 17:18-19; compare and contrast 2 Samuel 11:14; 2 Kings 5:4-7; 10:2-7; Jeremiah 36:11-15).

**14b. And Hezekiah went up into the house of the LORD, and spread it before the LORD.**

*The house of the Lord* is the temple in Jerusalem. The point of departure for King *Hezekiah* regarding the task we see here was likely his nearby palace. The phrase *went up* when referring to travel to the temple was generally accurate, as the temple sat at a higher elevation than most other landmarks (compare Isaiah 37:14; Jeremiah 26:10).

The fact that Hezekiah *spread* the letter *before*

*the Lord* implies that the king asked God to read it and respond in a way that reflected Israel’s place as God’s people of the covenant. While 2 Chronicles 23:6 confirms that only the priests were to enter the temple, it’s hard to believe that the phrasing here means that Hezekiah stood outside that building. Emergency situations call for unusual measures (compare Luke 6:3-4)!

### What Do You Think?

What prevents you from going to God in prayer when you receive disturbing communications?

### Digging Deeper

What first step could you take to make this a habit?

### B. Adoration (v. 15)

**15a. And Hezekiah prayed before the LORD, and said, O LORD God of Israel, which dwellest between the cherubims.**

Hezekiah’s prayer invites us to reflect on God’s names. At the most foundational level, you may find it surprising that God is known by three single-word names. When they are transliterated—that’s where you swap letters of the Hebrew alphabet for similar-sounding letters in English—those three names are *Yahweh*, *Elohim*, and *Adonai*. But what about all those lists on the internet that claim “16 names of God,” “God’s 20 names,” etc.? Most entries in such lists consist of one of the three names mentioned above combined with a descriptor (examples: “the living God” in Joshua 3:10; “a jealous God” in Deuteronomy 4:24; 5:9; 6:15). In the text at hand, the phrase *O Lord God* translates both the names *Yahweh* and *Elohim*. The longer phrase *Lord God of Israel* adds a descriptor; that exact phrase is not rare—it occurs in more than a hundred places in the Old Testament.

Another descriptor is added with God’s dwelling between the cherubims (compare 1 Samuel 4:4). The creatures known by that designation are mentioned dozens of times in the Old Testament. The most familiar discussion of cherubims is in conjunction with the ark of the covenant and

## How to Say It

Adonai (Hebrew)	Ad-owe-nye.
Amoz	Ay-mahz.
anthropomorphic	an-thruh-puh-more-fik.
cherubims	chair-uh-bimz.
Elohim (Hebrew)	El-o-heim.
Hezekiah	Hez-ih-kye-uh.
Sennacherib	Sen-nack-er-ib.
Shearjashub	She-are-jah-shub.
Yahweh (Hebrew)	Yah-weh.



Visual for Lesson 3. Discuss with learners what it might look like for the Lord to demonstrate His kingship in your community.

the place to meet with God (Exodus 25:17-22; 37:6-9). The word translated “dwellest” can refer to a place where someone in authority sits, such as a throne or judgment seat (examples: Exodus 18:13-14; Deuteronomy 1:4; Judges 4:5; 1 Kings 1:46-48; 2:12, 19). The idea that God figuratively dwells in a place on earth is reflected in Exodus 15:17; 1 Kings 8:13; Psalms 132:13-14; 135:21; and Matthew 23:21. Affirming that this concept is not intended to be interpreted in a literal sense are 1 Kings 8:27, 30, 39, 43, 49; and Acts 17:24.

**15b. Thou art the God, even thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth; thou hast made heaven and earth.**

King Sennacherib of Assyria had claimed that other nations and their gods were powerless to stop his army (2 Kings 18:19-35). However, Hezekiah knew that the only true God was indeed God of *all the kingdoms of the earth*. This status necessarily derives from His role as Creator. The phrase *thou hast made heaven and earth* is reminiscent of Genesis 1:1. But Hezekiah was not quoting that passage. Rather, the text shows the idea that all things are part of the Lord’s creation and, therefore, all things are subject to the Lord. Creation implies ownership. That idea lay at the heart of Israel’s confession.

### C. Supplication, Part 1 (v. 16)

**16. LORD, bow down thine ear, and hear; open, LORD, thine eyes, and see; and hear the**

**words of Sennacherib, which hath sent him to reproach the living God.**

The language here is anthropomorphic, which means attributing human characteristics (having *ear, eyes*, etc.) to God. He knows all things, of course (Psalms 139:2; 147:5; Hebrews 4:13; 1 John 3:20). Psalms of lament frequently ask God to hear the petitioner’s cry (examples: Psalms 4:1; 64:1) or to look at a situation (examples: 35:17, 22; 53:2). Sometimes He chooses to react positively on that awareness (Exodus 3:7), sometimes in a negative way (Jeremiah 7:16-20).

*To reproach the living God* is to mock, taunt, or ridicule Him. Sennacherib did this through his officer (2 Kings 18:35; 2 Chronicles 32:16-17; compare 1 Samuel 17). Could there be a greater blasphemy?

### D. Agreement (vv. 17-18)

**17-18. Of a truth, LORD, the kings of Assyria have destroyed the nations and their lands, and have cast their gods into the fire: for they were no gods, but the work of men’s hands, wood and stone: therefore they have destroyed them.**

Sennacherib was at least partly right: *the kings of Assyria* had indeed *destroyed the nations and their lands* (2 Kings 17-18). Since the Assyrians had been able to do this, it logically follows that the *gods* of the conquered nations were powerless, therefore, fit only for *the fire* (compare Deuteronomy 4:28; Isaiah 44:9; Acts 17:29). The fact that an invader could destroy the idols proved their impotence. On this point, Hezekiah agrees with Sennacherib! But then the question was whether Sennacherib could defeat the Lord.

#### What Do You Think?

What are the modern “gods” of your society?

#### Digging Deeper

How does your church guard against being seduced by these gods?

### The Non-Gods of Kiev

Have you ever heard of Perun? What about Dazhbog, Stribog, or Veles? Unless you have stud-

ied pre-Christian Ukrainian history, it's unlikely that you have. These were the main deities worshipped in Kievan Rus, the precursor state to both Ukraine and Russia, until AD 988. For millennia, such fictitious gods were believed to control the weather, agriculture, fertility, and wealth. But all those prayers and sacrifices fell on deaf ears and eyes of idols of wood, stone, and metal (compare Isaiah 44:9-20).

Things changed when Prince Vladimir I rose to the throne of Kiev. Wanting to unite his kingdom under a single religion, he attempted to convert his people to Orthodox Christianity. But old ways were hard to break. When the population resisted, he ordered that idols of the old gods be thrown into the river—and their die-hard supporters after them. Despite such a wrong-headed conversion method, Christianity eventually became deeply rooted in Ukraine. The gods of wood, stone, and metal were forgotten.

Everyone worships something. Those who think that statement to be untrue are worshipping themselves; they have placed themselves on the thrones of their own hearts. Today, we may not see many people bowing to idols of wood and stone, but that doesn't mean that the problem of idolatry is nonexistent. The main problem is idols of the heart (compare Ezekiel 14:1-11). Where are you most in danger of slipping into such idolatry? —A. W.

### E. Supplication, Part 2 (v. 19)

**19. Now therefore, O LORD our God, I beseech thee, save thou us out of his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that thou art the LORD God, even thou only.**

Hezekiah closed his prayer with the desire that *God* would triumph over the invaders. Sennacherib had rightly claimed to be superior in his encounters with foreign powers. Nevertheless, the survival of Jerusalem would prove the superiority of Judah's God to all others.

Hezekiah wished all the nations to know about that superiority. This theme appears at many points in the Old Testament when Israel sought (or should have sought) to extol God before the Gentiles (1 Kings 8:41-43; 1 Chronicles 16:23-29;

Isaiah 49:6). But Israel would not succeed in that task unless the nation stopped profaning the name of *the Lord* in the sight of *the kingdoms of the earth* (Ezekiel 20:9, 14, 22; 36:20-23; 39:7).

#### What Do You Think?

Is God's glory diminished if He does not choose to deliver you from difficult situations? Explain your answer.

#### Digging Deeper

How can you give God glory in situations from which you have not experienced the relief of deliverance?

### Leave It on God's Desk

Lena set to work with her usual diligence when her boss asked her to compile a report of recent sales data. As she looked at the figures, she began to realize the serious financial condition of the company. So she went beyond what her boss asked her to do and compiled a second report. It featured recommendations for fixing the problem.

As she placed both reports on her boss's desk, doubts entered Lena's mind. She had a nagging feeling her second report would anger her boss, resulting in it being ignored or—worse—misapplied. So she spent the next couple of weeks fretting and losing sleep.

Noticing this change in demeanor, Lena's boss correctly guessed the cause. So he called her in and said, "Thank you, Lena. I knew I could count on you to go above and beyond. And I know how much you care about the company and your coworkers. But keep in mind that once you put something on my desk, you must trust me to react appropriately. Your job is just to bring it to me."

Lena's problem was that she had tried—perhaps subconsciously—to take the boss's responsibility onto herself, being unsure that he would do the right things. How often do we spread out our problems before God but then don't quite believe that a right outcome will result? After we have done our part (compare Isaiah 6:8), let us, like Jesus, become comfortable praying, "Not my will, but thine, be done" (Luke 22:42). —A. W.

## II. God's Response

(2 Kings 19:20, 29-31)

### A. Prayer Heard (v. 20)

**20. Then Isaiah the son of Amoz sent to Hezekiah, saying, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, That which thou hast prayed to me against Sennacherib king of Assyria I have heard.**

The material in the eight verses following this one gives God's full response to Hezekiah's request. The verse at hand is the preface to those eight; it notifies Hezekiah that God has *heard*. For God to "hear" also implies a willingness to "heed" (compare and contrast Matthew 13:13-15, quoting Isaiah 6:9-10).

#### What Do You Think?

How do you usually pray for leaders in your nation? allied countries? hostile regions?

#### Digging Deeper

What would change if you shifted the focus of your prayers regarding help for or judgment of these leaders?

### B. Sign Promised (vv. 29-31)

**29. And this shall be a sign unto thee, ye shall eat this year such things as grow of themselves, and in the second year that which springeth of the same, and in the third year sow ye, and reap, and plant vineyards, and eat the fruits thereof.**

This part of Hezekiah's prayer is the other bookend to 2 Kings 19:21-28. Those verses taunt the Assyrian king, throwing his boasts of conquest back in his face.

The eventual defeat of the Assyrian army would mean a return to normal agriculture over time. The Assyrians were adept at siege warfare (2 Kings 17:5), and this time-consuming tactic led to the destruction of vineyards, orchards, etc., as the invaders foraged and otherwise lived off the land during the siege. A liberated land therefore required time to restore agriculture.

The first two years depicted here echo Leviticus 25:5. These two years would require faith as

survivors of the war scrambled for food. Faith requires long-term thinking. Surely this points to God's profound care for the people of Jerusalem and Judah! Their nation would survive one of the most desperate moments in their long history, despite all earthly odds.

**30. And the remnant that is escaped of the house of Judah shall yet again take root downward, and bear fruit upward.**

By referring to *the remnant*, God's response acknowledged that not all Judeans would escape what was to come. Yet a kernel of the nation would survive and flourish (Zephaniah 2:6-7). The verse before us, therefore, moves from an earthly sense of the text just before it to one of projecting imagery that includes spiritual robustness (compare Isaiah 11). The prophet Isaiah even named his son Shearjashub, which means "a remnant will return" (Isaiah 7:3; compare 10:21-22). This concept is so important that it has given rise to a subfield of study today known as the "doctrine of the remnant."

**31a. For out of Jerusalem shall go forth a remnant.**

Here we see an instance of parallelism that characterizes Hebrew poetry. The use of parallelism is evident in the repetition of similar ideas using different yet connected words. Thus "the house of Judah" from the previous verse parallels *Jerusalem* here. The identical English words *remnant* in these two verses hides the fact that the words are different in Hebrew—one being a verb, the other being a noun.

**31b. And they that escape out of mount Zion.**

The parallelism continues, with *they that escape* reflecting the previous two instances of "remnant." *Mount Zion*, for its part, is parallel to the previous "house of Judah" and "Jerusalem."

**31c. The zeal of the LORD of hosts shall do this.**

In addition to the parallel text of Isaiah 37:32, this phrase is reflected in Isaiah 9:7. The *Lord of hosts* designation is one of the combination name-and-descriptors discussed earlier. Interestingly, the word *zealous* is virtually synonymous with the word *jealous*. We usually think of jealousy as a



negative thing. But it can be positive when the fervency (zeal) is appropriately motivated and informed. We see the positive side in John 2:17 (quoting Psalm 69:9) and the opposite in Philip-  
pians 3:6 (compare and contrast Zechariah 8:2).

## Conclusion

### A. ACTS in Action

This account reveals a faithful leader seeking God's help on behalf of an entire nation during a time of great crisis. This aspect of spiritual leadership remains relevant. Asking for God's help is still an important part of such leadership. The threat may come from many directions, but it often comes from those who aspire to control others involuntarily. The leader must be alert to such a danger and align the people's hopes with God's desires, as Hezekiah did.

One way to do this is via the ACTS method of prayer. This acronym speaks to a four-stage prayer pattern:

**Adoration:** Recognizing God for who He is;

**Confession:** Admitting one's sins;

**Thanksgiving:** Expressing gratitude for God's blessings already received;

**Supplication:** Requesting God's intervention or blessings.

This pattern, with various emphases, is seen in Hezekiah's prayer. Such prayers often come naturally to people who believe God can help them in crisis, assuming that God has no reason to dismiss such prayers (contrast Lamentations 3:8, 44; Ezekiel 8:18; 1 Peter 3:7). Indeed, in today's text, God answered promptly and positively.

But supplication in and of itself isn't the whole of the ACTS-pattern prayer battle; it's only one-fourth. A vital part of the ACTS prayer pattern is ensuring some balance among its four aspects. The prayer lives of many Christians lack such a balance. That deficiency is seen when we spend most of our prayer time asking for things (supplication), with little time spent in adoration, confession, and thanksgiving.

Consider Hezekiah's prayer again: he didn't start with his plea for help; he started with adoration. Then he moved to recognition of sin—

Assyria's sin of blasphemy. We may think that "confession" involves only one's personal sin, but the Bible witnesses to corporate confession as well (Leviticus 16:21; 26:40; Ezra 10:1; etc.).

Moving to the aspect of thanksgiving, this is difficult to detect in this singular prayer of Hezekiah. But thanking God was a big part of Israelite prayer practices (1 Chronicles 16:34, 41); a prayer of King David witnesses to all four ACTS elements (29:10). Returning to the aspect of supplication, another challenge in this area is to pray with right motives. Such motives align with God's stated will (Matthew 6:10; James 4:3, 15).

A further challenge is not to use prayer as a spare tire—"only in emergencies"! Today many Christians face crises of persecution, famine, political unrest, injustice, etc. It's important to pray for issues that affect the body (James 5:14-15), but this is where the "emergency, spare tire" practice seems to reveal itself the most.

A Christian once counted the prayers and their nature as he sat through 10 weeks of an adult Bible class. When the 10 weeks were up, he analyzed the resulting 133 prayers to see patterns. He discovered that every prayer could be categorized in one of three ways: prayers for bodily healing or preservation of life (97 prayer requests); prayers for "situations" such as grief, marriage, and job loss (33 requests); and prayers for spiritual issues (3 requests). Contrast that with what Jesus had to say about prayer in Matthew 6:5-15.

#### What Do You Think?

Can you identify disparities concerning the 10-week examination and your personal prayer experience?

#### Digging Deeper

What change could you make to be more in line with Jesus' teaching?

### B. Prayer

Father, may we pray with right motives and right priorities! In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

### C. Thought to Remember

Pray with one desire: that God's will be done.

# Involvement Learning

Enhance your lesson with KJV Bible Student (from your curriculum supplier) and the reproducible activity page (at [www.standardlesson.com](http://www.standardlesson.com) or in the back of the KJV Standard Lesson Commentary Deluxe Edition).

## Into the Lesson

**Brainstorming.** Announce that you desire the learners' advice for the "crisis response kit" you are creating for your household. Ask what should go into such a kit. Jot responses on the board.

After a few minutes, direct attention one of two ways, depending on whether or not anyone mentioned *prayer* as a necessity for a household's crisis response kit.

- If prayer was *not* mentioned, say, "It's natural to think in terms of [name some items listed on the board] and other items of a physical nature. But why isn't prayer included?"
- If prayer *was* mentioned, say, "It's a good thing to have prayer in our crisis response kit. But if we pray only or primarily in a crisis, what does that say about our spiritual maturity?"

Allow a few minutes for responses and reactions to your question. Use this as a transition point to introduce the crisis-prayer of Hezekiah.

## Into the Word

Ask a learner to read 2 Kings 19:14-19. Then invite someone else to read 19:20, 29-31. Set the historical stage for these passages by explaining the setting as set forth in the Lesson Context.

Introduce the in-depth study by asking a participant to be a "scribe"; ask your scribe to stand at the board as elements of Hezekiah's prayer will be compared and contrasted with God's responses.

Begin the compare/contrast by reading again 2 Kings 19:14-19 slowly. As those six verses are read, encourage class members to voice salient points. If participants are slow in starting, suggest they think in terms of what Hezekiah *thought*, *said*, and/or *did*. (Don't be too hasty in offering this suggestion; allow 15 seconds of silence for learners to wrestle with the task.) Do the same with 19:20, 29-31.

With salient points listed on the board for both sections of the text, move to compare/contrast by

saying, "Next, we will examine which aspects of Hezekiah's prayer ended up being addressed specifically by God, which aspects of God's response went above and beyond what Hezekiah requested, and which aspects, if any, of the king's prayer did not draw a response from God."

**Logistical notes:** If you are using a whiteboard, have your scribe use erasable markers of differing colors for the cross-connections between elements of the two sections of text. If using a chalkboard, use connecting lines of different types (dotted, dashed, etc.). This exercise can also be accomplished in small groups, depending on the size of your class. In that case, create handouts appropriate for the task. **Recommended:** Best learning will occur if you, the teacher, have studied the entirety of 2 Kings 19 thoroughly beforehand.

**Option.** For deeper study on how God does and does not respond to prayers, distribute copies of the "Four Outcomes of Prayer" exercise from the activity page, which you can download. Form learners into study pairs to complete as indicated. For faster completion, one person in the pair can look up the Old Testament texts while the other looks up the New Testament ones. Reconvene for a whole-class discussion of results.

## Into Life

Draw participants' attention back to the "crisis response kit" with which you opened the lesson. Then form study pairs or triads to propose a plan to respond to any crisis with immediate prayer to the Lord. Challenge them to state their plan in terms of what a prayer in a time of crisis *must* include, what it *should* include, and what it *could* include. (**Option.** Using small groups for this task is ideal, time permitting; during ensuing whole-class discussion, groups can "debate" one another regarding the must, should, and could elements.)

**Option.** As learners depart, distribute copies of "Hezekiah's Prayer Scramble" as a take-home.

# Josiah Celebrates Passover

Devotional Reading: 2 Chronicles 34:8, 14-27

Background Scripture: 2 Kings 22-23; 2 Chronicles 34:1-35:19

## 2 Chronicles 35:1-6, 16-19

1 Moreover Josiah kept a passover unto the LORD in Jerusalem: and they killed the passover on the fourteenth day of the first month.

2 And he set the priests in their charges, and encouraged them to the service of the house of the LORD,

3 And said unto the Levites that taught all Israel, which were holy unto the LORD, Put the holy ark in the house which Solomon the son of David king of Israel did build; it shall not be a burden upon your shoulders: serve now the LORD your God, and his people Israel,

4 And prepare yourselves by the houses of your fathers, after your courses, according to the writing of David king of Israel, and according to the writing of Solomon his son.

5 And stand in the holy place according to the divisions of the families of the fathers of your brethren the people, and after the division of the families of the Levites.

6 So kill the passover, and sanctify yourselves, and prepare your brethren, that they may do according to the word of the LORD by the hand of Moses.

16 So all the service of the LORD was prepared the same day, to keep the passover, and to offer burnt offerings upon the altar of the LORD, according to the commandment of king Josiah.

17 And the children of Israel that were present kept the passover at that time, and the feast of unleavened bread seven days.

18 And there was no passover like to that kept in Israel from the days of Samuel the prophet; neither did all the kings of Israel keep such a passover as Josiah kept, and the priests, and the Levites, and all Judah and Israel that were present, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

19 In the eighteenth year of the reign of Josiah was this passover kept.

## Key Text

*Josiah kept a passover unto the LORD in Jerusalem: and they killed the passover on the fourteenth day of the first month. —2 Chronicles 35:1*

# Worship in the Covenant Community

## Unit 1: Leaders Set Worship Example

Lessons 1–5

### Lesson Aims

After participating in this lesson, each learner will be able to:

1. Explain the setting and guidelines for the first Passover celebration mentioned in Exodus 12.
2. Evaluate the significance of Josiah's renewal of the Passover observance for Israel's ongoing relationship with God.
3. Create a plan to revitalize one neglected spiritual practice.

### Lesson Outline

#### Introduction

- A. Rituals or Ritualism?
- B. Lesson Context

#### I. Preparation (2 Chronicles 35:1-6)

- A. Decision Made (v. 1a)
- B. Date Designated (v. 1b)
- C. Priests Assigned (v. 2)  
*The Power of Encouragement*
- D. Levites Instructed (vv. 3-6)

#### II. Celebration (2 Chronicles 35:16-19)

- A. By an Order (v. 16)
- B. With a Feast (v. 17)
- C. In Comparison (vv. 18-19)  
*Regarding Influencers*

#### Conclusion

- A. Embracing Rituals
- B. Prayer
- C. Thought to Remember

## Introduction

### A. Rituals or Ritualism?

When you hear or read the word *ritual*, is your immediate reaction positive or negative? Chances are your first reaction is negative, as the word *ritual* conjures up mental images of tedious formal ceremonies that bear little relevance to reality. We may also think rituals are just “going through the motions” of a periodic observance, where one's thoughts and attitude don't match one's actions while the ritual is underway (examples: Isaiah 29:13; Mark 7:6-8).

But aren't celebrations of birthdays, anniversaries, graduations, etc., rituals in a good sense? Perhaps we can move toward clarity by distinguishing between *ritual* as a good thing and *ritualism* as a bad thing. We humans need ritual, in its best sense, for the formation and flourishing of our relationships. Rightly practiced, rituals help us remember the past as it explains the present and helps us plan wisely for the future (example: 1 Corinthians 11:23-26). Regarding our worship of God, rituals only have meaning if they are followed with obedience to God (examples: Isaiah 1:11-17; 1 Corinthians 7:19). Further, ritualism without discernment risks placing a person under divine judgment (example: 11:27-30)

God knows our need for ritual. That's why He established annual feasts (Exodus 23:17; etc.) for the Old Testament covenant people. Today's study examines the renewed practice of one such ritual.

### B. Lesson Context

Today's lesson takes us to the year 623 BC, “the eighteenth year of the reign of Josiah,” king of Judah (2 Chronicles 35:19). That moves us forward some 336 years after King Solomon's dedication of the temple in 959 BC (lesson 2) and 79 years after King Hezekiah's prayer in 702 BC (lesson 3). The year 623 BC positions the events of today's lesson right at 100 years since the Assyrian Empire cast Israel's 10 northern tribes into exile in 722 BC (2 Kings 17). Unbeknownst to the Judeans of the time, their removal from the land lay only 37 years in the future (that is, 586 BC).

The 31-year reign of Josiah (641–609 BC) over the southern kingdom of Judah was a time of respite from the consequences of sin. This was a direct result of Josiah’s godly leadership (2 Chronicles 34:2-7). In the process of purifying the land and renovating the temple, a certain priest found “a book of the law of the Lord given by Moses” (34:14). Some today believe this to have been a copy of Deuteronomy (see terminology in Deuteronomy 29:21; 30:10; 31:26).

King Josiah was shaken to his core when he heard the book read (2 Chronicles 34:19). He acted immediately, receiving both bad and good news in return (34:20-28). Even so, he continued to exercise godly leadership in both word and deed (34:29-33). His leadership included reinstating the celebration of the Passover. This neglected feast had been instituted more than 800 years previously to mark the divine liberation from Egyptian slavery (Exodus 12; Deuteronomy 16:1-2). The feast’s revival is a focus of today’s lesson.

## I. Preparation

(2 Chronicles 35:1-6)

### A. Decision Made (v. 1a)

#### 1a. Moreover Josiah kept a passover unto the LORD in Jerusalem.

The beginning of this verse and the beginning of 2 Chronicles 35:19 form the bookends of this account. The celebration of *passover* in this text was not only an act of obedience to the Law of Moses, but it was also an act of covenant renewal (see Lesson Context). Passover had not been celebrated for some time—or at least not in the manner that King *Josiah* intended to celebrate it (2 Chronicles 35:18; compare 30:5b). Hezekiah, who reigned over Judah from 716 to 687 BC, celebrated an extended Passover after he had renovated and reopened the temple (29:3–30:27).

Both observances, one by Hezekiah and the other by Josiah, are detailed for the readers of Chronicles (compare the much more condensed version in 2 Kings 23:22-23). And both were held *in Jerusalem*, the place where God put his name (Deuteronomy 16:5-7).



Visual for Lesson 4. At the beginning of class, point to this visual and ask learners to provide examples of ways to celebrate God’s work.

### B. Date Designated (v. 1b)

#### 1b. And they killed the passover on the fourteenth day of the first month.

The statement *they killed the passover* becomes clearer when we realize that the writer is talking about the Passover lamb (Exodus 12:21). With the phrase *on the fourteenth day of the first month* (that is, sometime in late March or early April), the writer presents this Passover celebration as firmly rooted in the Law of Moses (Exodus 12:6; Numbers 28:16; Deuteronomy 16:1-2). Decades earlier, King Hezekiah deviated from the stipulation regarding *the first month*, but he had good reasons for doing so (2 Chronicles 30:1-20).

The record of Hezekiah’s Passover observances in 2 Chronicles 30 and Josiah’s Passover in 2 Chronicles 35 invited the postexilic readers of Chronicles (536 BC and later) to renew the observance of Passover and reaffirm their covenant with God. The Passover celebrations of Hezekiah and Josiah were rooted in the state of the two men’s hearts (2 Chronicles 29:2; 34:1-2).

### C. Priests Assigned (v. 2)

#### 2. And he set the priests in their charges, and encouraged them to the service of the house of the LORD.

King Josiah established the agenda. We may look with great skepticism at church-and-state combinations today, but not so in ancient Israel. Here we see a king (a civic ruler) authorizing and

directing *priests* (religious leaders) in their forthcoming role. Josiah placed the total weight of the monarchy behind the priestly *service*, as King Hezekiah had done (2 Chronicles 31:19-21).

The word *charges* reflects the idea of “tasks” or “responsibilities.” Regarding those responsibilities and the arrangement of the priesthood, see 1 Chronicles 24:1-19; 2 Chronicles 13:11; 23:6. The word translated *encouraged* occurs dozens of times in Chronicles, revealing its importance to the author. It speaks of “strengthening” (examples: 2 Chronicles 32:5, 7).

### What Do You Think?

How can you encourage those who have devoted themselves to full-time ministry in the church?

### Digging Deeper

How will you also encourage those who volunteer in the church but are not full-time ministers or staff members?

## The Power of Encouragement

The year was 1991. The Buffalo Bills and the New York Giants were down to the last eight seconds of Super Bowl XXV. The Giants were ahead 20–19 when the Bills’ kicker Scott Norwood lined up to attempt a 47-yard field goal. Norwood was no amateur. In 1985, he beat out nine other kickers in training camp to win his spot playing for Buffalo.

The next day’s headline said it all: “Wide and to the right: The kick that will forever haunt Scott Norwood.” The Giants celebrated, the Bills groaned, and Scott walked off the field with a sagging spirit.

Friends rallied with letters of cheer. They offered sage advice about one kick not being the measure of his life. They reminded him of his achievements. But Norwood was tormented by mental replays of the kick. When the Bills returned to Buffalo, he wanted to melt into the background at a reception at city hall. He had let down his fans. To his surprise, however, people in the crowd of more than 25,000 held signs of support as they chanted, “We want Scott!”

Disappointments are part of the human experience.

But encouragement from other people can reverse the sting of disappointment and regret. Perhaps this is where Josiah took a page from Hezekiah’s playbook (compare 2 Chronicles 30:22 with 35:2). Will you? —A. W.

### D. Levites Instructed (vv. 3-6)

#### 3a. And said unto the Levites that taught all Israel, which were holy unto the LORD.

It’s helpful to recall at this point that all priests are *Levites*, but not all Levites are priests (compare Deuteronomy 17:9, 18; 18:1; 21:5; 1 Kings 12:31). Since the Levites had a teaching role in Israel, the priests had that role as well (Nehemiah 8:9). These teachers were responsible for guiding *Israel* in the lawful conduct of the nation’s rituals. For that role and others, the Levites were expected to lead the way in being personally *holy unto the Lord*. To be holy is to be “consecrated” or “set apart” (1 Chronicles 15:11-14).

#### 3b. Put the holy ark in the house which Solomon the son of David king of Israel did build.

This text begins with the first of a series of directives to the Levites. The reference to the need to *put the holy ark in the temple* recalls the initial placement of the ark there, some 336 years earlier (see Lesson Context and 2 Chronicles 5:2-10). *David* reigned from 1010 to 970 BC, with his son *Solomon* reigning from 970 to 931 BC after him.

We do not know why the ark was no longer in the temple, but the culprit was probably evil King Amon, who reigned over Judah from 643 to 641 BC. The ark of the covenant was necessary for a complete reformation of the temple service. The temple was the resting place for the ark because God dwelt in it and was enthroned on the ark’s cherubim (1 Chronicles 13:6; 28:2; 2 Chronicles 6:41). The ark represented the presence of God, and it also symbolized God’s commitment to Israel.

#### 3c. It shall not be a burden upon your shoulders.

The Levites were the only ones authorized to carry the ark (Deuteronomy 10:8; 31:9; 1 Chronicles 15:2). The original instructions were that they were indeed to carry the ark on their *shoulders* via poles (15:15). Thus, Josiah’s directive here seems curious. Perhaps he was aware of the first disas-

trous attempt to transport the ark to Jerusalem (2 Samuel 6:1-7) and misunderstood what had caused the disaster.

**3d. Serve now the LORD your God, and his people Israel.**

The Levites served *God* by carrying out their duties per those listed in 1 Chronicles 23:28-31. These duties changed when the immovable temple replaced the portable tabernacle (1 Chronicles 23:25-26).

**4-5. And prepare yourselves by the houses of your fathers, after your courses, according to the writing of David king of Israel, and according to the writing of Solomon his son. And stand in the holy place according to the divisions of the families of the fathers of your brethren the people, and after the division of the families of the Levites.**

The Levites were to prepare themselves for service by organizing themselves by their respective clans based on *the houses* of their ancestors. *David king of Israel* provided a list of these clans in 1 Chronicles 23:6-23, and *Solomon his son* followed the same pattern as documented in 2 Chronicles 8:14. Levites, like priests, rotated their service according to the *divisions* of their ancestral *families* per 1 Chronicles 24 (compare Luke 1:8).

**What Do You Think?**

How do you prepare yourself and your family to be attentive to God’s direction during worship services?

**Digging Deeper**

How do you deal with distractions that might prevent you from serving God?

**6a. So kill the passover.**

The verse outlines three instructions along with the rationale for their implementation. Regarding the phrase *kill the passover*, see commentary on 2 Chronicles 35:1, above. More explicit guidelines regarding the Passover lamb are found in Exodus 12:1-28.

**6b. And sanctify yourselves.**

Priests and Levites had been expected to *sanctify* themselves for their tasks for Hezekiah’s Passover several decades earlier (2 Chronicles 30:3, 15).

Since this was only one of several tasks assigned to them, they were required to purify themselves following the sacrifice. This was an issue of setting a person or thing apart for a sacred task, rooted in the original sanctification of Aaron, his sons, and their priestly line (Exodus 29; Leviticus 8:1-6).

**6c. And prepare your brethren, that they may do according to the word of the LORD by the hand of Moses.**

The first four words in this partial verse translate an uncertainty in the original Hebrew text. This kind of uncertainty is known as a textual variant. Some manuscripts have wording that translates as what the Levites were to do to prepare their *brethren*; others have wording that translates the text as directives for preparing the sacrificial Passover lamb for those fellow Judeans.

Turning to the ancient Greek translation of the Old Testament (the Septuagint) doesn’t help. The English translation of this partial verse contains the phrase, “Prepare *it* for your brethren, to do according to the word of the Lord, by the hand of Moses.” The italicized nature of the word *it* indicates that that word is not present in the text being translated from the Septuagint. Instead, the translators have added the word *it* for smooth reading. Both ideas—of preparing fellow Judeans and preparing Passover lambs for those Judeans—are present elsewhere in the text, so there’s no new information added either way.

In Exodus 12:1-11, 21 and Deuteronomy 16:1-

**How to Say It**

Assyrian	Uh-sear-e-un.
Corinthians	Ko-rin-thee-unz ( <i>th</i> as in <i>thin</i> ).
Deuteronomy	Due-ter-ahn-uh-me.
Ezra	Ez-ruh.
Hezekiah	Hez-ih-kye-uh.
Hilkiah	Hill-kye-uh.
Jerusalem	Juh-roo-suh-lem.
Josiah	Jo-sigh-uh.
Judeans	Joo-dee-unz.
Levites	Lee-vites.
Septuagint	Sep-too-ih-jent.
Solomon	Sol-o-mun.

8, the people sacrificed their own lambs. In Hezekiah's Passover, however, it seems that Levites and lay people killed Passover lambs (2 Chronicles 30:13-17). However, in Josiah's Passover, there is no indication of anyone other than priests and Levites as having slain the Passover lambs.

## II. Celebration

(2 Chronicles 35:16-19)

### A. By an Order (v. 16)

**16a. So all the service of the LORD was prepared the same day, to keep the passover.**

This verse sums up the various preparatory details of 2 Chronicles 35:7-15. All told, at least 41,400 animals were available for sacrifice in Josiah's Passover (2 Chronicles 35:7-9). This was more than twice the number for Hezekiah's Passover earlier (30:24). A considerable number of animals were needed to feed all the people since the celebration involved meals (Exodus 12:11; Matthew 26:17; etc.).

**16b. And to offer burnt offerings upon the altar of the LORD, according to the commandment of king Josiah.**

The Old Testament lists four types of blood sacrifices: the burnt, peace, sin, and guilt offerings. These are discussed throughout the book of Leviticus. Two of those four types are present here. The Passover animal sacrifice was a peace offering. One thing that distinguished this type from *burnt offerings* was that meat was available to eat from peace offerings, but not from burnt offerings (Leviticus 1:9; 7:15, 34-36; 9:3, 7). Bulls were often used for burnt offerings, and the whole animal was burned up to God. It was a dedicatory offering where the worshipper gave God everything and expressed total commitment.

### B. With a Feast (v. 17)

**17. And the children of Israel that were present kept the passover at that time, and the feast of unleavened bread seven days.**

The meals continued throughout the week that followed as part of *the feast of unleavened bread* (Exodus 12:15-20; 2 Chronicles 30:21; 35:17). Technically, this feast is distinct from Passover. But

since the two occur right next to each other on the Jewish calendar, they are treated as a single celebration, practically speaking (compare Luke 22:1).

During the first Passover celebration (Exodus 12:1-30, 43-51), the Israelites were prepared to flee from Egypt. Hence, they consumed the Passover meal hastily. As a result, they ate unleavened bread—bread without yeast—because there was no time to allow the bread to rise.

### What Do You Think?

How might you develop a plan to set aside seven consecutive days to take up a spiritual practice that would strengthen your faith in God?

### Digging Deeper

How could you invite others from your class or congregation to participate in the practices over these seven days?

### C. In Comparison (vv. 18-19)

**18a. And there was no passover like to that kept in Israel from the days of Samuel the prophet; neither did all the kings of Israel keep such a passover as Josiah kept.**

*Samuel*, considered the last of the judges and the first of the prophets, served as a judge from 1067 to 1043 BC (1 Samuel 7-9). Thus, there had not been *such a passover as Josiah kept* for over 400 years! It dwarfed Hezekiah's Passover (see commentary on 2 Chronicles 34:16a, above). It probably did so as well regarding the first Passover after return from exile, some 106 years later (Ezra 6:19-22). No figures for the number of animals sacrificed are given for the latter, but comparing numbers at two dedications of the temple may be insightful: Solomon's dedication of the first temple involved some 142,000 animals (2 Chronicles 7:5), while the dedication of the second (rebuilt) temple involved a little over 700 (Ezra 6:17)—a magnitude comparison of about 200-to-1!

**18b. And the priests, and the Levites, and all Judah and Israel that were present, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem.**

When we read that the attendees included *all Judah and Israel*, we remember that those two des-



ignations identify the southern kingdom of two tribes and the northern kingdom of 10 tribes. Many members of the latter had been exiled 100 years earlier (see Lesson Context). Thus *all . . . Israel* would refer to the few who had not been taken.

### What Do You Think?

How can your class commemorate and celebrate God's work and faithfulness?

### Digging Deeper

Who will your class select to spearhead the planning of such a celebration?

## Regarding Influencers

A rare celebration attracted the world's attention in 2022. It was the Platinum Jubilee of Queen Elizabeth II (lived 1926–2022), marking 70 years of her reign. Four months of celebrations all over Britain and the Commonwealth honored the queen. Parades, speeches, and banquets were televised as local communities conducted their own recognitions. Accolades included recognition for her service during World War II, when she, as Princess Elizabeth, trained as a driver and mechanic at age 19.

No king of ancient Israel or Judah even came close to reigning for 70 years! Josiah himself reigned less than half that long. But what an influence that young king had, beginning at age 16 (2 Chronicles 35:1-3)! His godly initiatives are evident in every episode of his attempts to bring Judah back into compliance with God's expectations. His reinstatement of the Passover celebration at age 26 surely was a high-water mark for this youthful influencer.

But you're not a king or a queen? Ah, but you are—in whatever area of expertise you're best at. How can you be an influencer for Christ in that area? —A. W.

### 19. In the eighteenth year of the reign of Josiah was this passover kept.

This note serves as a bookend to 2 Chronicles 35:1. The abbreviated account in 2 Kings 23:24 adds this assessment:

Moreover the workers with familiar spirits, and the wizards, and the images, and the idols, and

all the abominations that were spied in the land of Judah and in Jerusalem, did Josiah put away, that he might perform the words of the law which were written in the book that Hilkiyah the priest found in the house of the Lord.

## Conclusion

### A. Embracing Rituals

When Josiah kept the Passover ritual, he became a model of ritual faithfulness that originated in his heart. God has instituted certain rituals in the new covenant. At least two come immediately to mind: baptism and the Lord's Supper. Baptism is a ritual reenactment of Christ's burial and resurrection (Romans 6:3-4; Colossians 2:12). The Lord's Supper reenacts the Passover meal that Jesus shared with His followers the night He was betrayed (Matthew 26:17-29; Mark 14:12-26; Luke 22:7-23). The meal remembers Christ's sacrifice and death and focuses our attention and hope on His future return (1 Corinthians 5:7-8; 11:23-26).

These rituals invite us to participate in God's mission and God's story of redemptive history. They are touchstones of continuity and stability. They teach and remind, and God delights in our obedience as we seek Him through what He has commanded.

### What Do You Think?

In what ways is the lesson's Scripture text applicable to modern audiences?

### Digging Deeper

What takeaways from this lesson are most challenging to you?

### B. Prayer

Heavenly Father, rekindle our appreciation for Your rituals! Focus our hearts and minds when we observe these rituals so that we might remember Your salvation and recommit our lives to You. Show us how we can observe these rituals of worship without becoming ritualistic. We pray in the name of Jesus. Amen.

### C. Thought to Remember

Embrace God's rituals.

# Involvement Learning

Enhance your lesson with KJV Bible Student (from your curriculum supplier) and the reproducible activity page (at [www.standardlesson.com](http://www.standardlesson.com) or in the back of the KJV Standard Lesson Commentary Deluxe Edition).

## Into the Lesson

Ask volunteers to share their favorite memories of a childhood holiday tradition and why that memory is special. Then, ask other volunteers to think of a family holiday tradition that began when they were adults. What made that memory special? Talk as a group about how traditions and rituals change as we get older. How do age and tradition change the importance of those celebrations?

*Alternative.* Distribute copies of the “Celebrations Big and Small” exercise from the activity page, which you can download. After learners take no more than one minute to fill in the three blanks, form participants into triads to answer the two questions below their entries.

Transition to the next part of the lesson by saying, “Let’s look at a Passover celebration that took place under King Josiah and think about how to apply lessons from it to life today.”

## Into the Word

Have a volunteer read 2 Chronicles 35:1-6 aloud. Then have another volunteer do the same with 35:16-19. Then form class members into two groups, no more than four per group (large classes can create duplicate groups). Distribute handouts (you create) with the information that follows:

**Preparation Group.** Compare and contrast Josiah’s preparations for Passover in 2 Chronicles 35:1-6, 16-21 with the original instructions in Exodus 12:1-30 and Numbers 9:1-14; 28:16-24. What steps, if any, did King Josiah miss in his Passover preparations? Which steps, if any, do we simply lack information about either way?

**Consecration Group.** Determine what is being “consecrated” as you compare and contrast 2 Chronicles 35:1-6, 16-21 with Leviticus 11:44; 20:7; 2 Chronicles 29:34; 30:2-3, 15; Ezekiel 44:19; 46:20.

After allowing time to formulate answers, reconvene for a whole-class discussion. Evaluate

those answers and discuss how Josiah’s renewal of the Passover observance was (or was not) significant for Israel’s ongoing relationship with God at that point. (*Option.* Conduct a role-play debate with one side proposing that King Josiah’s Passover was significant in that regard, and the other side denying that it was; plan this in advance, giving both sides a copy of the Lesson Context.)

## Into Life

Write on the board as headers of two columns each of these two phrases:

*Preparation Today | Consecration Today*

Then, to the left, write the words *Physical / Spiritual* as identifiers of two rows, one each. The overall result will be four intersections of the two columns and two rows. These four intersections naturally suggest four questions:

- 1—What physical preparation can I initiate for worship and kingdom service?
- 2—What spiritual preparation can I initiate for worship and kingdom service?
- 3—What physical consecration can I initiate for worship and kingdom service?
- 4—What spiritual consecration can I initiate for worship and kingdom service?

Have the grid and the four questions ready on handouts (you prepare) to distribute to small groups. Depending on the time available, you can have all groups work on all four questions; each group can work on just one question or some other combination. Reconvene the class and ask volunteers to share results. Conclude class time by distributing blank index cards and allowing one minute of silence for learners to pick one idea from each intersection for revitalizing his or her own devotional practices.

*Option.* Distribute copies of the “Word Search” exercise from the activity page as a take-home.

# Moses and Miriam

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## Lead in Praise

Devotional Reading: Psalm 104:1-9  
Background Scripture: Exodus 14:21-31; 15:1-21

Exodus 15:1-3, 11-13,  
17-18, 20-21

1 Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the LORD, and spake, saying, I will sing unto the LORD, for he hath triumphed gloriously: The horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea.

2 The LORD is my strength and song, And he is become my salvation: He is my God, and I will prepare him an habitation; My father's God, and I will exalt him.

3 The LORD is a man of war: the LORD is his name.

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11 Who is like unto thee, O LORD, among the gods? Who is like thee, glorious in holiness, Fearful in praises, doing wonders?

12 Thou stretchedst out thy right hand, The earth swallowed them.

13 Thou in thy mercy hast led forth the people which thou hast redeemed: Thou hast

guided them in thy strength unto thy holy habitation.

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17 Thou shalt bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of thine inheritance, In the place, O LORD, which thou hast made for thee to dwell in, In the Sanctuary, O Lord, which thy hands have established.

18 The LORD shall reign for ever and ever.

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20 And Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand; and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances.

21 And Miriam answered them, Sing ye to the LORD, for he hath triumphed gloriously; The horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea.

## Key Text

*Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand; and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances. —Exodus 15:20*

# Worship in the Covenant Community

## Unit 1: Leaders Set Worship Example

Lessons 1–5

### Lesson Aims

After participating in this lesson, each learner will be able to:

1. List God's attributes as sung by Moses and Miriam.
2. Trace the historical elements within Moses' and Miriam's celebratory songs of praise.
3. Write and sing a song of praise to God for His character and deliverance of His people.

### Lesson Outline

#### Introduction

- A. The Power of Song
- B. Lesson Context

#### I. The Song Introduced (Exodus 15:1-3)

- A. Recipient (v. 1)
- B. Reason (vv. 2-3)

#### II. The Song Continued

(Exodus 15:11-13, 17-18, 20-21)

- A. The Lord's Guidance (vv. 11-13)
- B. The People's Inheritance (vv. 17-18)  
*Six Seedlings*
- C. The Women's Response (vv. 20-21)  
*Joyful Dance*

#### Conclusion

- A. Sing to the Lord
- B. Prayer
- C. Thought to Remember

## Introduction

### A. The Power of Song

The power of song can transcend ethnic and national boundaries. In every country and every people group, songs are significant. According to many experts, music and singing can improve a person's sleep, mood, and cognitive performance while decreasing the effects of stress. Not only is it fun to sing along to your favorite song, but it might also contribute to a healthy lifestyle!

Songs can also improve a person's *spiritual* health. Through songs of worship, we learn the truths about God and strengthen our faith in Him. Further, such praises have the power to unite the people. Today's lesson consists of an ancient song that united the Old Testament people of God by remembering His work.

### B. Lesson Context

The song in today's lesson comes from the book of Exodus, which is part of the Pentateuch, another name for the first five books of the Old Testament. These books have been traditionally attributed to Moses because he was well-educated (Acts 7:22) and skilled at detailed record-keeping (examples: Exodus 17:14; 24:4; Numbers 33:2).

The events of the exodus are traditionally dated to 1447 BC. Long before then, God had promised the land of Canaan to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Genesis 13:14-15; 26:3; 28:13). The fulfillment of the promise seemed to be in jeopardy when Jacob and his family moved to Egypt because of a famine. Still, God worked through Joseph, a son of Jacob, so that the family could have all it needed during the years of famine (41:53-54).

Over the centuries, the Israelites witnessed significant leadership changes in Egypt. Eventually, there came a new king to whom Joseph's reputation meant nothing (Exodus 1:8). The original favor Jacob (Israel) and his sons experienced changed into servitude and oppression. After the Israelites spent 430 years in Egypt (12:40-41), God was ready to act to fulfill the promises (2:23-25).

It was during this time that Moses was born. It is well-known that a princess of Egypt adopted him, but he had to flee Egypt at age 40 after kill-

ing an Egyptian (Exodus 2; see Acts 7:23). Forty years later, Moses encountered the Lord at Sinai. God repeated the promise given to Moses' ancestors and called him to lead the enslaved Israelites away from Egypt (Exodus 3:8). God worked through Moses and Aaron (Moses' brother) to bring about ten plagues that devastated Egypt.

At that point, Pharaoh expelled the Israelites from Egypt (Exodus 12:31-33). It had been 430 years to the day since Jacob and his family entered Egypt (12:40-41). As God's people left Egypt, they were reminded again that their destination was Canaan (13:5, 11).

Pharaoh, however, changed his mind and decided to bring his labor force back (Exodus 14:5-8). The Egyptians pursued Israel to the edge of the Red Sea. It seemed that the Israelites were blocked by the sea, and victory for the Egyptians was assured, but God had other plans.

The Israelites crossed the Red Sea safely after the waters parted, but the Egyptians drowned when they tried to follow. The God of Israel was superior to any of the fictitious gods of Pharaoh! The crossing of the Red Sea was pivotal in the history of ancient Israel. The enslaved Israelites were free, beyond the reach of Pharaoh. Moses and the people responded with joyous singing (Exodus 15:1-21).

The first song in the history of this new nation is a song of rejoicing because of the victory that the Lord has obtained for the people. We note a minor difficulty in finding an appropriate designation for this song. Some students of the song have created designations for this song. These designations include "A Song of the Sea" (compare Exodus 15:1, 4-5, 8, 10), "A Song of Moses and Miriam" (compare 15:20-21), or "A Song of Moses and Israel" (compare 15:1). Another song designated as "A Song of Moses" can be found in Deuteronomy 32 (see the introduction in Deuteronomy 31:30).

## I. The Song Introduced

(Exodus 15:1-3)

### A. Recipient (v. 1)

**1. Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the LORD, and spake, saying, I will sing unto the LORD, for he hath tri-**

**umphed gloriously. The horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea.**

The use of the English word *Lord* with small caps indicates that the underlying Hebrew term reflects God's self-designation as revealed to Moses (Exodus 3:14). Its use in this verse highlights that the song is directed to none other than the only true and great God who had previously revealed himself to Moses.

The song praises the Lord for the ways He *triumphed* over Pharaoh and his army and thereby received honor (see Exodus 14:17-18). The *horse* and *rider* refer to parts of Pharaoh's army. Although his forces were considered all-powerful in their day, they paled in comparison to the power of the Lord (Isaiah 43:16-17).

The Lord's power was on display by casting the Egyptian armies *into* the waters of *the sea*. Through this powerful act, the Lord eliminated the most powerful military force of that era and showcased His unparalleled greatness (see Exodus 18:9-11). As a result, the enemy was incapable of a return attack on the Israelites.

### What Do You Think?

How would you respond to the claim that this verse reveals God's lack of care for the suffering of animals?

### Digging Deeper

How might Nehemiah 9:6; Psalm 36:6; Isaiah 11:6-9; and Matthew 6:25-26; 10:29 inform your response?

## B. Reason (vv. 2-3)

**2a. The LORD is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation.**

This half-verse reflects the Israelites' response to the powerful work of *the Lord*. The people were pursued by the armies of Pharaoh (Exodus 14:23); the strength of the Israelites was inadequate to save themselves. Liberation came not through their own power but by the *strength* of the Lord (compare Psalm 28:8). Before crossing the Red Sea, Moses commanded the people to "stand still" and "see the *salvation* of the Lord" (Exodus 14:13-14). Psalm 118:14 and Isaiah 12:2

quote this half-verse as the writers look back to the miraculous strength of the Lord in bringing salvation to the people.

**2b. He is my God, and I will prepare him an habitation; my father's God, and I will exalt him.**

The song removed any possibility of misidentifying the *God* of Moses' ancestors; He is the single objective of the Israelites' worship. For centuries, the people would *exalt* God for what He had done for them in the exodus (see Psalm 22:3-5, lesson 7).

**3. The LORD is a man of war: the LORD is his name.**

The Israelites lived in a hostile world. They had been pursued by the nation that had enslaved them. Then, just weeks after the events of this song, the Israelites faced their first actual military conflict, against the Amalekites (Exodus 17:8-16).

The Old Testament describes the Lord as a divine *man of war* who would fight for His people (example: Isaiah 42:13; compare: Deuteronomy 3:22; Nehemiah 4:20; Zechariah 14:3). On some occasions, the Lord joined in battle with the Israelites (example: Deuteronomy 20:1-4). But at other times, the Lord went to war alone (example: Exodus 14:14). The Lord's *name* as a divine warrior is expressed later in the Old Testament by the phrase "Lord of hosts," with *hosts* referring to angelic armies (examples: 1 Samuel 17:45; Isaiah 13:4). It would have been easy for the Israelites to depend on their power or the power of other nations. Instead, the people of Israel were to trust that just as the Lord protected them and brought them out of Egypt, the Lord would continue to do so.

## How to Say It

Amalekites	<i>Am-uh-leh-kites</i> or <i>Uh-mal-ih-kites.</i>
Korah	<i>Ko-rah.</i>
Miriam	<i>Meer-ee-um.</i>
Moriah	<i>Mo-rye-uh.</i>
Pentateuch	<i>Pen-ta-teuk.</i>
Pharaoh	<i>Fair-o</i> or <i>Fay-roe.</i>
Zion	<i>Zi-un.</i>

The New Testament contains similar imagery regarding conflict and the power of the Lord. God has not called His people to fight battles against flesh and blood, but against "principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, [and] against spiritual wickedness" (Ephesians 6:12). Ultimately, God's people have been promised that the enemies of God, and even death itself, will someday be destroyed (1 Corinthians 15:23-28; Revelation 20:6-10, 14-15; 21:4).

### What Do You Think?

In what situations is it comforting for you to think of God as a "man of war" (Exodus 15:3)?

### Digging Deeper

In what situations is it a comfort to think of the Messiah as the "prince of Peace" (Isaiah 9:6)? Are these two designations contradictory? Why or why not?

## II. The Song Continued

(Exodus 15:11-13, 17-18, 20-21)

### A. The Lord's Guidance (vv. 11-13)

**11. Who is like unto thee, O LORD, among the gods? Who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?**

This verse contains two rhetorical questions that highlight the uniqueness of God. The Egyptians worshipped hundreds of gods and goddesses. However, those "gods" were fictitious and could not provide protection. By asking *who is like unto thee, O Lord, among the gods?* Moses emphasized the Lord's superiority over these pagan gods. This was a question for which Moses knew the answer: there is none like the Lord God (compare 1 Samuel 2:2; Isaiah 45:5; Jeremiah 10:6).

The second question builds on the first by distinguishing the ways that the Lord is incomparable to all other "gods." The *holiness* of the Lord describes His moral purity. The Lord God is *glorious* and perfect in every way (Deuteronomy 32:4; 2 Samuel 22:31; Matthew 5:48). The Lord is unique regarding His holiness (1 Samuel 2:2; Psalm 77:13).

Because the Lord is holy, His people are com-

manded to have lives of holiness (Leviticus 11:44-45; 1 Peter 1:15-16). For humans to be *fearful in praises* implies utmost respect and honor for the Lord and a willingness to follow His commands (example: Deuteronomy 10:12, 20-21).

The *wonders* of the Lord's work were displayed in His power to lead the Israelites safely across the sea on dry ground (compare Psalm 66:5-6). Even in Heaven is the Lord worshipped for His holy and mighty acts (see Revelation 15:4-5).

### What Do You Think?

What are some "gods" worshipped by our culture, and in what ways is God more wondrous than those "gods"?

### Digging Deeper

How will you celebrate the wonderful and wondrous ways God has worked?

## 12. Thou stretchedst out thy right hand, the earth swallowed them.

In biblical times, the right hand or being located at a person's right hand conveyed blessing (example: Genesis 48:17-20), demonstrated prestige (examples: 1 Kings 2:19; Matthew 22:44 [quoting Psalm 110:1]), or revealed power (example: Psalms 20:6; 98:1).

This verse uses a literary device called *anthropomorphism*, the practice of assigning human attributes to God (examples: Leviticus 20:6; Numbers 6:25-26; Deuteronomy 11:12). God does not have a physical body (John 4:24). The song uses this literary device to describe how the Lord conveys His power through His outstretched *right hand* (compare: Psalms 17:7; 138:7). The expression is used twice in this song, once here and in Exodus 15:6 (not in this week's lesson text). In this case, it celebrates God's victory over the Egyptians on Israel's behalf (Exodus 14:21-30).

Given that the song celebrates that *the earth swallowed them*, this verse also seems to point to future events. The Egyptian army was swallowed up by the sea, after all. Not long after the events of this song, Israel would see Korah and 250 rebels swallowed up when "the earth opened her mouth" (Numbers 16:32). In that instance, as when the sea swallowed the Egyptians, it was a

sign of God's judgment on wickedness and delivering His people.

## 13. Thou in thy mercy hast led forth the people which thou hast redeemed. Thou hast guided them in thy strength unto thy holy habitation.

When we think about provision, we might consider material things like food and shelter. While it is true that God provided these things for the Israelites, their greatest need was by no means material. The Israelites had experienced enslavement, and their greatest need was redemption. The Lord demonstrated *mercy* by noticing their suffering and promising deliverance (Exodus 3:7-8). The concept of redemption consists of God's taking back or buying back what is rightfully His. God redeemed the people and took them back as people of His own (6:6-7). No longer were the people the possession of Pharaoh; instead, they would be the unique people of God.

After redeeming the people, the Lord led them to a *holy habitation*. The underlying Hebrew word translated *habitation* elsewhere refers to the tabernacle (2 Samuel 15:25), the city of Jerusalem (example: Isaiah 33:20), or a more general descriptor for the place of the Lord (example: Jeremiah 25:30). God was leading the people to the promised land of Canaan, the land where He would dwell with them (Genesis 17:8). The New Testament presents Christ as our redeemer, paying the price to purchase us from the slavery of sin (1 Corinthians 6:20; Galatians 3:13; 1 Timothy 2:5-6). God continues to lead His people to the ultimate holy dwelling beyond the physical realm (John 14:1-3; Hebrews 11:10). Thus, the saints in Heaven "sing the song of Moses . . . and the song of the Lamb" at their final destination (Revelation 15:3).

### What Do You Think?

In what ways would (or should) your life change if you spent more time reflecting on and emulating God's holiness?

### Digging Deeper

Which of these three texts spurs you most to start doing so today: Ephesians 1:4; Hebrews 12:14; 1 Peter 1:15-16?



Visual for Lesson 5. *Point to this visual and ask for examples of other ways that the Lord has been the source of salvation for His people.*

### **B. The People's Inheritance (vv. 17-18)**

**17. Thou shalt bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of thine inheritance, in the place, O LORD, which thou hast made for thee to dwell in, in the Sanctuary, O Lord, which thy hands have established.**

The Lord's leading to *bring* the Israelites into the promised land demonstrates His provision and the permanence of His care. The song acknowledges that the people's establishment in the land would come from the Lord's work to *plant them* and not because they made a name for themselves (compare 1 Chronicles 17:9-10; Psalms 44:2; 78:54-55; 80:8-11; contrast Isaiah 37:24-25). The land was an *inheritance* given to them by the Lord. It had been promised to Abram (Genesis 12:6-7) and confirmed to Moses (Exodus 6:2-4, 8). It would be the place of God's blessing to the people (Leviticus 20:24; Deuteronomy 8:7-8).

The land of Canaan is mountainous, unlike the flat, coastal region of Egypt where the Israelites had likely been enslaved. There are many mountains in Canaan, but the song probably refers to *the mountain Zion* (Psalm 2:6; etc.). Centuries after Moses, Solomon would build *the sanctuary* that is the temple on this mountain, also called Mount Moriah (2 Chronicles 3).

### **Six Seedlings**

Two cottonwood trees grew in the backyard of my childhood home. The trees released thou-

sands of cotton-like seeds that floated through the air like little white puffs each spring. Some seeds would take root when they came to rest in the yard. The seedlings did not remain in the ground for long because my dad usually mowed them down as they sprouted. My sister and I always pleaded with him to let the seedlings grow. He eventually succumbed to our request, guiding us to plant six seedlings in evenly spaced rows in the front yard.

The seedlings eventually took root and matured. My sister and I were photographed standing next to the trees each year. By the time we moved out, the trees were taller than the house. When I drive past that old house, I marvel at the size of those trees, deeply rooted and mature.

After leading the Israelites out of Egypt, the Lord planted them in a new land. He wanted them to take root in that land and flourish as His people. Are you following the Lord, becoming deeply rooted in God's plan for you? Are you "like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season" (Psalm 1:3)?  
—L. M. W.

### **18. The LORD shall reign for ever and ever.**

This verse repeats the song's central theme: *the Lord* is all-powerful and eternal in His *reign*. Unlike earthly rulers, the Lord's reign over His people will be forever (Psalms 45:6; 146:10; Revelation 11:15).

### **D. The Women's Response (vv. 20-21)**

**20-21. And Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand; and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances. And Miriam answered them, Sing ye to the LORD, for he hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea.**

This is the first explicit reference to *Miriam* in the Old Testament. It is possible that she was the sister who watched the "ark of bulrushes" that contained the baby Moses (Exodus 2:3-4). Miriam is also one of several women in Scripture who are designated as a prophet or *prophetess* (Judges 4:4; 2 Kings 22:14; Nehemiah 6:14; Isaiah 8:3; Luke 2:36; compare Micah 6:4). The



book of Numbers records an event that shows how her service in this role was somewhat of a mixed experience. In a misdirected way, she believed (accurately) that God had spoken through her (Numbers 12:2). This statement, however, came in a bout of rebellion against her brothers. As a result of her rebellion, she experienced leprosy as a punishment from God (12:10). However, she was restored following her brother's petition (12:11-15).

A *timbrel* is the equivalent of a modern-day tambourine or hand drum. It was customary in the ancient world for women to celebrate various occasions *with dances* and *timbrels* (example: Judges 11:34; compare Psalms 149:3; 150:4; Jeremiah 31:4).

The refrain of the women's song celebrated how the Lord cast Israel's foes *into the sea*. It is very similar to the beginning of Moses' song, which also focused on the mighty acts of the Lord to save the Israelites (see Exodus 15:1, above).

The implication may be that Miriam is the one who leads the other women in a type of antiphonal rendition. (That's when one group answers another.) In any case, their words are a final reminder of how the most powerful nation in the world at that time was no match for the God of Israel.

### What Do You Think?

What are some occasions that would be appropriate to label as "a time to dance" (Ecclesiastes 3:4)?

### Digging Deeper

Why did you, or did you not, include "a church worship service" as one of your responses?

## Joyful Dance

As a religion professor, my husband often took his students on field trips to observe various congregations and their worship services. Our young daughter and I often accompanied them to these services. One enthusiastic service stands out: the worship music was energetic, and the congregation moved and swayed to the music more than I had ever seen. During the service, a group of

women with tambourines gathered in a semicircle before the sanctuary and began dancing to the music. As they did so, I saw my two-year-old daughter joyfully dancing. I smiled at how she could confidently dance as an act of worship, just as the women at the front of the room did.

My mind flashed back to the story of Miriam and the Israelite women as I watched a modern-day version of that example play out. How will you honor and worship God for His great blessings? Can you incorporate worship practices that you typically have not utilized? —L. M. W.

## Conclusion

### A. Sing to the Lord

Singing helps diminish feelings of stress and anxiety by releasing "feel good" brain chemicals that alleviate pain. Singing also activates the portion of the brain associated with memorization—you can probably still sing the alphabet song!

Our songs of worship do these things and so much more. We sing in worship to the Lord because He is the source of our strength and salvation. Our worship also celebrates and remembers the Lord's goodness and faithfulness. The apostle Paul sang to the Lord in worship, even in imprisonment (Acts 16:25). "Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs" along with "singing and making melody in your heart" are marks of a life filled with God's Spirit (Ephesians 5:19; see Colossians 3:16). While there are specific situations when singing is not always appropriate (examples: Proverbs 25:20; Amos 5:23; 8:10; Ezekiel 26:13), the righteous people of God are called to sing praises to Him (Psalm 33:1-3). Sing to the Lord without hesitation!

### B. Prayer

Lord God, we thank You for the example of worship and song presented in Scripture. Help us be further attentive to Your Spirit so that we might sing to You in all situations—good or bad. In the name of Your Son, Jesus, we pray. Amen.

### C. Thought to Remember

The Lord has given us a reason to sing!

# Involvement Learning

Enhance your lesson with KJV Bible Student (from your curriculum supplier) and the reproducible activity page (at [www.standardlesson.com](http://www.standardlesson.com) or in the back of the KJV Standard Lesson Commentary Deluxe Edition).

## Into the Lesson

Divide the class into three groups, no more than four per group (large classes can create duplicate groups). Distribute a pen and a handout (you create) to each group with one of the following three song titles at the top: *Just As I Am, It Is Well with My Soul, Blessed Assurance*. Have groups write down the lyrics of the assigned song from memory as possible. After three minutes, have each group share what they wrote and compare their results to the lyrics.

Lead into Bible study by saying, “Songs can be a powerful tool for teaching because they can help reinforce important messages. Today’s lesson will study a song that taught the Israelites of God’s power and provision.”

## Into the Word

Ask a volunteer to read aloud Exodus 15:1-3, 11-13, 17-18, 20-21. Divide the class into three equal groups. Distribute handouts (you create) with the following questions for in-group discussion based on the lesson’s Scripture text.

**Actions of God Group.** 1—What are some examples from the song of God’s powerful actions? 2—What were the results of these displays of power? 3—How has God’s power been on display in our congregation? 4—What are some results of His displays of power?

**Provision of God Group.** 1—What are some examples from the song of God’s provision for the people? 2—What were the results of these displays of provision? 3—What instances of provision from God can you celebrate? 4—How has God’s provision been on display in our congregation?

**Attributes of God Group.** 1—What are some examples from the song that highlight God’s attributes? 2—How were these attributes on display to the Israelites? 3—What other attributes of God can you name? 4—How have you seen these on display in our congregation?

After five minutes, ask a volunteer from each group to share responses and ask them what the song reveals about God’s character. Write responses on the board. (Keep responses on the board until class concludes.)

*Alternative.* Distribute copies of the “Song of Moses and Miriam” exercise from the activity page, which you can download. Have learners work in pairs to complete as indicated.

*Option.* Divide learners into triads and ask a volunteer to read aloud Revelation 15:1-4. Say, “This song taught by Moses and Miriam will also be sung by the victorious saints in Heaven. What significant themes in the song can also be celebrated by these saints?” Allow three minutes for triads to discuss before asking for responses. (Possible responses: the exodus led by Moses formed a pattern for the deliverance brought by the Lamb; the enemies of the people of God will ultimately be destroyed; the people of God can celebrate their inheritance).

## Into Life

Point to the responses from the Into the Word activity written on the board, and say, “The song celebrated God’s character and deliverance. Today, we have the opportunity to celebrate the same.”

Form learners into groups of three. Give each group a large poster board along with markers and colored pencils. Instruct groups to write on their poster board some reasons for praising God for His character and deliverance. Then, ask groups to flip over the poster board and write a song of praise based on the reasons listed on the other side. (*Option.* Have groups use a sheet of printer paper instead of poster board.) After 10 minutes, have each group read or sing their song of praise.

*Alternative.* Distribute copies of the “My Song of Praise” activity from the activity page. Have learners complete the activity as a take-home. Tell learners that you will give volunteers time at the start of the next class to share their work.

# Prayers of Repentance and Confession

Devotional Reading: 2 Corinthians 7:5-11  
Background Scripture: Psalm 51; 2 Samuel 11

Psalm 51:1-4, 10-12, 15-17

1 Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions.

2 Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.

3 For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me.

4 Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest.

10 Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.

11 Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me.

12 Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit.



15 O Lord, open thou my lips; and my mouth shall shew forth thy praise.

16 For thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give it: thou delightest not in burnt offering.

17 The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.

## Key Text

*Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. —Psalm 51:10*

# Worship in the Covenant Community

## Unit 2: Songs of the Old Testament

Lessons 6–9

### Lesson Aims

After participating in this lesson, each learner will be able to:

1. Summarize the circumstances that led King David to write Psalm 51.
2. Interpret Psalm 51 through the lens of King David's experience of repentance and forgiveness.
3. Confess and repent of personal and corporate sins.

### Lesson Outline

#### Introduction

- A. The Need for Confession
- B. Lesson Context

#### I. Confession (Psalm 51:1-4)

- A. Needing Mercy (vv. 1-2)
- B. Acknowledging Sin (vv. 3-4)  
*Stains Removed*

#### II. Restoration (Psalm 51:10-12)

- A. Clean My Heart (v. 10)
- B. Grant Your Presence (vv. 11-12)  
*Sustained With Joy*

#### III. Praise (Psalm 51:15-17)

- A. From My Lips (v. 15)
- B. From a Broken Heart (vv. 16-17)

#### Conclusion

- A. The Power of Confession
- B. Prayer
- C. Thought to Remember

## Introduction

### A. The Need for Confession

In second grade, my class held an end-of-the-year pizza party. Our teachers told us that there was just enough pizza for every student to have one—and only one—slice. As the party ended, I snuck the last slice and ate it without telling anyone. What I didn't know was that another student hadn't yet eaten. So, when that boy came to get his slice of pizza, there was none left for him.

When our teacher asked who had taken an extra slice, I kept my mouth shut. As the silence grew, I saw the sadness on the other boy's face. Overcome with guilt, I raised my hand and confessed what I had done. I apologized to the other student, the teacher, and the whole class. I was worried that they all would be upset with me. Instead, the boy hugged me and told me that he forgave me. My teacher encouraged me by telling me she was proud of my honesty. My relationship with my teacher and classmates was restored when I confessed my wrongdoing.

Although that experience was trivial, it taught me an important lesson about the need for confession and repentance. Before we can have forgiveness and healing, we need an awareness of our sins and an admission of our wrongdoing. Today's psalm gives us an example of such.

### B. Lesson Context

Today's lesson comes from Psalm 51, a lament psalm. This type of psalm focuses on the psalmist's remorse, confession of sin, and request for forgiveness (compare Psalms 6, 32, 38, etc.). The psalm's superscription attributes authorship to King David.

Psalm 51 was composed after a particularly heinous and tragic series of events in his life, as the superscription notes. The psalm endures as a model for confession, restoration, and praise.

These events are recounted in 2 Samuel 11–12 and occurred while David was king (1010–970 BC). While David stood on the roof of his palace, he saw a woman bathing (2 Samuel 11:2-3). This woman was Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah, one of David's fighting men. David sent for her,

slept with her, and made her pregnant (11:4-5). To conceal his actions, David tried to convince Uriah to sleep with her so that Uriah would think he caused his wife's pregnancy (11:6-13). However, David's schemes failed, and Uriah refused to sleep with his wife. As a result, the king resorted to having Uriah killed in battle (11:7) and marrying the now-widowed woman (11:27a). David's sinful actions "displeased the Lord" (11:27b).

Therefore, the Lord sent the prophet Nathan to convict David of his sin. Rather than blatantly expose the king's sin, Nathan used a parable—a short story—to uncover it. This parable presented two characters: a poor man who owned a beloved lamb and a rich man who owned many flocks of sheep. The parable described how the rich man took the poor man's precious lamb, killed it, and prepared it as a meal for the traveler (2 Samuel 12:1-4). The rich man's unjust treatment of the poor man infuriated David (12:5-6).

Nathan then revealed the parable's point: King David was like that rich man (2 Samuel 12:7). Although the king was exceedingly wealthy and powerful, he took that which was not his to take; he "killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and hast taken his wife" (12:9). Upon hearing Nathan's words and being convicted of his sin, David confessed of his wrongdoing and proclaimed, "I have sinned against the Lord" (12:13).

## I. Confession

(Psalm 51:1-4)

### A. Needing Mercy (vv. 1-2)

**1. Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions.**

The Hebrew word translated in this verse as *lovingkindness* occurs over 200 times in the Old Testament, with varying English translations. It is sometimes translated as "mercy" (examples: Psalm 33:18, 22), "merciful kindness" (examples: Psalms 117:2; 119:76), or "goodness" (examples: Exodus 34:6; Psalm 107:8). The word generally describes God's faithfulness to His people. An aspect of God's mercy is demonstrated in His response to

sin (see Numbers 14:18-19; Daniel 9:9; Ephesians 2:4-5).

The word picture used by David is that of a ledger used by the Lord to record sins. To *blot out* something from that ledger would be to remove it entirely (compare Psalm 69:28). Centuries after David, God identified himself to the prophet Isaiah as the one who would blot out and no longer remember the sins of His people (Isaiah 43:25).

*Transgressions* are actions that willfully break God's law. The underlying Hebrew word translated *transgressions* is elsewhere translated as "sins" (examples: Proverbs 10:19; 28:13). David acknowledged that he had broken God's law by his actions with Bathsheba and against Uriah. David also knew that God is full of *mercy* (2 Samuel 24:14) and never-failing compassion (compare Lamentations 3:22). In his sorrow and remorse, David requested that God show mercy and demonstrate forgiveness by removing all records of his sins (compare Exodus 34:6; Micah 7:18-20).

### What Do You Think?

How would you explain God's lovingkindness and tender mercies to someone who thinks God is harsh and unloving?

### Digging Deeper

What Scripture texts come to mind to help your explanation (example: Psalm 103)?

**2. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.**

This verse demonstrates *parallelism*, a rhetorical device frequently found in Hebrew poetry. It occurs when a line of poetry uses words or phrases that are different but synonymous. The repetition emphasizes the writer's point. In Psalm 51:1-2, parallelism is seen in the use of the words *blot out*, *wash*, and *cleanse*.

David's transgressions were like a stain on a garment that needed washing. His request, *wash me thoroughly*, reveals his knowledge of the depth of his sinfulness and understanding that only God could remove the stain of sin.

God promised to cleanse His people from their sins (Ezekiel 36:25). In response, God's people

should confess their iniquities (Jeremiah 33:8) and commit to lives free from wrongdoing (Isaiah 1:16).

Of the dozens of uses of the underlying Hebrew word for *cleanse*, most refer to the ceremonial cleansing required by the Law of Moses (examples: Leviticus 14; Numbers 8:7). God requires that His people live pure and holy lives, free from *sin*. By asking to be cleansed from *sin*, David sought to be made clean before God (also Psalm 51:7, not in our printed text).

## B. Acknowledging Sin (vv. 3-4)

### 3. For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me.

David could ask to be cleansed from sin because he knew the sins he had committed. For a person to *acknowledge* sin can be painful, but it must happen (compare Isaiah 59:12; Psalms 38:18; 40:12; contrast 1 Samuel 15:20-25). Awareness of sin must occur prior to personal conviction, which is required for true repentance and mercy (Proverbs 28:13; 1 John 1:9). David knew the extent of his *sin* (2 Samuel 12:13; compare Psalm 32:3-5). His admission of that fact to himself was his first step to confessing to God and receiving forgiveness.

More parallelism is displayed in this verse between the words *transgressions* and *sin*. We see this identical pair of terms stated in Psalm 32:5, another psalm by David.

#### What Do You Think?

What steps can a believer take to be attentive to the Spirit's conviction regarding his or her sin?

#### Digging Deeper

What things prevent us from hearing the Spirit's leading in this regard?

## Stains Removed

The house we lived in when my children were little had white carpets. I did not prefer this flooring, especially in a home with young children and a dog. Replacing it would have cost too much for us, so it stayed. Almost daily, something spilled on that beautiful white carpet. Dirt, grass, and mulberry juice from the mulberry tree in our

yard were frequent culprits. Every day was a constant battle to keep the carpet clean—a struggle I repeatedly lost.

Eventually, I hired a carpet-cleaning service. After seeing the filthy carpet, the technician frowned with discouragement. "It's okay if you can't get the stains out," I told him. "I know it's bad. Just get it clean." He agreed he would do his best. After some hours, he revealed the results of his labor: pristine, stainless carpets that looked new!

Sin has left its mark on us; our sins are like stains we can't remove. Before God can cleanse us from our sins, we need to acknowledge the presence of sin and repent. David realized that he had sinned and came before God to request cleansing. God has promised to make us clean, but we must go before Him with a repentant heart. What prevents you from coming to God today with a heart of repentance? —L. M. W.

### 4a. Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight.

Our sins can harm others. And yet, sin is ultimately a failure to follow the commands of a holy and righteous God. Therefore, sin is ultimately directed against God (see Genesis 39:9). This half-verse echoes David's statement of confession after he had been convicted of his sin: "I have sinned *against* the Lord" (2 Samuel 12:13).

The phrase *done this evil in thy sight* reflects the statement made by Nathan to highlight David's sin (2 Samuel 12:9). Because of God's holiness, He cannot tolerate the sight of evil (Deuteronomy 4:25; Habakkuk 1:13). God sees the actions of all people (Psalm 11:4-5), even those done in private (Hebrews 4:13). David acknowledged the severity of his sin. Not only was he aware of his wrongdoing, but he was also aware of God's knowledge of that sin.

### 4b. That thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest.

Some psalms describe God as an all-powerful and all-knowing judge who, in His righteousness, will judge the behavior of His people (examples: Psalms 96:13; 98:9). Because all sin is ultimately directed against God, His judgment against it is *justified*. David knew this and was prepared to

accept the consequences of his actions. The apostle Paul quoted this half-verse in Romans 3:4 to make the point that God is always righteous and correct in His judgment of sin.

## II. Restoration

(Psalm 51:10-12)

### A. Clean My Heart (v. 10)

**10. Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.**

This verse continues a turn for David that began in Psalm 51:7 (not in today's print passage). The turn is from his confession of sin to his request for a renewed relationship. David acknowledged that only *God* could clean his heart from sin. As such, David's prayer suggests an important insight regarding the state of humanity: we are incapable of having pure hearts and living completely righteous on our own (compare Proverbs 20:9; Romans 3:10-12 [quoting Psalms 14:1-3; 53:1-3 and Ecclesiastes 7:20]; 1 John 1:10). Only God, through His mercy, can give people a *clean heart* and a *right spirit* when they turn to Him (Ezekiel 18:31-32; 36:25-27; 1 Timothy 1:5; Titus 3:5). Only after God has provided this spiritual renewal can people then follow Him with obedience and love (Ephesians 4:20-23).

### B. Grant Your Presence (vv. 11-12)

**11. Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me.**

Under the covenant of Sinai, obedience to God's commands was a condition for Him to continue to dwell with the people (Exodus 29:42-46; contrast Ezekiel 10:18). Those who did not keep those commandments would be removed from the community and, thereby, the presence of God (examples: Genesis 17:14; Deuteronomy 17:1-5). David had previously admitted that he had disobeyed God. In this verse are his requests that result from that wrongdoing. He was fearful that he might suffer the loss of God's *presence* as a result (compare Isaiah 59:2).

This verse is only one of three verses in the Old Testament that use the title *holy spirit*, the others being Isaiah 63:10-11; compare "his [God's] spirit" in Psalm 106:33. During the Old Testa-



Visual for Lesson 6. Allow one minute for silent prayer on this request after discussing the commentary associated with verse 10.

ment era, the presence of God's Spirit came upon certain people to empower them for a particular purpose (examples: Numbers 11:16-17; 1 Samuel 10:6; Micah 3:8). These rare instances prefigure the indwelling of the Holy Spirit that blesses all Christians today (Romans 8:9-11; 2 Timothy 1:14). However, through our sin, we risk deadening our attentiveness to the Spirit's influence. The apostle Paul warns strongly about the ways we might "grieve" (Ephesians 4:30) or "quench" (1 Thessalonians 5:19) the Spirit.

David had received "the Spirit of the Lord" after being anointed by Samuel (1 Samuel 16:13). The request that God *take not thy holy spirit from* David reflects that past experience. After David's predecessor, Saul, had sinned, "the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul" (16:14; compare 18:10; 19:9). It's not stretching our sanctified imaginations too much to think that David was fearful that he would suffer likewise.

David's fears in this regard are understandable.

## How to Say It

Bathsheba	Bath-she-buh.
Ecclesiastes	Ik-leez-ee-as-teez.
Habakkuk	Huh-back-kuk.
Hittite	Hit-ite or Hit-tite.
Hosea	Ho-zay-uh.
Lamentations	Lam-en-tay-shunz.
Uriah	Yu-rye-uh.

Since the introduction of sin into the world, humans have experienced guilt and shame when caught in sin. As a result, people often feel unworthy before the presence of God (examples: Judges 13:22; Isaiah 6:5). When we draw near to God with repentance, we can experience His presence and love (Psalm 23 [lesson 10]; James 4:8).

**12. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit.**

David's sin caused a sense of separation between him and God. At one time, God's *salvation* had led David to rejoice (Psalm 13:5). However, his feelings of *joy* had been replaced with grief because of the presence of David's sin.

David recognized that he could not experience transformation through his power; he needed God to provide support to *uphold* him. David had already acknowledged God's role in transforming David and strengthening the bond of their relationship.

**What Do You Think?**

How will you celebrate the joy of salvation in the upcoming week?

**Digging Deeper**

How will you go about such a celebration even if external circumstances seem less-than-ideal?

**Sustained With Joy**

A popular comedian once pointed out that joy and laughter should be communal experiences; humor is best when shared with others. To prove this point, the comedian described what he sees from the stage during a comedy set. The audience would typically respond to his routine by turning to one another, nudging each other, and laughing. These mutual experiences of joy and humor invite connections between people and build relationships among the audience members.

These experiences aren't limited to the audience of a comedy show. On several occasions, my coworkers and I have experienced the need for joy and humor. Once, during a difficult week at work, one coworker said something humorous. I then chimed in with a witty retort. We both

laughed so hard that tears ran down our cheeks. Laughter, humor, and joy were the needed responses to relieve the stress of that challenging week.

David wanted to experience the joy that could come only from God's salvation. Such a joyous state came from David's right relationship with the God of salvation. What things have prevented you from experiencing the joy of God's salvation? What will you do to correct that? —L. M. W.

**III. Praise**

(Psalm 51:15-17)

**A. From My Lips (v. 15)**

**15. O Lord, open thou my lips; and my mouth shall shew forth thy praise.**

With this verse, David's prayer of confession and repentance transitions to praise. He had confessed to God, requested forgiveness, and asked to experience a renewed relationship with God. As a result, David promised that he would use the experience of forgiveness as an opportunity to "teach transgressors [God's] ways" so that "sinners shall be converted unto [God]" (Psalm 51:13, not in our printed text). David's acknowledgment of his sin led him to seek repentance and use his life as an example to others for their correction.

This verse also demonstrates another use of poetic parallelism. *My mouth shall shew forth thy praise* parallels the statement "my tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness" (Psalm 51:14, not in our printed text). Praise is the proper response to God's love and mercy (63:3-5; Hebrews 13:11-15). David would respond to God's mercy with public displays of praise and worship. His goal was not to manipulate God into granting forgiveness. Instead, he expressed his commitment to worship God in response to receiving God's promised mercy.

**B. From a Broken Heart (vv. 16-17)**

**16-17. For thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give it: thou delightest not in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.**



David states the basis for his confession of sin and prayer for forgiveness. Through the Law of Moses, God established a system of sacrifices and offerings for the people of Israel (Leviticus 1–7). Therefore, at an initial glance, this verse appears to negate the role of this sacrificial system.

We can find an explanation by looking again at the context that prompted David to write this psalm (see Lesson Context). Under the Law of Moses, adultery and murder required capital punishment (Exodus 21:12; Leviticus 20:10). David knew that God desired a change of heart rather than sacrifices without any change (compare 1 Samuel 15:22).

Instead, God desires “internal” *sacrifices* from the contrite and repentant. These sacrifices include the attitude and stance of a person’s *spirit* and *heart*. When people become aware of their sin, they will experience grief for what they have done—a “godly sorrow” that leads to repentance (2 Corinthians 7:10; compare Psalm 34:18). This sorrow results from having a *broken spirit* filled with sadness for not having loved and obeyed God as intended. However, experiencing sorrow for the sake of itself is not the intended goal. God desires that His people have a *contrite heart* that shows remorse for sinful behavior.

This verse also teaches us that religious observances and practices are ultimately meaningless if they are not followed by a change of heart that results in following and obeying God’s commands (compare Isaiah 1:11–15; 29:13). God will *despise* such behaviors (see Amos 5:21–23). Rather than sacrifices and offerings for their own sake, God desires a changed heart that results in worship and obedience (see 1 Samuel 15:22; Hosea 6:6).

### What Do You Think?

In what ways can a believer cultivate a broken spirit and a broken and contrite heart?

### Digging Deeper

How can a person overcome desensitization to sin so that he or she can cultivate these things?

## Conclusion

### A. The Power of Confession

Regardless of the sins we may commit, David’s words in Psalm 51 provide us with a model of acknowledgment, confession, repentance, and praise. We first acknowledge our sins and take ownership of our actions. Second, we confess our wrongdoing and repent. Repentance is a crucial and necessary aspect of the Christian life (Luke 5:32), and it pleases God (see Ezekiel 18:23; Romans 2:4; etc.). Through our confession, we are “healed” from the power of sin (James 5:16) and receive forgiveness from God: “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9).

Finally, because of our confidence in God’s promises, we praise Him for His mercy toward us, demonstrated through forgiveness. When wayward Christians follow this model, they can experience the joy of living in relationship with God—a joy to be shared with others.

### What Do You Think?

How has Psalm 51 changed how you approach your acts of confession and repentance?

### Digging Deeper

Who can be an accountability partner to encourage you in a life of confession and repentance?

### B. Prayer

Merciful God, Your love and mercy are great. As Your people, we want to be in a right relationship with You. We confess that we have not loved You or others as we ought. We repent of our sinful actions and humbly ask for Your forgiveness. We praise You because You have promised to cleanse us from our sins and give us a life of joy in a right relationship with You. In the name of Jesus, we pray. Amen.

### C. Thought to Remember

Acknowledge. Confess. Repent. Praise.

# Involvement Learning

Enhance your lesson with KJV Bible Student (from your curriculum supplier) and the reproducible activity page (at [www.standardlesson.com](http://www.standardlesson.com) or in the back of the KJV Standard Lesson Commentary Deluxe Edition).

## Into the Lesson

Begin class time by asking learners to brainstorm a list of words that are synonymous with *sin*. Allow 90 seconds for them to shout out as many as they can. Write their responses on the board. Do the same with the following words: *acknowledge*, *confession*, and *praise*. Using the listed terms and their synonyms, determine the relationship between *sin* and *acknowledge*, *confession*, and *praise*.

Lead into Bible study by saying, “The psalm in today’s lesson reveals to us the significance of these words: *acknowledge*, *confession*, and *praise*. How can this psalm inform your response to sin?”

## Into the Word

Using the commentary and other resources, give a background summary of Psalm 51 and the events that led to its composition (see 2 Samuel 11–12). *Option.* Recruit a class member ahead of time to present a three-minute summary of this material to set the stage for today’s Bible study.

Invite a volunteer to read today’s text. Distribute handouts (you create) of the sentences below *without* the verse citations. Ask learners to mark them as *True* or *False*. Include space for additional written responses between sentences.

- 1—David requested grace according to God’s lovingkindness. (Psalm 51:1)
- 2—David failed to recognize his sin. (51:3)
- 3—David proclaimed that he did evil in the sight of other people. (51:4)
- 4—David requested that God give him a clean heart and a new outlook. (51:10)
- 5—Despite his sin, David still felt the joy of God’s salvation. (51:12)
- 6—David’s sacrifices consisted of burnt offerings. (51:17)

Share that each sentence is false. In pairs, challenge learners to write verse references that show the falsehood of each statement and write out true

sentences based on the verse(s) referenced. After calling time, bring the class back together. Let pairs share their corrected sentences.

*Alternative 1.* Distribute copies of the “All My Transgressions” exercise from the activity page, which you can download. Have learners complete it in a minute or less before discussing conclusions with a partner.

*Alternative 2.* Distribute copies of the “Cause and Effect” activity from the activity page. Have learners work in small groups to complete it as indicated. After calling time, have one member of each group share their group’s responses.

## Into Life

Distribute an index card and pen to each learner. In a minute or less, have learners write down a personal or corporate sin they wish to confess. Ask learners to reread Psalm 51:1-4, 10-12, 15-17 silently as a prayer of confession and repentance of individual sins. Then have learners join with a partner to reread the lesson Scripture, but this time as a prayer of confession and repentance of corporate sins.

*Option.* Print the following prayer on a sheet of paper and distribute a copy to each learner:

Most merciful God, I confess that I have sinned against You in thought, word, and deed, by what I have done, and by what I have left undone. I have not loved You with my whole heart; I have not loved my neighbors as myself. I am truly sorry and I humbly repent. For the sake of Your Son Jesus Christ, have mercy on me and forgive me; that I may delight in Your will, and walk in Your ways, to the glory of Your name. Amen.

Encourage learners to place the copy in a location where they will see it each day. Ask learners to make time each day to pray this prayer of confession aloud. Begin the next class by asking learners to share their experiences as they made the prayer of confession a part of their daily routine.

# A Plea for Deliverance

Devotional Reading: Psalm 107:23-32  
Background Scripture: Psalm 22; Daniel 3

## Psalm 22:1-11

To the chief Musician upon Aijeleth Shahar,  
A Psalm of David.

1 My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? Why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring?

2 O my God, I cry in the daytime, but thou hearest not; And in the night season, and am not silent.

3 But thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel.

4 Our fathers trusted in thee: They trusted, and thou didst deliver them.

5 They cried unto thee, and were delivered: They trusted in thee, and were not confounded.

6 But I am a worm, and no man; A reproach of men, and despised of the people.

7 All they that see me laugh me to scorn: They shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying,

8 He trusted on the LORD that he would deliver him: Let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him.



9 But thou art he that took me out of the womb: Thou didst make me hope when I was upon my mother's breasts.

10 I was cast upon thee from the womb: Thou art my God from my mother's belly.

11 Be not far from me; for trouble is near; For there is none to help.

## Key Text

*My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? Why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring? —Psalm 22:1*

# Worship in the Covenant Community

## Unit 2: Songs of the Old Testament

Lessons 6–9

### Lesson Aims

After participating in this lesson, each learner will be able to:

1. Identify the New Testament significance of Psalm 22.
2. Compare and contrast David's experiences with his trust in God.
3. Identify an area of personal trial and offer a prayer for God's help or rescue.

### Lesson Outline

#### Introduction

- A. Hymns of Lament
- B. Lesson Context

#### I. Petition by David (Psalm 22:1-5)

- A. God's Distance (vv. 1-2)  
*Sleepless Nights*
- B. God's Deliverance (vv. 3-5)  
*The Example of Ancestors*

#### II. Insult from Enemies (Psalm 22:6-8)

- A. Despised (v. 6)
- B. Mocked (vv. 7-8)

#### III. Presence of God (Psalm 22:9-11)

- A. Since Birth (vv. 9-10)
- B. Always Near (v. 11)

#### Conclusion

- A. Space for Lament
- B. Prayer
- C. Thought to Remember

## Introduction

### A. Hymns of Lament

Most modern-day hymnals include indices that list hymns according to their themes and emphases. Such lists allow users to find hymns based on specific doctrinal topics. Possible motifs include *praise* (example: "Come, Thou Fount"), *thanksgiving* (example: "All Creatures of Our God and King"), *personal testimony* (example: "Blessed Assurance"), and *hope* (example: "In Christ Alone").

The book of Psalms served as the hymnbook for the Old Testament people of God. In that book, we find psalms of praise, thanksgiving, and hope, but we also see another side to worship: psalms of lament, grief, guilt, doubt, and anger.

Most often, it seems that our congregations' songs of worship focus on thanksgiving and praise, and rightly so: "For the Lord is great, and greatly to be praised" (Psalm 96:4). Rarely, however, does it seem that we are eager to sing songs and hymns that reflect the lament and sadness that we might feel. Perhaps it would do our congregations good to follow the book of Psalms and recover hymns and songs of lament for corporate and personal worship.

### B. Lesson Context

By one estimate, there are six types of psalms in the Old Testament book of Psalms: lament, thanksgiving, wisdom, praise, psalms of Zion, and imprecatory. Most students categorize Psalm 22 as a lament psalm. Such psalms are characterized by the psalmist's attitude of personal anguish and the psalmist's petitions to God in response to some felt suffering.

Lament psalms typically contain a three-fold structure, demonstrated by Psalm 13. First, lament psalms begin with a complaint or question, such as "How long wilt thou forget me, O Lord?" (Psalm 13:1). Second, the psalmist petitions or cries for help from the Lord, such as "Consider and hear me, O Lord my God" (13:3). Finally, the psalmist concludes with praise and worship to God: "I will sing unto the Lord, because he hath dealt bountifully with me" (13:6).

Psalm 22 contains these same elements. It begins with the psalmist's question (Psalm 22:1),

transitions into a set of his petitions and cries for help (22:2, 11, 19-21), and concludes with his worship of God (22:22-23). Some students see aspects of both lament psalms and praise psalms in Psalm 22. As a result, these students divide the psalm into two parts: a lament psalm (22:1-21) and a praise psalm (22:22-31). Regardless of how we categorize and divide this psalm, it depicts the sadness and worship of someone suffering.

The psalm's superscription provides some information regarding context. First, it directs "the chief Musician" to sing this psalm to a tune apparently known to the psalm's original audience. Second, the superscription also tells us that Psalm 22 was "A Psalm of David." Like most psalms, this psalm does not indicate the situation that led David to compose the psalm (contrast Psalms 18, 51). One possibility is that David wrote this psalm while hiding from Saul (see 1 Samuel 23:7-29). Whatever the situation, we know from the verses after today's lesson text that David felt abandoned, isolated, and in danger. His body was failing and on the verge of death (Psalm 22:14-15, 17). His enemies had surrounded him like wild animals (22:12, 16), eager to attack (22:13, 21) and strip him of his clothing (22:18).

The writers of the New Testament connected the suffering of the psalmist and his prayer for help with the suffering of Jesus and His prayers during the crucifixion. Of New Testament quotations of and allusions to Psalm 22, most occur in the passion narratives of the Gospels:

- Psalm 22:1, quoted in Matthew 27:46; Mark 15:34
- Psalm 22:7-8, alluded to in Matthew 27:39; Mark 15:29; Luke 23:35-36
- Psalm 22:8, alluded to in Matthew 27:43
- Psalm 22:18, quoted in John 19:24
- Psalm 22:22, quoted in Hebrews 2:12

Some students have called this psalm "The Psalm of the Cross" because of its connections to Jesus' suffering and the lament He expressed to His heavenly Father while on the cross.

We may be drawn to interpret Psalm 22 only in light of Christ's suffering—and understandably so! But if we do, we will miss how it, in its original context, can inform our spiritual growth.

## I. Petition by David

(Psalm 22:1-5)

### A. God's Distance (vv. 1-2)

#### 1a. My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?

David was surrounded by enemies who mocked him and were eager to see him destroyed (Psalm 22:12, 16). In light of this seemingly hopeless situation, David cried out to God. His cries were notably not directed to any random pagan god. Instead, he called on the God with whom he had a relationship: *my God* (compare 31:14).

By using this term of intimacy, David demonstrated confidence that the God who had entered into a covenant relationship with Israel would also be faithful and present to him. But David's situation was so dire that he felt compelled to ask *why* God seemed distant. Throughout the history of Israel, God had promised His presence with His people (example: Deuteronomy 31:6-8). The promise of God's presence anchored the hope of the psalmists (examples: Psalms 9:10; 37:28; 94:14).

While suffering on the cross, Jesus quoted this half-verse in Aramaic: "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani? which is, being interpreted, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Mark 15:34). In the lead-up to and during His crucifixion, Jesus was mocked, attacked, and forsaken as He was handed over to death (examples: Matthew 27:27-31; Mark 15:29-32). The suffering led Jesus to feel abandoned by His heavenly Father. By quoting this psalm as a prayer, Jesus expressed anguish regarding the rejection that He experienced on the cross.

#### 1b. Why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring?

Any hope of rescue seemed *far* away (compare Psalm 22:19, not in our printed text). The kind of *helping* that David desired was deliverance from his enemies. All other avenues of deliverance had been exhausted; only the strength of the almighty Lord could save David (compare 10:1; 28:8).

The phrase *the words of my roaring* reflects the depths of David's despair. He was left to groan and cry out for any means of rescue. The sense of being abandoned by God led David to cry out as

a last resort. His cries were like the roar of a wild animal in anguish (compare Psalm 32:3; Isaiah 5:29).

### What Do You Think?

How would you respond to the claim that believers should not question God?

### Digging Deeper

What Scripture texts support your answer?

## 2. O my God, I cry in the daytime, but thou hearest not; and in the night season, and am not silent.

David's cries for rescue were not a one-time occurrence; he petitioned God *in the daytime* and *the night season* for deliverance. It is understandable for God's people to cry out to God and question whether or not He hears those petitions (examples: Psalm 42:3; Lamentations 3:8, 44). However, unlike the experience of other psalmists, it seemed to David that God *hearest not* the man's cries (compare Psalm 88:1).

## Sleepless Nights

The experiences of parenthood will inevitably include many sleepless nights! After my children were born, I awoke most nights for midnight feedings. As they grew older, my sleepless nights differed. Sometimes, I was awakened by a crying child, fearful of a nightmare. Other times, a child crawling into my bed would startle me awake.

As my children became teenagers, my sleepless nights took a different flavor. I stayed awake to welcome them home from competitions, dates, or jobs. Once they moved to college and would come back to visit, I kept vigilant watch through the early hours of the morning to confirm their safe arrival.

People experience sleepless nights for various reasons, including mental turmoil and spiritual anguish. The next time you face a sleepless night, will you consider praying to God about your fears? We can sleep with the promise that God will be with us—even in our slumber (Psalm 4:8). We can trust Him because He is the one who “neither slumber[s] nor sleep[s]” (121:4). —L. M. W.

## B. God's Deliverance (vv. 3-5)

### 3. But thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel.

Although David had questioned why God seemed distant (Psalm 22:1, above), he still affirmed the unique characteristics of God. Notably, he proclaimed that God is *holy*, meaning He is totally perfect and free of any blemish of sin (1 Samuel 2:2; Isaiah 40:25; Habakkuk 1:13; Revelation 15:4; etc.). There would be none other who could save God's people. God's holiness is often the foundation of worship in the psalms (examples: Psalms 29:2; 99:3, 5, 9; 145:21).

For ancient Israel, God's presence was represented by the ark of testimony. He would reveal His presence “from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubims which are upon the ark of the testimony” (Exodus 25:22; compare Psalms 80:1; 99:1). However, in the verse before us, God's presence is in the midst of His people as He *inhabitest the praises of Israel*. Even in distress, David could worship God—the only one who is holy, faithful, and present in the midst of suffering.

### What Do You Think?

In what ways can you emphasize God's holiness in your personal and corporate worship?

### Digging Deeper

How will your worship address other attributes of God, such as His love, mercy, faithfulness, or righteousness?

### 4-5. Our fathers trusted in thee: they trusted, and thou didst deliver them. They cried unto thee, and were delivered: they trusted in thee, and were not confounded.

The history of God's work with His people gave David confidence in God's faithfulness. Such reflection anchored David's worship and provided encouragement regarding God's active and all-powerful presence (compare Psalm 44:1-8). Other psalmists shared this view (examples: 78:53; 107:6).

Perhaps David was reflecting on the exodus from Egypt. While enslaved in Egypt, the people *trusted* God's promises to their ancestors—promises of

blessing, descendants, and land (Genesis 15:14-18; 17:4-8; 26:2-6, 24; 28:13-15; 46:2-4). Trusting these promises and God’s faithfulness, the people cried out that God would bring freedom from their enslavement (Exodus 2:23-24). God saw the people in their suffering, took pity on them (2:25), and *delivered* them from their oppression (12:31-42).

The word *confounded* typically means to be confused or perplexed. However, that is not its meaning in this verse. The underlying Hebrew word is translated elsewhere as “ashamed” (Psalms 25:2; 31:1; etc.), and that is the sense here. Those who hope in the Lord and trust His promises have hope that He will someday remove shame once and for all (Isaiah 28:16; Romans 9:33; 1 Peter 2:6).

The three uses in these verses of a form of the word *trust* reveal the tension between trust and suffering. Feelings of sadness, anger, and fear are often associated with grief—such are normal human emotions. However, in those moments, we can also trust that God is present and with us and will be faithful to us. Such tension reveals a “both-and” situation: we can *both* cry out in our suffering *and* trust that God will provide comfort (see 2 Corinthians 1:3-4).

### What Do You Think?

Who is an ancestor of yours who demonstrated trust in God during a season of suffering?

### Digging Deeper

How will you demonstrate trust in God so that you can be an example to future generations?

## The Example of Ancestors

Sensing sadness from my teenage daughter, I went to her room to check on her. I lay in her bed beside her, hearing her sadness pour from her heart. When she finished, and we lay there in the quiet, I began telling her stories of her great-grandmother, a woman my daughter had never met. I told my daughter about her ancestor’s passion, tenacity, and faith. I concluded by saying, “Your great-grandmother was a strong woman,

and you remind me a lot of her.” I hoped that the example of her great-grandmother would strengthen my daughter’s faith and character.

In the midst of the psalmist’s trials, he reflected on the examples of his ancestors, specifically their faith and trust in God. Who is a “spiritual ancestor” for you—someone whose faith example you can follow? How can their legacy of faith strengthen your faith today? —L. M. W.

## II. Insult from Enemies

(Psalm 22:6-8)

### A. Despised (v. 8)

**6. But I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people.**

Worms are associated with destruction, death, and decay (examples: Deuteronomy 28:39; Job 21:26; Isaiah 51:8). David’s self-identification as a *worm* and not a *man* reveals the extent of his negative self-assessment (compare Job 25:6). His enemies had treated him as though he was worthless and on the verge of death. He began to believe that their threats and vile hopes would come true.

The Lord had delivered David’s ancestors (see Psalm 22:5, above), thus freeing them from feelings of shame. However, as David waited for rescue, he became *despised* by others and the object of their *reproach*. The Lord would need to intervene for David to experience freedom from his dishonor and shame.

### B. Mocked (vv. 7-8)

**7. All they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying.**

## How to Say It

Aramaic	<i>Air-uh-may-ik.</i>
cherubims	<i>chair-uh-bimz.</i>
Corinthians	<i>Ko-rin-thee-nuz</i> ( <i>th</i> as in <i>thin</i> ).
Eloi (Aramaic)	<i>Ee-lo-eye.</i>
lama (Aramaic)	<i>lah-mah.</i>
lament	<i>luh-ment.</i>
sabachthani (Aramaic)	<i>suh-back-thuh-nee.</i>

Although God seemed silent, David's enemies were not. They took advantage of David's situation to make a spectacle of his suffering. They ridiculed David and heaped *scorn* and insult on him because he trusted God. Mockery and insult led them to *shake* their heads out of disdain and disgust (compare Psalm 109:25).

### What Do You Think?

How should believers respond to perceived mocking and ridicule for their faith and obedience to God?

### Digging Deeper

What steps can you take to ensure you do not respond to these incidents with contempt or mockery?

## 8. He trusted on the LORD that he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him.

This verse reveals that David's enemies quoted his prayers back to him. However, they did so with a harsh and sarcastic tone (compare Psalm 42:10). The confidence of David's enemies is displayed as they sarcastically invited God to *deliver* David. They refused to believe that God would miraculously intervene for the good of David (compare 3:2; 71:11). To the suffering psalmist, their mocking words seemed to have a kernel of truth; their sarcastic invitation likely reinforced the psalmist's doubts and lament.

God's people often face scorn and ridicule from the unrighteous (examples: Psalms 31:11-18; 35:15-16; 69:7-20). Even Jesus faced ridicule (Matthew 27:39) and sarcastic incitements (27:43) while suffering, adopting Psalm 22:1 as His own in the process (Matthew 27:46); see above. In those moments of testing, we can trust that God will be faithful to us, even amid ridicule and mockery. This trust is our hope as believers (Hebrews 10:23).

## III. Presence of God

(Psalm 22:9-11)

### A. Since Birth (vv. 9-10)

#### 9-10. But thou art he that took me out of

**the womb: thou didst make me hope when I was upon my mother's breasts. I was cast upon thee from the womb: Thou art my God from my mother's belly.**

David's delight in the Lord came from the ways that God had provided for him—a provision that began while David was still in his mother's *womb*. While "covered" in his mother's womb, he was "fearfully and wonderfully made" by a caring God (Psalm 139:13-14). God's care continued after David was born and received his mother's love, care, and provision. God's care for His servant was on display from that man's conception to his birth and childhood. In another psalm, the psalmist proclaimed, "By thee have I been holden up from the womb: Thou art he that took me out of my mother's bowels: My praise shall be continually of thee" (71:6).

By reflecting on God's provision during his conception, birth, and upbringing, David demonstrated the reason for his *hope*. A form of the underlying Hebrew word translated *hope* is also translated as "trusted" elsewhere in this passage (Psalm 22:4-5), and that is the sense in the verse before us. David's trust in God was not based simply on any good feelings that David felt. Instead, David's confidence came from the certainty he had because of God's previous demonstrations of provision (see Isaiah 46:3-4). Although David experienced suffering and felt doubt, he demonstrated trust that God would provide, leading the psalmist to proclaim in worship: *thou art my God*.

### B. Always Near (v. 11)

#### 11. Be not far from me; for trouble is near; for there is none to help.

David's petition *be not far from me* is repeated later in the psalm (Psalm 22:19, not in our printed text). The petition to God reflects David's deep need for urgent deliverance from his enemies and his situation. The psalmists frequently petitioned for the nearness of God's presence when they faced trials and suffering (examples: 35:22; 38:21; 71:12). They knew that God is always-present (omnipresent; example: 139:7-12). Surrounded by trouble, the psalmists desired to experience God's presence through their deliverance from suffering.



The sort of presence that David desired was an act of deliverance from the *trouble* brought on by his enemies (compare 69:18). David sought the *help* that *none* other could provide, a deliverance that only God could give (see 142:4-6).

### What Do You Think?

How could you use this verse to encourage other believers facing troubling circumstances?

### Digging Deeper

What steps do you need to take to prepare yourself to respond to such a situation?



Visual for Lesson 7. Show this visual as you discuss the commentary and discussion questions associated with Psalm 22:11.

## Conclusion

### A. Space for Lament

Psalm 22 consists of David's lament and petition balanced with his praise and adoration. His questioning "Why?" (Psalm 22:1) resulted in his praise to God. David's cries of suffering turned to worship because of the belief that God would ultimately be faithful and bring deliverance. And David hoped that he would praise God and that all nations and people would someday praise God (22:27-31).

The lament songs of the Psalter give us an example of how we might express our fears, frustrations, sadness, and petitions to the Lord. These psalms model how believers can enter the presence of God and proclaim their concerns and frustrations. Even though God already knows our wants, needs, and fears, He invites us to express those things to Him through our prayers and songs.

Jesus modeled lament for us when, on the cross, He quoted this psalm. The Son of God asked His heavenly Father, "Why?" (Matthew 27:46). We, too, can ask "Why?" to our heavenly Father when we experience suffering and hardship. Therefore, our personal and corporate times of worship can include prayer, lament, and petitions to the Lord. But there are two cautions here. First, we should not let our *why* lead to questioning God's justice. Second, we cannot flourish by remaining in an endless loop of *why, why, why*. An answer to that

may never come. Eventually, we have to move from *why* to *what's next*?

Further, our congregations should be communities that encourage expressions of lament. Perhaps we can sing hymns of lament and hope, like "O God, Our Help in Ages Past." Another way to do so is through listening and supporting those suffering and grieving.

The psalms invite us to consider the role of lament in our worship. When we open our hearts to God and acknowledge our sadness and suffering, we depend entirely on Him. The psalms also model how we might praise God for His power and deliverance, even if our situations seem hopeless. How will the psalms be your hymnbook the next time you are in a season of suffering?

### B. Prayer

Holy God, You are all-powerful and always present. You know us when we are experiencing joy and gladness and when we are experiencing sadness and grief. In seasons of lament, remind us to call out to You, even if all we can proclaim is our grief. We trust in Your unfailing love and Your faithfulness to us. Hear the cries of our hearts and come quickly to our aid so that we might experience the comfort and deliverance only You provide. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

### C. Thought to Remember

Cry out to God!

# Involvement Learning

Enhance your lesson with KJV Bible Student (from your curriculum supplier) and the reproducible activity page (at [www.standardlesson.com](http://www.standardlesson.com) or in the back of the KJV Standard Lesson Commentary Deluxe Edition).

## Into the Lesson

Divide learners into triads. Lead into the activity by saying, “At some point, each of us will experience a crisis. At that time, we will need the support and care of others.” Have learners answer the following question in their groups: 1—Who do you call on when you experience a crisis? 2—What about that person makes him or her the best first call in a dire situation? 3—How do you want that person to respond when you call on him or her?

After five minutes of in-group discussion, ask volunteers to share their responses. Lead into Bible study by saying, “When we are in dire straits, we want to know who we can depend on. As believers, we know that we can depend on God. But what about when He seems to be ignoring our situation? The psalm in today’s lesson can help us reframe our thinking without negating the negative feelings we may be feeling in such a situation.”

## Into the Word

Using the Lesson Context, give a background summary of Psalm 22. Be sure to include information about its genre and how the psalm is quoted or alluded to in the New Testament. (*Option.* Ask a volunteer to prepare this ahead of time.) After the presentation, ask the following for whole-class discussion: “What possible situation might have prompted David to pen this psalm?”

Write the following headers on the board:

*How David Felt | What David Knew |  
What Is Revealed?*

Divide learners into the same triads. Have them silently read Psalm 22:1-11 and answer the following questions for in-group discussion: 1—What feelings of David does this psalm communicate? 2—What true things did his feelings reveal? 3—What thoughts of David does this psalm communicate? 4—What true things did his knowledge reveal?

Have a volunteer from each triad offer their

group’s answers. Write the responses on the board under the appropriate header.

Direct learners to return to their triads and answer the following questions, using the responses on the board to inform their answers: 1—What possible tensions could arise between how David felt and what he knew? 2—How could those tensions exist simultaneously?

*Option.* Divide the class into groups of four and have them research Scripture for examples of when people would have used the language of the psalm to affirm God’s character and deeds as David did here. (*Possible examples could include Genesis 37:12-36; Exodus 1; 2 Samuel 15:13-30; Esther 4:15-5:1; Daniel 3:8-23; Job 19:1-13.*)

## Into Life

Write the following questions on the board:

1. *Do you connect with this psalm or struggle to empathize with David? Why and how?*
2. *What is a struggle in your life or a personal trial that feels hopeless?*
3. *What evidence can you recall of God’s faithfulness to you?*

Distribute an index card and pen to each learner. Ask a volunteer to read aloud Psalm 22 for the whole class. Then, instruct learners to write their answers to the questions on the index cards. After one minute, ask learners to flip over their index cards and write a prayer for God’s help or rescue. After one minute, ask them to join a partner for prayer, asking for God’s help.

*Option 1.* Distribute copies of the “A Psalm for Today” exercise from the activity page, which you can download. Have learners complete the activity in one minute or less before sharing their findings with a partner.

*Option 2.* Distribute copies of the “Personal Response” activity from the activity page. Have learners work in small groups to complete as indicated.

# Praise for Deliverance

Devotional Reading: Ephesians 1:3-14  
Background Scripture: Isaiah 25; Daniel 6:10-28

## Isaiah 25:1-10a

1 O LORD, thou art my God; I will exalt thee, I will praise thy name; For thou hast done wonderful things; Thy counsels of old are faithfulness and truth.

2 For thou hast made of a city an heap; Of a defenced city a ruin: A palace of strangers to be no city; It shall never be built.

3 Therefore shall the strong people glorify thee, The city of the terrible nations shall fear thee.

4 For thou hast been a strength to the poor, A strength to the needy in his distress, A refuge from the storm, a shadow from the heat,

When the blast of the terrible ones is as a storm against the wall.

5 Thou shalt bring down the noise of strangers, As the heat in a dry place; Even the heat with the shadow of a cloud: The branch of the terrible ones shall be brought low.

6 And in this mountain shall the LORD of hosts make unto all people A feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, Of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined.

7 And he will destroy in this mountain The face of the covering cast over all people, And the veil that is spread over all nations.

8 He will swallow up death in victory; And the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from off all faces; And the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth: For the LORD hath spoken it.

9 And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; We have waited for him, and he will save us: This is the LORD; we have waited for him, We will be glad and rejoice in his salvation.

10 For in this mountain shall the hand of the LORD rest.



## Key Text

*In this mountain shall the LORD of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined. —Isaiah 25:6*

# Worship in the Covenant Community

## Unit 2: Songs of the Old Testament

Lessons 6–9

### Lesson Aims

After participating in this lesson, each learner will be able to:

1. Summarize the historical context of Isaiah the man.
2. Connect Isaiah's historical context to his specific assurances of God's faithfulness.
3. Write a personal testimony to God's faithfulness.

### Lesson Outline

#### Introduction

- A. When the Darkness Lifts
- B. Lesson Context

#### I. Praise the Lord (Isaiah 25:1-5)

- A. For His Judgments (vv. 1-3)  
*Flipping the Script*
- B. For His Mercy (vv. 4-5)  
*God's Levee*

#### II. The Lord Hosts a Banquet (Isaiah 25:6-8)

- A. Invitation to Dine (v. 6)
- B. Deliverance from Death (vv. 7-8)

#### III. Testify About Him (Isaiah 25:9-10a)

- A. What Will Be Said (v. 9)
- B. What Will Be Done (v. 10a)

#### Conclusion

- A. Living Gratefully in Hope
- B. Prayer
- C. Thought to Remember

## Introduction

### A. When the Darkness Lifts

At times, darkness overwhelms. It happens to all; no one is exempt. Whether that darkness comes in the form of grief, poverty, sickness, or national tragedy, believers cry out to God for deliverance.

When we experience God's rescue, we naturally . . . do what? That's a crucial question because it will reveal the level of our spiritual maturity and devotion. There are affirmations of this in various places in the Bible. One New Testament example is Luke 17:17. One Old Testament example is found in today's text.

### B. Lesson Context

Today's text comes from a section of Isaiah that is often called "The Isaiah Apocalypse" (chap. 24–27). This is because the scenes pictured are similar to the apocalyptic language (which is imagery describing the end of the world) found in the book of Revelation (compare Zechariah 9–14; Mark 13:24-27).

Isaiah became a prophet in the year King Uzziah of Judah died around 740 BC (Isaiah 6:1-10). By the time Isaiah appeared on the scene, the Israelites had been divided into two countries for almost 200 years: the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah. The prophet had a long ministry of several decades in Judah during the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah.

Isaiah's ministry began during a time of economic and military prosperity (Isaiah 2:7). But spiritual rot had set in (2:8), and it was only a matter of time before God intervened (2:9–4:1).

God's interventions took the form of oppression by foreign powers (Isaiah 7:20). One such oppression occurred during the reign of Ahaz of Judah (735–716 BC) when Aram (Syria) and the northern kingdom of Israel joined forces against Judah (2 Kings 16:1-10). Ahaz "saved" Judah by means of an unholy alliance with Assyria (16:7-9). That country eventually conquered northern Israel and exiled its inhabitants in 722 BC (17:6). The city of Jerusalem (in Judah) barely escaped the same fate in 701 BC (18:13–19:27). But that

was only temporary. Jerusalem's reaction to that time of forthcoming darkness would reveal where the inhabitants' hearts actually lay (Jeremiah 7:1-8; compare Isaiah 42:20-25).

Isaiah not only served during difficult times, but he also foresaw them—not only for Judah, but for the idolatrous nations around her, such as Egypt, Edom, and Tyre (Isaiah 14:28–23:18). But while confrontation about sin was a critical part of the task of the prophets, that was not their only function; the prophets also provided hope. The situation looks utterly hopeless by the time the reader gets to Isaiah 24. That chapter's 23 verses are dire in their prediction of the devastation of the whole earth. The reason is given in Isaiah 24:5: "The earth also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof; because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant." The utter holiness of God that is unmistakable in Isaiah 24 is followed by a message of God's love in Isaiah 25. It bears a message of hope—today's lesson.

## I. Praise the Lord

(Isaiah 25:1-5)

### A. For His Judgments (vv. 1-3)

**1. O LORD, thou art my God; I will exalt thee, I will praise thy name; for thou hast done wonderful things; thy counsels of old are faithfulness and truth.**

Isaiah's response to the vision of devastation in chapter 24 was a prayer of *praise*. The prayer involves the prophet's use of two names for the same recipient: *Lord* and *God*. By adding the word *my*, the prophet leaves no doubt where his loyalties lie (compare Isaiah 40:27; 49:5; 61:10). The people of Judah were to have a personal relationship with and loyalty to the only true God. He is not a fictitious regional god (1 Kings 20:28) but the God who reigns over the whole earth.

Isaiah's reflection on God's *wonderful things* echoes a key element of some psalms: pondering God's accomplished works as indicators of His identity and character (example: Psalm 77; contrast 78:9-20). But in this regard, there's a difference between the psalmist's recall of God's

wonders and Isaiah's recall: the psalmist speaks of God's wonders that were tied to positive elements of His works and provisions, while Isaiah's praise was for the destruction God had wrought on sinful people and places. See the next verse.

### What Do You Think?

What effects could you anticipate if you reminded yourself daily of the wonderful promises God has fulfilled?

### Digging Deeper

What if that practice included reminding others of God's fulfilled promises?

**2a. For thou hast made of a city an heap; of a defenced city a ruin: a palace of strangers to be no city.**

History witnesses to the arrogance of those who trust in earthly protections. It's not wrong to take steps to protect oneself or others from harm (example: Nehemiah 3). But reliance on such human efforts to the exclusion of God leads to arrogance and disaster (examples: 2 Samuel 5:6-8; Proverbs 18:10-11; Daniel 4:19-33).

As we read the verse before us, we may wonder which *city* Isaiah refers to. Jerusalem could be the reference, given its destruction in 586 BC (Isaiah 64:10-11), but mentioning a palace of strangers (foreigners) works against this. Similar language of destruction is used for Damascus (Isaiah 17:1; compare Amos 1:3-5; compare 2 Kings 25:8-10). Another candidate is Tyre (Isaiah 23; compare Ezekiel 26:4). Given the grammatical construction of the phrasings, the best answer is "none of the above, specifically." Instead, the prophet acknowledges God's power over every city anywhere. No matter how *defenced* (fortified) a city or location may be, it is not, nor ever will

## How to Say It

Ahaz	Ay-haz.
apocalypse	uh- <i>pock</i> -uh-lips.
Aram	<i>Air</i> -um.
Jotham	<i>Jo</i> -thum.
Tyre	Tire.
Uzziah	Uh- <i>zye</i> -uh.

Visual for  
Lessons 8 & 12



With verse 6, ask learners to consider how hospitality can be a foretaste of God's own feast.

be, able to resist God's plans (Deuteronomy 3:4-6; 28:49-52). As the previous chapter of Isaiah 24 speaks of the entirety of the earth, so also does Isaiah 25 by considering God's sovereignty over all the earth's cities. In effect, the prophet uses the metaphor of a city for the whole earth.

### 2b. It shall never be built.

Destroyed cities and towns were often rebuilt. Ideal places for cities in the ancient world involved three criteria: (1) access to water, (2) access to one or more trade routes, and (3) defensibility. So a city that had been destroyed was subject to being rebuilt if those three criteria still held for a given location. For God to forbid a city ever being rebuilt indicates His extreme displeasure of what went on there (examples: Deuteronomy 13:12-18; Jeremiah 49:13). To ignore this prohibition was to invite the wrath of God anew (Joshua 6:26; 1 Kings 16:34).

## Flipping the Script

See if you can identify what these four structures have in common: the Tower of Babel, the Reich Chancellery, Solomon's Temple, and the statue of Saddam Hussein that stood in Firdos Square. *Answer:* They are all no more—destroyed!

The Tower of Babel and its city were abandoned and left incomplete when the motive of the builders invited God's judgment (Genesis 11:1-9). The stunning Reich Chancellery, the seat of power of Hitler's Nazi regime in Berlin, was destroyed

when the city fell to the Soviets in 1945. Solomon's Temple, built with holy motives, was destroyed because of eventual idolatry (Ezekiel 8). Hussein's statue was pulled down as his oppressive dictatorship was terminated by force.

Although those four destructions have one or more common themes, we take care not to equate them with one another too readily or glibly. There are differences and unknowns to acknowledge. One thread of commonality among scriptural destructions is that such acts of divine judgment are usually connected with the deliverance of God's people from harm or oppression. But sometimes, the script is flipped, as judgment comes upon God's people by the hands of God-sent oppressors (Isaiah 7:18-20).

As we live in this fallen world, we know that relief from ungodly oppression does not always happen on our preferred timetable. Even so, God is still looking for those who would speak His Word to unholy power structures (compare Isaiah 6:8; Ezekiel 22:30-31). How will you recognize God's call if or when it comes to you?

—C. S.

### 3. Therefore shall the strong people glorify thee, the city of the terrible nations shall fear thee.

In the older language of the King James Version, the word *terrible* refers to "something that strikes terror." The concept speaks of those who live by the principle of "might makes right" (compare Isaiah 13:11). Such people have no regard for God (Psalms 54:3; 86:14).

The parallel between the first and second lines in verse 3 indicates *the strong people* and *the terrible nations* refer to the same group. That may make us wonder if repentance is the way they will *glorify* God. That's a possibility (compare Jonah 3). Another possibility is that any respect they have for God is forced and grudgingly given (compare Revelation 6:15-17).

### B. For His Mercy (vv. 4-5)

4-5. **For thou hast been a strength to the poor, a strength to the needy in his distress, a refuge from the storm, a shadow from the heat,**

**when the blast of the terrible ones is as a storm against the wall. Thou shalt bring down the noise of strangers, as the heat in a dry place; even the heat with the shadow of a cloud: the branch of the terrible ones shall be brought low.**

The opening word *for* ties the previous discussion of the oppressive nations to a recognition of God's concern for *the poor* and *the needy*. When people groups neglect or abuse the most vulnerable, God comes to their defense. In that regard, Isaiah compares God to a *refuge from the storm* or a shade *from the heat* (compare Isaiah 14:30; contrast 30:2-3). A military image can be detected here because the word translated *strength* is also translated "fortress" elsewhere (Jeremiah 16:19; Daniel 11:7, 10).

A pithy description of how God acts is that He "comforts the disturbed" and "disturbs the comfortable." What we just considered describes the former; what Isaiah prophesies next describes the latter. The phrase *Thou shalt bring down the noise of strangers* is reflected more specifically in Jeremiah 51:55, where God is predicted to have "destroyed out of [Babylon] the great voice." Loud noise is a characteristic of war and other conflicts (Psalms 46:6; 74:23; Isaiah 13:4). But no matter how much noise the enemies of God and His people make, the God of Israel can silence it with His voice (66:6).

### What Do You Think?

In what ways does the church demonstrate God's concern for the poor?

### Digging Deeper

What roadblocks prevent your community from recognizing God's concern for the poor?

## God's Levee

Have you ever filled thousands of sandbags in a single day? I did—or at least it seemed as if I did. The Mississippi River was overflowing its banks, and the dikes that held the river at bay needed to be raised and strengthened. Living nearby, I volunteered to help. As the day ended, I was as tired

as I had ever been! But our team may have saved dozens of homes.

Dikes and levees are used everywhere to protect areas from flooding. But human instruments are subject to failure, whereas God's protection is not. Neither is His wrath. We decide whether we shall avail ourselves of His protection from the floodwaters of sin or be objects of the oncoming flood of His wrath.

See the outcome of option 1 in Psalm 124:1-5 and Isaiah 66:12; for the danger of option 2, see Job 27:20 and Isaiah 28:2.

How do you know which side of God's levee you are on? —C. S.

## II. The Lord Hosts a Banquet

(Isaiah 25:6-8)

### A. Invitation to Dine (v. 6)

**6a. And in this mountain shall the LORD of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things.**

*This mountain* refers to God's holy mountain in Jerusalem (Isaiah 27:13). The prophet locates a future banquet here as he uses that phrase a total of three times in 25:6, 7, 10). Beyond the devastation of the earth in Isaiah 24 and the judgment of the nations in Isaiah 25:1-5, Isaiah offers a hopeful vision because of what will happen on the mountain where Jerusalem is located. It is important to note that the forthcoming feast will be available *unto all people* (the word *people* is plural in the Hebrew text—people groups). The guest list for this feast is limitless (compare Luke 14:15-24; Revelation 19:19). No one is meant to be excluded, "on the outside looking in."

### What Do You Think?

How could or does your congregation benefit from interaction with Christians from different nationalities?

### Digging Deeper

What challenges prevent deeper relationships in this area, and how can your congregation address those?

**6b. A feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined.**

This half-verse indicates the celebratory nature of the festival to come. The nature of the food and beverage indicates that this was not the regular diet of people who lived in Judah. Meat, which has bones *full of marrow*, was a rare delicacy, and *wine* was expensive and reserved for special occasions. These two are depicted together in a positive sense here and in Proverbs 9:1-2; they are depicted together in a negative sense in Proverbs 23:20 and Isaiah 22:12-13.

The phrase *wines on the lees* may sound strange to us. “The lees” refers to what is left over from the grapes after the initial stage of their pressing. Leaving wine on the lees strengthens its taste. Then when the wine is strained before consumption, what remains is wine of the highest quality. Clearly, God will serve only the best to those who attend this special feast (compare John 2:10). No shortcuts here!

This feast looks back to Exodus 24:1-11 where Israel ate and drank in the presence of God. They enjoyed a banquet where they saw God and experienced God’s saving presence on God’s holy mountain. This vision also looks forward to the messianic banquet in the age to come, where people will come from all over the earth to eat and drink in the kingdom of God with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Matthew 8:11; Luke 13:29).

### **B. Deliverance from Death (vv. 7-8)**

**7-8. And he will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people, and the vail that is spread over all nations. He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth: for the LORD hath spoken it.**

The *mountain* on which God will host a feast is the same mountain on which He will destroy something. There is salvation, and there is destruction. This salvation is deliverance from death itself. Death covers *the face* of all people. Everyone wears this veil as a shroud. Everyone is appointed to die (Hebrews 9:27). No one escapes death.

The banquet, therefore, celebrates the death of death. God will destroy death, and His people will celebrate life; see Paul’s quotation of Isa-

iah 25:8 in 1 Corinthians 15:54. The apostle John, for his part, quotes Isaiah 25:8 twice: Revelation 7:17; 21:4. In the new heaven and new earth, there will be no more death or pain, no more mourning, and no more tears. The foundation of the Christian’s assurance in this regard is the resurrection of Jesus (1 Corinthians 15:12-28).

#### **What Do You Think?**

When considering death, do you tend to dwell on the certainty of God’s work or the uncertainty of exactly what life after death will be like?

#### **Digging Deeper**

How does either approach allow you to share your hope in the Lord with others who may not know Him?

## **III. Testify About Him**

(Isaiah 25:9-10a)

### **A. What Will Be Said (v. 9)**

**9. And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the LORD; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation.**

Isaiah 25 begins with the prophet’s tribute of praise. Now the praise is on the lips of all who will come to the mountain of the Lord to share in the “wonderful things” to be provided there (Isaiah 25:1). Note the use of the pronouns *our*, *we* (thrice), and *us*. The language is similar to the often-sung words of Psalm 118:24: “This is the day which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it.”

We should note that the Hebrew name Isaiah means “the Lord saves” or “the Lord is salvation.” Given that the words *save* and *salvation* appear in this verse, also consider that the name *Jesus* means the same thing (Matthew 1:21). He is the one who has and will accomplish the wonders Isaiah described.

When banquet day arrives, no better words can be uttered than *This is our God!* The creator and ruler of life became its redeemer at the cross. Death held humanity in its grip until Christ



accomplished His work; now Jesus holds “the keys to hell and death” (Revelation 1:18).

## B. What Will Be Done (v. 10a)

### 10a. For in this mountain shall the hand of the Lord rest.

*The hand of the Lord* is active throughout the Bible. Sometimes it is associated with blessing (Joshua 4:23, 24; Ezra 7:6; Luke 1:66; Acts 11:21); at other times, it is extended for discipline or punishment (Exodus 9:3; Judges 2:15; Ruth 1:13; 1 Samuel 5:6). Here, however, the focus is on the hand’s being at *rest* (contrast Isaiah 5:25; 9:21; 11:15; 19:16; 23:11). When God’s hand rests upon the land, it gives the land rest and protects it from all enemies, including death. God will rest after He ushers in His new creation—the new heaven and the new earth (65:17-25; Revelation 21–22). Before that rest occurs, “The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death” (1 Corinthians 15:26). When death is defeated for good at the return of Jesus, it will be cast into the lake of fire (Revelation 20:14), never again to cause pain and tears.

#### What Do You Think?

Why is God’s rest good news for people?

#### Digging Deeper

Can your own rest also be good for others? Explain.

## Conclusion

### A. Living Gratefully in Hope

Isaiah 25 provided a message of hope for God’s covenant people. In response, a song of praise and victory was predicted to be sung by Judah in Isaiah 26. The message of today’s lesson text was what assured that song. We mentioned in the Lesson Context that the section of Isaiah 24–27 has been called “The Isaiah Apocalypse”; the final and concluding work of this section is this: there will come a day when God gathers His people to worship Him in a place He has made holy.

People experience oppression in different ways and degrees. But everyone experiences death. We certainly should use godly methods and motiva-

tions to overcome oppression and injustice, as well as work for the sanctity of life. But as we do, we should remind ourselves that the complete presence of justice and absence of death in the life to come is what to focus on. It’s coming! As we so focus, we experience and expect God’s continuing faithfulness for our assured hope in ultimate deliverance.

One way to express this hope is to practice gratitude. We can do so in many ways. Some do so through music as they write and sing songs. Others do so via personal contact. Still others \_\_\_\_\_ [you fill in the blank]. One of the simplest ways to express gratitude and become thankful, even during trials, is to create a gratitude list daily, perhaps first thing in the morning or the last thing before bed. A daily gratitude list will remind you of God’s many gifts. To name them is to offer thanks. Built into this naming is also an expectation of more good things from God, including the death of death. A gratitude list reorients our experience of the trial, recenters our faith, and expresses hope in the future.

As believers in Jesus, we anticipate and yearn for the messianic banquet hosted by Jesus in the presence of God (Matthew 26:29). As Israel shared in the blessings of God through the altar when they ate the sacrifices, so we share in the fellowship of body and blood of Jesus at the table when we eat and drink (1 Corinthians 10:14-17). It is a foretaste of the messianic banquet. When we eat and drink at the table of the Lord, we give thanks for the body and blood of the Lord. We also remember God’s faithfulness and yearn for the death of death. We eat and drink, and we go out into the world to serve, comforted by hope (Acts 20:7-12).

### B. Prayer

Father, we thank You for the promise of a banquet to celebrate Your faithfulness. Give us the desire and capacity to faithfully serve You in the present. In the name of Jesus. Amen.

### C. Thought to Remember

Gratefully wait for the fulfillment of the promised death of death.

# Involvement Learning

Enhance your lesson with KJV Bible Student (from your curriculum supplier) and the reproducible activity page (at [www.standardlesson.com](http://www.standardlesson.com) or in the back of the KJV Standard Lesson Commentary Deluxe Edition).

## Into the Lesson

Ask the class to define the phrase “mountaintop experience.” Expect an answer that references some spiritual high point, especially of knowing and loving God. In small groups, have learners find biblical examples of mountaintop experiences that fit or challenge their definition. Encourage volunteers in those groups to share their own experiences and what they have in common with the biblical examples. After a few minutes, ask volunteers to share with the class what they’ve found.

Lead into Bible study time by saying, “Today’s lesson describes God’s character and past actions as well as a future mountaintop experience and what God will do for His people. Let’s take a look at how Isaiah describes both.”

## Into the Word

*Option.* Distribute handouts (you create) of the printed text of Isaiah 25:1-10a.

As a volunteer reads aloud, have learners close their eyes and listen to Isaiah 25:1-10a. Encourage learners to make note of phrases that stand out to them as you read the lesson text aloud. In pairs, have the learners discuss what struck them and why. Allow a few minutes for pairs to find and jot down other places in the Bible that share images or concepts with one or two of their marked concepts. (The commentary can help guide learners through the cross-references provided.)

*Alternative.* Distribute the “Right Words, Wrong Lines” exercise from the activity page, which you can download. Have learners work in small groups to complete as directed. After several minutes, bring the class back together to go over answers (found on the answer page at the end of the activity pages) and discuss any interesting or surprising connections they discovered.

On the board, write two headers, leaving room for a third to be added: *What God Has Done*

and *What God Will Do*. Have learners list God’s actions in Isaiah 25:10a under the appropriate columns.

*Option.* If you distributed a handout of Isaiah 25:1-10a before, learners can work in pairs to mark God’s former and future actions on their own sheets.

Have learners discuss the relationship between remembering what God has already accomplished and having confidence in what He will do in the future. Ask, “What are the implications of remembering or forgetting God’s works?”

## Into Life

Expand on the previous exercise by having learners brainstorm New Testament works that are fundamental for Christians to remember, as well as any additional insights as to what God plans to do in the future. Ask for the Bible references to these actions or promises. Allow time for discussion.

Add a third column to the board with the header *Our Response*. Have learners identify how Isaiah and the people did or would respond to God’s work. Then in pairs, have learners discuss how they can respond to God in these same ways throughout the week to come. For instance, they might discuss what it might look like to praise God’s name while grocery shopping or to rejoice in His salvation at family dinner.

After several minutes, ask learners to work alone for one minute on a personal testimony to God’s faithfulness, based on what has been studied today.

*Option.* Distribute the “Personal Testimony” exercise from the activity page for learners to complete this task.

Close class with a prayer thanking God for what He has done and what He will do and asking for reminders of both throughout the week to come.

# Trust in God Alone

Devotional Reading: Jeremiah 17:5-11  
Background Scripture: Psalm 62

## Psalm 62

1 Truly my soul waiteth upon God: from him cometh my salvation.

2 He only is my rock and my salvation; he is my defence; I shall not be greatly moved.

3 How long will ye imagine mischief against a man? Ye shall be slain all of you: as a bowing wall shall ye be, and as a tottering fence.

4 They only consult to cast him down from his excellency: they delight in lies: they bless with their mouth, but they curse inwardly. Selah.

5 My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation is from him.

6 He only is my rock and my salvation: he is my defence; I shall not be moved.

7 In God is my salvation and my glory: the rock of my strength, and my refuge, is in God.

8 Trust in him at all times; ye people, pour out your heart before him: God is a refuge for us. Selah.

9 Surely men of low degree are vanity, and men of high degree are a lie: to be laid in the balance, they are altogether lighter than vanity.

10 Trust not in oppression, and become not vain in robbery: if riches increase, set not your heart upon them.

11 God hath spoken once; twice have I heard this; that power belongeth unto God.

12 Also unto thee, O Lord, belongeth mercy: for thou renderest to every man according to his work.



## Key Text

*My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation is from him. —Psalm 62:5*

# Worship in the Covenant Community

## Unit 2: Songs of the Old Testament

Lessons 6–9

### Lesson Aims

After participating in this lesson, each learner will be able to:

1. List the many ways God is a source of strength in times of trouble.
2. Identify the barriers to peace found in Psalm 62.
3. Create a plan for intentional time to wait quietly on the Lord.

### Lesson Outline

#### Introduction

- A. Song of Your Life
- B. Lesson Context

#### I. Calm Amidst Trouble (Psalm 62:1-4)

- A. Wait on God (vv. 1-2)  
*Quake Proof*
- B. Confronting Enemies (vv. 3-4)

#### II. Calm Discovered (Psalm 62:5-8)

- A. Refocusing on God (vv. 5-7)
- B. Admonishing the People (v. 8)

#### III. Calm Grounded in God (Psalm 62:9-12)

- A. Rejecting Insubstantial Help (vv. 9-10)  
*Weighing Air*
- B. Embracing Substance (vv. 11-12)

#### Conclusion

- A. Singing with David
- B. Prayer
- C. Thought to Remember

## Introduction

### A. Song of Your Life

If you were asked to describe your life as it is now with a song, what song would you choose? Consider what characteristics make it the right song for this time. Is it the tone (major or minor key) or the instruments (a violin that sounds forlorn)? Is it the lyrics, expressing contentment or love or betrayal? Is it a song you sing with others or all by yourself? If you've been honest with yourself, you might feel an emotional *click* when you name the song of your life at this time.

Songs have long been part of worship, in part because of their power to express our deepest hopes and fears while drawing us back to God. Perhaps the importance of songs in our relationship with God is best understood when we find ourselves in trouble, not knowing where to turn. At such times, songs like Psalm 62 affirm God's power and love even as they help us express what we need to tell God.

### B. Lesson Context

As prayers and songs, the Psalms give worshippers a voice. Sometimes it is the voice of lament (see Psalms 10, 13, 44, 77), and sometimes it is a voice of thanksgiving and praise (see Psalms 66, 107, 148). Lament prayers grieve suffering, and thanksgivings express gratitude. Psalm 62 is neither a lament nor a thanksgiving hymn, though it contains elements of both. Instead, this psalm can appropriately be called *a confidence psalm*. It expresses trust and hope in God in the middle of distress. Confidence psalms arise from an assured relationship with God. The psalmists are confident that God is their help and refuge. They trust in God's power and goodness, and they hope in God's faithfulness (compare Psalms 11; 23).

The superscript of Psalm 62 identifies Jeduthun as the leader of the choir (1 Chronicles 16:41, 42; 25:1-3; see Psalms 39, 77). He might have been someone like a songwriting partner to David (ruled about 1010–970 BC), who is identified as the writer of Psalm 62. Specific hardships are alluded to in the superscripts of David's psalms (see commentary on 62:3-4, below).

The power of poetry, especially set to song, is to allow not only the writer or singer to express themselves—fears, pain, trust, love—but also to speak for an audience in attendance. Psalm 62 invited Israelites to join the song, and it still does for us today.

## I. Calm Amidst Trouble

(Psalm 62:1-4)

### A. Wait on God (vv. 1-2)

#### 1. Truly my soul waiteth upon God. From him cometh my salvation.

*Truly* translates a key word in this psalm (translated “only” in Psalm 62:2, 4-6 and “surely” in 62:9). Its repetition throughout the psalm emphasizes the truth of each statement, lending a heightened sense of the sincerity for the psalmist.

*My soul* identifies the seat of a person’s commitments and loyalties. It is the “I” of personhood. *Waiteth* translates a rare Hebrew word in the Bible, occurring only four times (Psalms 22:2; 39:2; 62:1; 65:1). This waiting is restful, sometimes even silent. David was not an autonomous self but a dependent one. David entrusted himself to *God* because *salvation* comes from God, though we do not yet know from what David required rescuing (see 62:3, below). In this instance, salvation should not be thought of as a distant spiritual reality but as a present, physical rescue (examples: Exodus 14:13; 1 Samuel 14:45; Psalm 35:1-3).

Like David, we are wise when we entrust ourselves to the Lord and do not trust ourselves (Proverbs 3:5-6). Completely trusting God is related to the covenant (see Psalm 62:11b-12a, below). If David trusted God completely based on covenants in Israel, how much more should we, given that we have received what Israel hoped for (Hebrews 11)?

#### What Do You Think?

How would you describe the experience of finding rest for your soul in God?

#### Digging Deeper

What habits make resting in God possible regardless of your circumstances?

#### 2. He only is my rock and my salvation; he is my defence; I shall not be greatly moved.

Repeating the word *salvation* is another way David emphasized his confidence that he would find what he needed from the Lord (see Psalm 62:1, above). Only God, the *rock*, can serve as the source of stability and rest. When God was David’s *defence*, he could confidently and boldly profess that he could never *be greatly moved*—and so can we. Grounded in God’s gracious salvation and protected by God’s power, we confess that nothing will shake us (see also Psalms 30:6; 46:5; 55:22; 66:9; 112:6; 121:3). Our feet will not slip or give way. The soul committed to God alone is stabilized by God’s saving work and protective care.

### Quake Proof

Building earthquake-resistant structures in California isn’t just wise; it’s the law. The engineering solutions required to mitigate the effects of a violent earthquake can be quite impressive. A simple but effective method is to use cross beams to reinforce the strength of a structure. Another method is to have pistons within the structure that absorb the energy of the shock waves. Flexible foundations will sway with the vibrations; a pendulum method utilizes a large counterweight attached to the building to absorb some shock. Using materials that will bend without breaking or crumbling is also key.

Given a big enough earthquake, though, even well-designed buildings will fall. The mitigation techniques used are primarily meant to preserve human life; the rebuilding process of physical structures after a quake can still be vast. But there is no earthquake of life that is so large that God cannot help you stand. Call on your rock and your salvation, and He will see you through.

—C. S.

### B. Confronting Enemies (vv. 3-4)

#### 3. How long will ye imagine mischief against a man? Ye shall be slain all of you. As a bowing wall shall ye be, and as a tottering fence.

This verse and the next feature several contrasts between what has come before to what will come after. *Ye shall be slain* and the images

of an unstable *wall* and *fence* contrast the transient nature of David and his enemies with the unchanging, faithful God, who is David's "rock" and "defence" (Psalm 62:2, above). The contrast highlights God's power versus the ultimate powerlessness of any human as well as God's integrity in His dealings with David against the unreliability of his enemies. We do not know the specific nature of the *mischievous* David's opponents imagined, but we know that David's life was full of situations that might fit the bill (see 62:4, below).

**4. They only consult to cast him down from his excellency. They delight in lies. They bless with their mouth, but they curse inwardly. Selah.**

The Hebrew adverb translated *only* appeared in Psalm 62:1-2 (see commentary above). In the opening of the psalm, God is the only ground of assurance. But David's opponents lacked reverence for God, as evidenced by their total disregard for David, God's chosen king (1 Samuel 16:7-12; 2 Samuel 7:8-9; contrast 1 Samuel 24:5-7).

Speaking of himself in the third person, David suggested these opponents conspired *to cast him down from his excellency*, referring either to his position in Saul's court or to the throne itself. Some examples come from before David became king while he was part of King Saul's court or exiled from it (1 Samuel 18:10-11; 23:7-29; etc.; compare Psalms 57, 63, 142). Another possibility occurs decades later when King David's own son Absalom revolted against his father and tried to depose him (2 Samuel 15:13-14; compare Psalm 3). These and other efforts revealed David's enemies to be liars and hypocrites, willing to *bless with their mouth* while they *curse inwardly* (compare Matthew 23). They sought to undermine God's chosen and unjustly attacked David.

No one is sure what *selah* means. Since the book of Psalms was used in Israel's corporate worship and the psalms were frequently set to music (see Lesson Context, above), we can postulate that *selah* is a musical note, perhaps for a silent pause. This guess works well if the song leader wanted to invite the congregation to consider their own concerns as they prayed and sang the psalmist's words.

### What Do You Think?

How do you handle opposition from people who speak well but have evil intent?

### Digging Deeper

What verses inform your answer?

## II. Calm Discovered

(Psalm 62:5-8)

### A. Refocusing on God (vv. 5-7)

**5-6. My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation is from him. He only is my rock and my salvation. He is my defence; I shall not be moved.**

These two verses form a sort of refrain, largely repeating what was expressed in Psalm 62:1-2 (above). *Wait* is a form of "waiteth" that appeared in 62:1. In Psalm 131:2, the same word is used, describing a weaned child with his mother. There as here, the image is of security, peace, and silence.

**7. In God is my salvation and my glory. The rock of my strength, and my refuge, is in God.**

This verse expands what is said in Psalm 62:1-2 and 62:5-6, above. Here as there, God is the psalmist's *salvation*, *rock*, and *refuge*. The only new language here is of God as the psalmist's *glory*. The word can also be translated "honour" (Psalms 26:8; 66:2; etc.). The first example of God's giving people glory is found at creation (Genesis 1:26-27; Psalm 8:5). We also think of Jesus' honoring people by becoming fully human in order to minister among us and die for our sins (Philippians 2:6-11).

### What Do You Think?

Why was David able to express this kind of confidence in the Lord before Jesus' atoning sacrifice?

### Digging Deeper

How can Old Testament stories of God's faithfulness bolster your own faith in Christ?

## B. Admonishing the People (v. 8)

**8. Trust in him at all times; ye people, pour out your heart before him. God is a refuge for us. Selah.**

Imagine a temple worship service where a singer offers a testimony and expresses his or her hope in God's loving care. Then the singer turns to the congregation and invites them to share in this testimony. The singer calls the people of God to *trust* God, just as the singer does. God is not only the singer's refuge but is a *refuge for us*. The people of God share the same story. They rehearse the story of God's powerful deliverance through the exodus and His loving election of Israel as the people of His Old Testament covenant.

Because we trust in God's deliverance, we embrace Him as our refuge. As such, the singer also invites us to *pour out* our hearts to God. Our restful waiting does not require silence (see Psalm 62:1, above), though it can imply it (examples: 131:2; Lamentations 3:28; etc.). Rather, as we rest in God's care, we tell God the truth of our hearts.

### What Do You Think?

Would it be accurate to say that you pour out your heart to God? Why or why not?

### Digging Deeper

What is the most difficult thing in your life for you to talk to God about? What would happen if you prayed deeply about that thing today?

## III. Calm Grounded in God

(Psalm 62:9-12)

### A. Rejecting Insubstantial Help (vv. 9-10)

**9. Surely men of low degree are vanity, and men of high degree are a lie. To be laid in the balance, they are altogether lighter than vanity.**

A stark contrast is drawn between God and *men*, whether of *low* or *high degree*. These contrasts are meant to be understood together, indicating all people (compare Psalm 49:2). When compared to God, each person from least to greatest is *vanity* and *a lie*. The concept of vanity is familiar from the book of Ecclesiastes, which frequently uses

this same Hebrew word to assert the meaninglessness observed in human life (examples: Ecclesiastes 1:2, 14; 2:11; 3:19). The word describes a mist that appears for a moment and then dissipates.

In this way, anyone can be (metaphorically) weighed (*laid in the balance*) and found to be *lighter than vanity*. For ancient people, balance scales were vital to commerce. Coinage wouldn't be invented until sometime in the 600s BC, so transactions in David's day (about 400 years earlier) and for centuries following his reign were done by weight (examples: Genesis 23:16; 1 Kings 7:47). An unbalanced or loaded scale could cheat people out of precious resources (example: Amos 8:5). The weight of goods was truly important. When weighed against God on a balance scale, there is no substance to us (compare Isaiah 40:15). And this is the root of our untrustworthiness; this is what allows us to sin in the first place. We can try with all our might, but we lack the power to do most of the good we would like. And we ultimately cannot trust ourselves or others who hold no power for deliverance.

### Weighing Air

When I was a boy, my classmates and I enjoyed weighing objects on our science lab's balance scale. I found great satisfaction in the tactile process of adding or subtracting weight until the scales balanced. I especially appreciated the brass weights that were used to give accurate results. Sadly for my childhood self, this method of measuring weight has largely fallen by the wayside in favor of spring or electronic scales.

People, regardless of their station, weigh as nothing on the scale of trustworthiness. We are so light that if the right scale existed, we might all float away instead of weighing even one ounce as being worthy of trust. When faced with the question of where to place your trust, will it be your fellow weightless creatures or the creator God?

—C. S.

**10. Trust not in oppression, and become not vain in robbery. If riches increase, set not your heart upon them.**

For the powerful, their success at *oppression* can

feel like safety. The illusion of having control over not only one's own life but also the lives of others creates a false sense of self-determination and influence over the world. In truth, oppressors need fear God's wrath and judgment for their sins—a lesson Israel (and Judah) would learn long after David's reign ended (example: Amos 2:4-16).

In the Hebrew practice of poetic parallelism, *robbery* stands parallel to the oppression of the previous line in encompassing any number of financial or material crimes. It is an effective strategy for maintaining one's power. But even *riches* obtained without extortion or other wickedness are not to be trusted (compare 1 Timothy 6:10, 17-19).

In short, no human resource can serve as a refuge from trouble. Rather than relying on creatures, David invites us to “trust in [God] at all times” (Psalm 62:8, above).

### What Do You Think?

How do you prevent prudent financial decisions from becoming idolatrous trusting in your wealth (savings, retirement funds, etc.)?

### Digging Deeper

What biblical advice would you offer to younger adults who are learning wisdom in their financial decisions?

## B. Embracing Substance (vv. 11-12)

### 11a. God hath spoken once; twice have I heard this.

These two phrases poetically emphasize the efficacy of God's speaking. We might think of creation, when *God* had only to say a word, and what He said was created (Genesis 1). For David to hear God's speech *twice* might mean He repeated a particular message, or it could simply emphasize that David took what he heard to heart. The latter is certainly in view, based on the confidence David has expressed in the Lord.

### 11b-12a. That power belongeth unto God. Also unto thee, O Lord, belongeth mercy.

God's *power* stands in contrast to the illusion of power that people might have (see Psalm 62:9,

above). It has been alluded to several times already (see 62:1-2, 6-8, above), but here power is called out. For many, God's power, in combination with His wrath, is the primary way of understanding Him as revealed in the Old Testament (examples: Genesis 19; Deuteronomy 5:9; 2 Kings 17:16-23; Jeremiah 20:4-5; Jonah 3:1-4).

But a closer reading suggests that God's power cannot be understood without also considering His *mercy*. The Hebrew word translated “mercy” is frequently used in the context of God's covenant love and loyalty toward Israel (examples: Exodus 20:4-6; Deuteronomy 7:9-12). His mercy both initiated and sustained the covenant.

One example of God's power and mercy at work for Israel was the story of the exodus. Out of His covenant loyalty, God promised to bring Israel out of Egypt (Genesis 46:3-4), and He then began that work (Exodus 2:24). Bringing the Israelites out from their slavery as conquerors and providing for them in the desert—even in the face of multiple rebellions—were actions motivated by love and accomplished with power (15:13). Even the examples of God's wrath reveal His desire for mercy (see Genesis 18:20-33; Jeremiah 23:3; Jonah 3:10-4:2). Perhaps most striking is, even after pronouncing judgment for three or four generations, God says He shows love and mercy to thousands (Deuteronomy 5:10). This is a difference of degree; God limits His wrath and lets His love and mercy overflow.

We do not know whether David wrote this psalm before or after receiving God's promise of a house for David's family (2 Samuel 7). God was powerful to keep that promise centuries later, and through it, we experience God's love in Christ (Matthew 1:1). Unsurprisingly, then, many called on Jesus to have mercy on them throughout His ministry (examples: 9:27; 15:22; 20:30).

### 12b. For thou renderest to every man according to his work.

Paul alluded to this phrase in Romans 2:6 (compare Proverbs 24:12) and expressed a similar sentiment in 2 Timothy 4:14. Some students propose that neither David nor Paul seems to have had the Last Judgment in mind when making this assertion. Instead, God's conduct is appro-



priately contrasted with human conduct. Whereas we might act with a lack of integrity or with only selfish ends in mind, God acts out of His power and mercy and intends to set the world to rights.

## Conclusion

### A. Singing with David

Just as a song on the radio can feel like it was written for *you* at this *exact moment* in your life and expresses what you need to say, so too can psalms. Psalm 62 invites us to sing along with David and join him in his expression of confidence in God alone. Without identifying a specific situation in David's life, the psalm becomes that much more accessible for any situation we might relate to the feelings expressed within. Whatever troubled David, we have our own troubles. David models for us how to face our own struggles even though our troubles are different from his. We surrender every circumstance to God because we not only know God's strength and love, but we also know He will deal with evil and hold human beings accountable for their actions. Those who trust in God have nothing to fear; we fear neither God's judgment nor the troubles that have swamped us. The God of power and mercy will do what is just and right.

Without any further details, we can say with confidence only that David found himself in a turbulent situation. In the midst of it, the king still expressed supreme confidence in God. Sometimes joining David in song will mean singing praise to God, alone or with fellow believers. But other practices also nurture confidence in God, especially when misplaced faith in people falls apart. One example of pouring our hearts out to God (Psalm 62:8, above) could be reading the psalm as our own prayer. While doing so, we reflect on what we need from God, whether that is a change of circumstance or to strength to endure.

We could also read the psalm as a way to listen for God (Psalm 62:11, above). Listening for Him in all of Scriptures allows us to learn who He is, grasp what He desires for and from us, and build the relationship that He desires and we so desperately need. We must constantly and consistently open ourselves



Visual for Lesson 9. *While discussing verse 6, allow learners one minute to contemplate how the Lord is currently acting as their refuge.*

to the Word of God through listening to the reading of Scripture in community, studying Scripture in family and private moments, and memorizing Scripture. We devote time to mulling over the language of Scripture in order to listen to the voice of the Spirit so that we might come to know God and become like God in our conduct.

In these ways and more, we must recenter ourselves on God to be reminded of His power and mercy. Only then will our confidence be found in God alone, and only then will we, too, have supreme confidence in who God is and what He is willing to accomplish because of His great love.

### B. Prayer

Our Father, You know we are often surrounded by troubles. Help us trust You so that peace and love might reign in our hearts by Your power and because of Your mercy. In the name of Jesus. Amen.

### C. Thought to Remember

We trust God because He is willing *and* able to save us.

## How to Say It

Absalom	Ab-suh-lum.
Ecclesiastes	Ik-leez-ee-as-teez.
Israelites	Iz-ray-el-ites.
Jeduthun	Jeh-doo-thun.
Selah (Hebrew)	See-luh.

# Involvement Learning

*Enhance your lesson with KJV Bible Student (from your curriculum supplier) and the reproducible activity page (at [www.standardlesson.com](http://www.standardlesson.com) or in the back of the KJV Standard Lesson Commentary Deluxe Edition).*

## Into the Lesson

Draw two columns on the board, labeling one *Heavy* and the other *Light*. Then ask learners to offer examples of pairs of objects that (1) share something in common and (2) demonstrate extreme differences in weightiness. An example to get them started could be a tricycle and a cargo plane; both are forms of transportation, but one is far heavier than the other. Other possible categories to spark thought could be mammals (or animals in general), objects found in nature, tools, etc. Allow a few minutes for volunteers to share their ideas.

*Alternative.* Distribute copies of the “Weighty Matters” exercise from the activity page, which you can download. Have learners work individually for one minute to complete as indicated.

After either activity, say, “It’s easy to compare objects at extreme ends of the scale and know which will be weightier. In the same way, when we compare God to anything or anyone else we might trust, it is easy to see that He is the only true option. As we study today’s lesson, pay attention to the ways David describes God, and how these truths prompt him to respond to everything else.”

## Into the Word

Ask three volunteers to read Psalm 62 in these sections: verses 1-4; verses 5-8; verses 9-12. As learners listen, ask them to make a note of any words or phrases that catch their ear, especially any that are repeated. After a second reading, ask learners to share what they heard and the significance of those words or phrases in this psalm. Consult the commentary for any questions that arise.

Divide learners into two groups. The **Who God Is Group** will list descriptions of God found in the psalm along with verse references; the **Who We Are Group** will list descriptions of peo-

ple, also with verse references. While the groups work, write their group names as the headers of two columns on the board. When the groups have finished, have them take turns giving their answers until both lists are full. Compare the lists, putting a star next to any attributes that are shared between God and people, as described in Psalm 62. (Note: do not expect any stars here; see commentary about the absolute contrasts that David set up between God and people.)

Then divide learners into three groups to survey David’s life for circumstances that might have provoked the writing of Psalm 62: the **1 Samuel 16–19 Group**, the **2 Samuel 1–7 Group**, and the **2 Samuel 11–19 Group**. Before they start, note that Psalm 62 does not offer a specific answer to this question, so there are no right or wrong answers. Groups should summarize any circumstances they find and any specific verse(s) that suggest a connection. When they have finished, allow groups to present their answers. Then talk together about the variety of circumstances that can fit this psalm. Ask what this suggests for applying the confidence David expressed in the Lord in students’ own lives.

*Alternative.* Distribute copies of the “Sing Psalm 62” exercise from the activity page. Have learners work in pairs or small groups to complete as indicated. Allow time for groups to share with the whole class one example they found.

## Into Life

Give each learner an index card. In one minute, each person should name a day this week and a specific time when he or she will wait quietly on the Lord, as well as what that waiting will look like. After the minute is up, have learners pair up to share their plans. Encourage learners to commit to this time and come back to class next week prepared to share with their partners what they experienced. End class with prayer.

# Confidence in God's Shepherding

Devotional Reading: John 10:1-10  
Background Scripture: Psalm 23; John 10:11-14



## Psalm 23

- 1 The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.
- 2 He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: He leadeth me beside the still waters.
- 3 He restoreth my soul: He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.
- 4 Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.
- 5 Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: Thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.
- 6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: And I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.

## Key Text

*Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: And I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever. —Psalm 23:6*

# Worship in the Covenant Community

## Unit III: Psalms of Thanksgiving 3 Praise

Lessons 10–13

### Lesson Aims

After participating in this lesson, each learner will be able to:

1. Identify poetic repetition in Psalm 23 and its significance.
2. Compare the psalmist's description of the shepherd with the New Testament's descriptions of the ministry of Jesus.
3. Create a reminder of Psalm 23's most helpful encouragement for the upcoming holiday season.

### Lesson Outline

#### Introduction

- A. Needy Creatures
- B. Lesson Context

#### I. God's Shepherding (Psalm 23:1-4)

- A. Provides (v. 1)
- B. Leads (v. 2)  
*My Experience as a Shepherd*
- C. Restores (v. 3)
- D. Protects (v. 4)

#### II. The Lord Supplies (Psalm 23:5)

- A. Safety (v. 5a)
- B. Election (v. 5b)
- C. Abundance (v. 5c)  
*When an Overflow Isn't Too Much*

#### III. The Psalmist's Future (Psalm 23:6)

- A. Accompanied by Blessings (v. 6a)
- B. With God (v. 6b)

#### Conclusion

- A. Needy for God
- B. Prayer
- C. Thought to Remember

## Introduction

### A. Needy Creatures

When my spouse and I became parents, I remember the trepidation we felt. It seemed as if I had never beheld such a helpless creature as our daughter. Nearly all she could do was eat or sleep. I would sit beside her sleeping form, watching breaths move her tiny chest up and down. And I marveled that we begin life in this manner. Our only means of communication is a whimper or a yell.

Humans have a long period of development compared to other living creatures. We enter the world entirely dependent on others and remain so for several years. As time passes, we envision ourselves becoming more proficient at addressing our needs.

The truth is that many parts of our lives are not easy to control: our circumstances, environment, and health, for instance. We also cannot control the people around us. When we do not get our way, it is easy to slip back into our childhood self—the one who cries out for attention when needs are not met. The psalmists found comfort in letting God meet their needs.

### B. Lesson Context

We know less than we would like about where and when the Psalter was assembled. There is clearly a consideration given to an arrangement of its 150 psalms; it is frequently noted that they are arranged in five “books,” the first four of which conclude with “Amen,” meaning “we agree” or “true” (Psalms 41:13; 72:18-20; 89:52; 106:48).

A connection to David is apparent in half the psalms. His name appears in the superscriptions of 73 of them, with 2 more psalms attributed to him in Acts 4:25 and Hebrews 4:7. Superscriptions are instructions or attributions appearing at the beginning of many psalms. Superscriptions are part of the text, although modern Bibles give them no verse number, and Bible software gives them a verse number of zero.

Although many superscriptions list one or more names, the relationship of the named person to the psalm in view is often unclear. Today's text is an example. Its superscription reads “A Psalm

of David.” This may indicate that David was the author, but the Hebrew preposition behind the English word *of* can also express relation or direction. This means that Psalm 23 could be *about* David or *dedicated to* him.

David first appears in Scripture as a keeper of sheep (1 Samuel 16:11). During a war with the Philistines, he continued to be responsible for the care of his father’s flock (17:15, 20). That might seem to have been a safe, behind-the-front-lines kind of job, but in that role as a shepherd, David had fought both lion and bear (17:34-37).

It is also relevant to note that “shepherding” is a common metaphor in the ancient Near East, used especially for kings who protect and provide for subjects. This goes a long way to help explain the depiction of David. His introduction as a shepherd in 1 Samuel guides readers to anticipate that he would make a good king. This was an important development, for when the Israelites first asked Samuel for a king, they contravened the wishes of God (1 Samuel 8). But God nonetheless redeemed the monarchy and made an everlasting covenant with David (2 Samuel 7). Anything either by or about David is, therefore, important to consider.

## I. God’s Shepherding

(Psalm 23:1-4)

### A. Provides (v. 1)

#### 1. The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.

The first verse introduces a reversal: whereas David had been a *shepherd* himself (Psalm 78:70-72), God is David’s shepherd. The metaphor of God as a shepherd is frequently used by Old Testament writers (examples: Genesis 48:16; 49:24; Psalm 28:9; Isaiah 40:11). Thus, the psalm is spoken or sung by an individual sheep of the metaphor. It would be strange for a shepherd to care for only one sheep. The psalmist does not feel the need to tell of any others. He focuses on the relationship between one sheep (himself) and the shepherd.

David was familiar with the role of shepherd, and he understood the great responsibility of providing for the needs of a flock. As domesticated animals, sheep are less able to provide for their

own needs. However good David may have been as a shepherd in meeting those needs, the psalmist depicts God to be all the more mindful in that regard. This confidence is evident in the phrase *I shall not want*.

Whatever need may arise for the speaker, God is ready and able to meet this need (compare Deuteronomy 2:7; 8:9; Psalm 84:11). A good shepherd will do this, but a bad shepherd will be far away when needs arise (compare and contrast Ezekiel 34:1-16; Jude 12). God is not distant (John 10:7-16; 1 Peter 2:25).

### What Do You Think?

How do you practice finding contentment in the Lord?

### Digging Deeper

Write a brief prayer identifying situations in which you need the Lord to guide you to greater trust in Him.

### B. Leads (v. 2)

#### 2a. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures.

The phrase *green pastures* reflects an image of ideal summertime abundance in the land of Canaan. But such abundance can be hit and miss in its semiarid climate as it experiences little or no rainfall for five months of the year. Shepherds constantly had to scout the best locations for grazing sheep (Genesis 13:5-6; 37:12-17).

*Maketh me to lie down* reveals the causative force of the Hebrew verb. Sheep are at ease as they are provided rest alongside their food.

#### 2b. He leadeth me beside the still waters.

While sheep have the ability to survive without water for up to seven days, they are likely to consume a significant amount when the opportunity arises. The imagery of *still waters* is unusual since the flowing water of a river or stream is the preferred image for needs that are met (Psalms 36:8; 46:4; Revelation 7:17). At least two interpretations of *still waters* have been proposed.

One reading holds that the shepherd brings the flock to a natural body of water free of fast-flowing rapids—hence “still.” A difficulty for this

interpretation is that shepherds tended to rely on wells to water flocks (Genesis 29:1-8). Moreover, fast-flowing water was not common in this land.

Another way of understanding the image is to take the word *still*—a noun in the original language—to refer to a place of rest. This is a frequent translation of this word elsewhere (examples: Psalm 95:11; Isaiah 32:18; 66:1). It reinforces the image of a place where sheep feel free to lie down, unthreatened.

Whichever interpretation most accurately conveys the psalmist's intended imagery, the central message remains that the shepherd leads the sheep instead of driving them. This presents a picture of tender direction, as depicted in Isaiah 40:11. Furthermore, this picture is deeply rooted in the theology of the exodus, when God guided the Israelites through the wilderness (Exodus 13:21-22).

## My Experience as a Shepherd

I once owned sheep. My wife and I have a seven-acre field that we allowed a neighbor, who owned sheep and cattle, to cut for hay. He was not wealthy but wanted to give us something for the hay. Thus, he gave us two sheep.

While it seemed a blessing initially, it quickly became a burden. We put the sheep behind fences to keep them safe. But that required a fair amount of fencing. I didn't have money for fence posts, so I cut down some small trees, stripped the limbs, and made posts out of those. The cobbled-together result kept the sheep in for several days, but they eventually figured out how to squeeze underneath the fence. Once they did that, they were everywhere. After a couple of years of "shepherding," we gave up and returned the sheep to the neighbor.

The wonderful thing about God is that He is a much better shepherd than I ever was or would be. He always has the resources to lead the sheep to safe places and to provide for them (us). That fact is beyond question. The only question that emerges concerns the extent of our faith in this truth. How strong is your trust? —C. S.

### C. Restores (v. 3)

#### 3a. He restoreth my soul.

The psalmist is calm and untroubled as God's

provision for physical needs coincides with God's provision for non-physical needs. The same thought, using the exact two Hebrew words translated *restoreth* and *soul*, appears in Psalms 19:7; 116:7; Proverbs 25:13; and Lamentations 1:16. Many psalms plead for God's restoring favor (compare Psalms 6:4; 25:16; 31:2; 69:16; 71:2; 86:16; 88:2; 102:2; 119:132). This one, however, views that favor as an accomplished fact.

#### 3b. He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

The imagery of shepherding continues. One way of thinking about God's leading *in the paths of righteousness* is to imagine forks on the road of life. When a fork is encountered, one must choose which way is the right one (compare Psalms 5:8; 85:13).

But we should not miss a distinction between the closely related words *right(eous)* and *righteousness*. We can do no better than listen to the apostle John on this point: "If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him. . . . Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous" (1 John 2:29; 3:7).

A faithful or righteous shepherd—as God is—leads the faithful of the flock into right paths. God proves to be faithful; it is not in His nature to be otherwise!

### What Do You Think?

How is God's name and reputation enhanced by guiding you along the right paths?

### Digging Deeper

What part do you play, if any, in enhancing God's name? Cite verses that support your answer.

### D. Protects (v. 4)

#### 4a. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil. For thou art with me.

The psalmist continues by now emphasizing the protection side of God's shepherding. We would all prefer that there would be no more dark valleys

of life. Nevertheless, there are, and there will be, until Jesus returns. There is no promise that the Christian will not have to endure such valleys—quite the opposite (Matthew 10:22; 24:9). But we do indeed have a promise of God’s presence (Matthew 28:20; John 14:16-17; Hebrews 13:5).

The presence of God should signal the absence of *fear*. Fear is a God-given emotion that helps protect us. When our fear is justified because of real and imminent danger, it can save our life (assuming that fear doesn’t turn into panic). Fear (and its lack) can be related to *evil* in several ways. First, a person might fear neither evil nor God because he or she has embraced evil (Psalm 36:1-4).

Second, a godly person can fear evil by deciding to avoid it because getting too close to it runs the danger of falling into its clutches (Proverbs 14:16; 16:6; 1 Corinthians 15:33; etc.). Third, a godly person doesn’t fear evil because he or she knows that God’s presence is stronger than any evil that may lie in the path (Psalm 49:5-6, 15). This third option is in view here.

### What Do You Think?

Identify dark valleys you have encountered or currently face.

### Digging Deeper

Does God lead you differently if you entered that valley because of your own choices? Explain your answer.

### 4b. Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

*Rod* and *staff* are tools of the shepherd. The Hebrew word that is translated “rod” also can take the sense of a “sceptre”—a sign of authority (example: Psalm 45:6) that might be used to inflict pain or punishment (2:9; 89:32). The word translated “staff” refers more to a walking stick or a cane (Exodus 21:19; Zechariah 8:4). The psalmist is comforted by the fact that God has these metaphorical tools at His disposal.

## How to Say It

Philistines    Fuh-*liss*-teenz  
                    or *Fill*-us-teenz.  
Psalter        Sawl-tur.

## II. The Lord Supplies

(Psalm 23:5)

### A. Safety (v. 5a)

#### 5a. Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies.

With a new verse comes a change in metaphor. Sheep do not dine at tables, so the shepherd imagery seems to have given way to something new. God is now depicted as a gracious host who has prepared a fine meal for the psalmist to enjoy. This could signify a role-reversal for King David since kings were known to have splendid tables to feed many people (compare 1 Kings 4:27). Preparation *in the presence of mine enemies* could be intended to make these enemies jealous or simply to show that God was not hiding the display of His favor. Because of God’s protection and provision, they can do nothing to harm the psalmist.

The verse just prior to this one bridges the two images. In verse 4, the psalmist spoke of a death-defying journey through shadowy places. And now he imagines a feast for himself, the weary traveler. Roads and mountain paths were dangerous in ancient times. Much later, under Roman rule—when roads had greater security for travelers—Jesus still would speak of thieves on the road between Jerusalem and Jericho (Luke 10:30). Enemies on the road were a danger for all travelers.

It is impossible to say whether the psalmist has particular enemies in mind, perhaps the literal foes of David. His anointing as king made several enemies, not the least of which was his predecessor, King Saul (1 Samuel 16:13; 19:1; etc.). A related text refers to a time “when [David] was in the wilderness of Judah” (Psalm 63; see Lesson Context), and it speaks of enemies seeking his life (63:9-10).

### What Do You Think?

What verses encourage you to wait for God’s action against your enemies rather than taking revenge yourself?

### Digging Deeper

What can you learn about God while you wait for His action?

## B. Election (v. 5b)

### 5b. Thou anointest my head with oil.

The host honors the guest by anointing his *head* with oil (compare Psalms 45:7; 92:10). Given the fragrances that were available to add to olive oil (see 45:8; Proverbs 7:17), such anointing is a soothing and refreshing experience for a weary traveler. This anointing was not done for Jesus when Simon the Pharisee hosted Him for dinner, an intentional oversight noted by Jesus (Luke 7:46).

The psalmist possibly intends a double meaning: he may be recognizing David's physical anointing to be king over Israel (1 Samuel 16:3, 12-13; compare 2 Samuel 5:3) while acknowledging God's continual anointing in spirit. The latter projects an image of God as an hospitable host, with all the trappings of a grand meal involved. Since pouring oil happened in various contexts, the image fits both.

## C. Abundance (v. 5c)

### 5c. My cup runneth over.

The psalmist continues to acknowledge God's benevolence as host. Presumably, the host has given the guest a large cup of wine (compare Jeremiah 35:1-5), and the guest is satisfied. The Hebrew word translated *runneth over* occurs elsewhere only in Psalm 66:12. There, it is translated "wealthy place" in the context of being rescued by God. This cup of satisfaction is equivalent to the waters of Psalm 23:2b, above.

### When an Overflow Isn't Too Much

The abundance of an overflowing cup might seem silly or even wasteful to some. But an "overflow" of water is a truly happy thing for my family! We live more than half a mile from the nearest water line, and to extend it to our house would cost thousands of dollars. Digging a well is not financially feasible either. So we use a cistern: a 1,500-gallon polyethylene tank that holds our water supply.

We have run out of water on occasion. Filling the tank manually means 8 trips of 20 miles each to the nearest potable water filling station. That's a considerable use of gasoline! And don't even bring up the issue of winter weather!

So we rejoice when it rains so we can fill the tank to capacity. It means a couple of months of not worrying about running out.

We don't think about it much when we have enough to keep body and soul together. When that is not our situation, we might sink into worry (contrast Matthew 6:25-34). We often forget that our divine host has plenty of resources. While there will always be times of scarcity, our God occasionally gives us an overflowing cup. The prime example in which an overflowing cup was given was when God sent His Son into the world to save it. When times get tough, is that fact the first thing you shift your mind to? —C. S.

## III. The Psalmist's Future

(Psalm 23:6)

### A. Accompanied by Blessings (v. 6a)

#### 6a. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life.

The text has twice mentioned hardship: danger in the dark valley (Psalm 23:4) and enemies in sight of the host's table (23:5). If the psalmist feels that he is being chased by death and evil, then he imagines that God's *goodness and mercy shall* pursue him all the more. It's insightful into God's character to see how the two Hebrew words translated as "goodness" and "mercy" are paired in other passages (see 69:16; 86:5; 100:5; etc.).

#### What Do You Think?

What gives you confidence that goodness and mercy follow you when circumstances suggest otherwise?

#### Digging Deeper

How would you counsel someone who has lost sight of God's mercies because of present hardships?

### B. With God (v. 6b)

#### 6b. And I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.

The final line provides a fitting conclusion for the psalm as it vividly depicts nearness to God. The psalmist shared a table with God and



expected to remain *for ever*. He did not expect to be shown the door. A *house* for any god in the ancient Near East was a temple. But in David's lifetime, God had no temple, and He denied permission for David to build one for Him (2 Samuel 7:1-7). This fact of history points to *the house of the Lord* being the heavenly dwelling.

## Conclusion

### A. Needy for God

Psalm 23 is short, at only six verses. By contrast, the 150 psalms in total average about 16 verses each. But the influence of Psalm 23 is not limited by its length. The striking elegance of how the psalm begins results in many Christians memorizing its opening line easily and effortlessly: "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want."

However, if we limit ourselves only to that opening line, we miss the second important image of the psalm: that of God as host. Of course, it would be strange to imagine sheep dining at tables. This is a poetic text, and the juxtaposition of metaphors enhances the meaning. Two images—God as shepherd and God as host—collectively portray the Lord as caring and thoughtful toward His people.

What the psalmist proclaims is more radical than readers typically grant. He lived in a world where food and drink were not always easy to find. He saw enemies behind each corner of the road, not from a sense of paranoia. Nevertheless, he trusted that he was loved and remembered by God. He saw that God was with him, satisfying all needs.

The same can be said of us today as we place Psalm 23 in our hearts. By meditating on it, we can be encouraged to present our everyday needs to God, expecting trust to be honored. God is righteous and faithful.

However, this psalm would be misapplied if taken to endorse laziness or blind optimism. God provided for David's every need, but David remained in the wilderness for a long time! He was fleeing from men who wanted to murder him, and at every turn, he must have wondered whether he was on the path God provided. His faithful reliance was tested by desperate circumstance rather than by mere inconvenience. Thus, Psalm 23 can



Visual for Lesson 10. *Before closing in prayer, allow time for learners to offer their own silent thanks for Jesus' shepherding His flock.*

Speak clearest to those who genuinely don't know where their next meal is coming from or are in real and present danger of being victimized. But whether that scenario or the looming challenge of a figurative wilderness to risk wealth, reputation, etc., Psalm 23 is ready to speak to us.

In this era of the new covenant, we remember that the shepherd who is God is also the shepherd who is Jesus. Like the image of the Psalm, Jesus declares, "I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine. . . . I lay down my life for the sheep" (John 10:14-15). This profound act of God's provision in that last line goes beyond what any ordinary shepherd would think to offer; just the thought strains the credulity of the metaphor. No earthly shepherd would be expected to die for sheep! However, Jesus was no earthly shepherd—He was (and is) the Son of God. He is pursuing us with more goodness and mercy than we would know to anticipate. Yield to His offer!

### B. Prayer

Heavenly Father, we thank You for Your presence! Your provisions astound us. Thank You for sending Your Son, Jesus, who set the example of trust as He paid sin's price. We pray in His name. Amen.

### C. Thought to Remember

God has provided, is providing, and will provide.

# Involvement Learning

Enhance your lesson with KJV Bible Student (from your curriculum supplier) and the reproducible activity page (at [www.standardlesson.com](http://www.standardlesson.com) or in the back of the KJV Standard Lesson Commentary Deluxe Edition).

## Into the Lesson

*Option.* Display a peaceful nature scene and play sounds of gentle water flowing as students arrive for class. Encourage students to sit quietly as you wait for everyone to arrive.

Allow a few minutes for pairs from last week to discuss their experience waiting quietly on the Lord (see the Involvement Learning page for lesson 9).

Say to the class, “Sometimes we need to seek out the rest that God intends for us. Other times, we are aware that the ways He leads us are for our own good. Today we’ll look at one of the most familiar Bible chapters to discover how God promises His loving care to those who follow Him.”

## Into the Word

Divide the class into groups of three to pursue one of two Bible studies. Make sure about half of the class does each one.

*Sectional Study.* Distribute a handout (you create) with three headings in a chart: *Shepherd* (vv. 1-3); *Companion* (v. 4); and *Host* (vv. 5-6). To the left of these headings, write the following prompts: *What God Does*; *Main Thought*; *Encouragement for the “Sheep.”* Learners should fill out the chart according to these prompts; encourage drawing in other verses that come to mind in the process.

*He, You, and I.* Distribute a handout (you create) with three prompts: “*He*” *Statements* (statements about who God is or what He does); “*You*” *Statements* (expressions directed to God); and “*I*” *Statements* (how “I” interact with the Lord). Learners should describe the relationship between the Lord and the psalmist.

*Option.* Distribute the “The Good Shepherd” exercise from the activity page, which you can download. Assign some students to work on this instead of the other two prompts or in addition to them.

After several minutes, call the class together for the groups to report. Encourage groups to jot down the main ideas they hear from others’ presentations. After volunteers have presented, allow for discussion about the main points and any questions the class may have. Consult the commentary as necessary.

## Into Life

*Option.* Extend the above discussion by reforming the class into groups of three. This time, assign one of the key ideas from Psalm 23 to each group: Shepherd, Companion, Host. Ask group members to brainstorm with each other ways God has functioned in their assigned role in their lives. Ask volunteers to share how they need God’s presence in their lives in one of these three roles in the coming weeks. As they share, jot down their needs on your board.

Conclude your discussion by calling on class members to make a list answering the question, “So what?” Ask them to name what the promises of this psalm can mean to believers today. Encourage them to reference promises fulfilled in Christ.

*Alternative.* Distribute the “Personal Paraphrase” exercise from the activity page. Allow one minute for learners to complete, assuring them they will not be required to share their answers, though the opportunity will be extended. Allow learners either to pair up to share their responses or spend a few minutes in quiet individual prayer.

Distribute blank recipe cards to the class. In light of the approaching holiday season, ask each learner to write a short “recipe” that will help them remember important encouragement from Psalm 23. Allow volunteers to share their recipes. Suggest that learners slip their recipe cards into a cookbook or other spot where they will see it throughout this season. Then close by praying Psalm 23 together as a class.

# Songs of Praise

Devotional Reading: Psalm 148  
Background Scripture: Psalms 146–150

## Psalm 146

1 Praise ye the LORD. Praise the LORD, O my soul.

2 While I live will I praise the LORD: I will sing praises unto my God while I have any being.

3 Put not your trust in princes, Nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help.

4 His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; In that very day his thoughts perish.

5 Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help, Whose hope is in the LORD his God:

6 Which made heaven, and earth, The sea, and all that therein is: Which keepeth truth for ever:

7 Which executeth judgment for the oppressed: Which giveth food to the hungry. The LORD looseth the prisoners:

8 The LORD openeth the eyes of the blind: The LORD raiseth them that are bowed down: The LORD loveth the righteous:

9 The LORD preserveth the strangers; He relieveth the fatherless and widow: But the way of the wicked he turneth upside down.

10 The LORD shall reign for ever, Even thy God, O Zion, unto all generations. Praise ye the LORD.

## Psalm 150

1 Praise ye the LORD. Praise God in his sanctuary: Praise him in the firmament of his power.

2 Praise him for his mighty acts: Praise him according to his excellent greatness.

3 Praise him with the sound of the trumpet: Praise him with the psaltery and harp.

4 Praise him with the timbrel and dance: Praise him with stringed instruments and organs.

5 Praise him upon the loud cymbals: Praise him upon the high sounding cymbals.

6 Let every thing that hath breath praise the LORD. Praise ye the LORD.



## Key Text

*While I live will I praise the LORD: I will sing praises unto my God while I have any being.* —Psalm 146:2

# Worship in the Covenant Community

## Unit 3: Psalms of Thanksgiving and Praise

Lessons 10–13

### Lesson Aims

After participating in this lesson, each learner will be able to:

1. Summarize why God is to be praised based on Psalms 146 and 150.
2. Provide examples from the Scriptures of God’s care described in these psalms.
3. Identify an example of God’s care in his or her life and write a short praise of thanks.

### Lesson Outline

#### Introduction

- A. The Power of Praise
- B. Lesson Context

#### I. Praise (Psalm 146:1-2)

- A. The Lord (v. 1)
- B. Exhortation (v. 2)

#### II. Trust (Psalm 146:3-10)

- A. Misplaced in Princes (vv. 3-4)
- B. Perfectly Placed in God (vv. 5-10)

*Global Help*

#### III. Exhortation (Psalm 150:1-6)

- A. Where (v. 1)
- B. Why (v. 2)
- C. How (vv. 3-5)
- D. Who (v. 6)

*What Sound?*

#### Conclusion

- A. Praise Your Heavenly Father
- B. Prayer
- C. Thought to Remember

## Introduction

### A. The Power of Praise

When I was 10 years old, my mother threw a 40th birthday party for my father. My dad had been a highly successful high school athletic coach for 15 years. In that time, he had led over 100 young adults to Christ. But a string of difficult years had made my dad eager to retire from coaching. Former athletes had moved on with their lives and no longer called. He began to feel that he had nothing more to contribute. He wondered if his work had been in vain.

My mother knew that my dad needed encouragement. She called up every single one of his former athletes and asked them to come to our hometown for a party. She rented out a nice restaurant and told my dad it was just a normal birthday party with his family. We walked into the dining room to find it packed with nearly 200 of his former athletes. For the next several hours while we ate dinner, I watched person after person get up to a microphone and share some special memory in praise of my dad. And as he received the stream of praise and encouragement, my father’s weariness fell away, and he became joyful again.

Finally, I read my dad the letter I had written to him. I felt overwhelming pride over my father as I lent my voice to the parade of other voices in praise of him. I felt connected to him and to all the other people whose lives he had changed. Praising someone else benefits not only them but also ourselves.

### B. Lesson Context

The book of Psalms ends with five psalms of praise (Psalms 146–150). Each of these psalms begins with the admonition to praise the Lord, which suggests that there are common links between them (see Psalms 146:1; 150:1, below). Some have suggested that the initial declaration, “Praise ye the Lord” (Psalm 146:1, below), is actually a title of the work. Both the writer and date of composition are unknown.

Psalm 146 and Psalm 150 are the bookends of this final grouping. At the same time, these

two psalms have distinctive elements. Psalm 146 exhorts the reader to rely on God alone and praises Him in part to illustrate how reliable and awesome God is. Psalm 150, on the other hand, is a relatively simple call to praise God. In both psalms, however, the psalmist reiterates the need to consider God's mighty deeds and show gratitude for them.

## I. Praise

(Psalm 146:1-2)

### A. The Lord (v. 1)

**1. Praise ye the LORD. Praise the LORD, O my soul.**

*Praise ye the Lord* is a translation of a Hebrew word most Christians know very well: *hallelujah* (see Psalm 150:1, below). The exhortation to praise is given first to the psalmist—to his *soul*, the seat of the mind and will. If Psalms 146–150 are linked by the common command to praise God (as posited in the Lesson Context), then the psalmist's choice to begin Psalm 146 with an exhortation to oneself is likely significant. Praise leaders, preachers, and other leaders in times of worship do well to adopt a habit of such encouragement for themselves.

### B. Exhortation (v. 2)

**2. While I live will I praise the LORD. I will sing praises unto my God while I have any being.**

Here the psalmist responded to his own exhortation with a commitment to praising *the Lord* for the entirety of his life. The two sentences in this verse are parallel to one another, and their points are essentially the same. The repetition of two thoughts that are nearly equivalent in meaning creates emphasis. This technique is found frequently in Hebrew poetry.

The speaker has expressed a full and firm commitment to glorifying the name of *God* for as long as he lives (contrast Psalms 6:5; 30:9; etc.) This commitment will find fulfillment not only in discourse (146:2a) but also in song (146:2b). That distinction may imply praise both in conversation and in worship settings, encompassing all of life.

## What Do You Think?

What benefit is there in deciding to praise God for your entire life, even without knowing what will happen?

## Digging Deeper

How can you strengthen praise habits now that will allow you to keep this life-long commitment?

## II. Trust

(Psalm 146:3-10)

### A. Misplaced in Princes (vv. 3-4)

**3. Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help.**

The speaker shifts focus to warn against placing one's trust in human leaders. While this shift is initially unexpected, it makes considerably more sense when read in light of the psalmist's expression of commitment to praising God in the previous verse. Israel and Judah were tempted at various points to make alliances with pagan nations rather than trusting in God. This legacy of infidelity eventually led to the fall of both the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah (2 Kings 18:11-12; 24:20).

Human leaders ultimately cannot provide true and lasting *help*. Even though life's circumstances can make trusting God difficult, the psalmist urged his readers to commit to affirming God's goodness by praising Him alone through it all.

**4. His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish.**

The reason why one should not put trust in humans (Psalm 146:3, above) is because people are not only powerless but transitory (see also 118:8-9). Our earthly lives have an ultimate limit in death. And when we die, any outstanding goals we have die with us. We are no longer able to affect the land of the living directly; only the indirect effects of our legacies remain to influence others. Thus, any mortal is unworthy of the kind of trust that others often place in them. Death is the ultimate example of the frailty of human beings (Ecclesiastes 7:1-2). The rest of the psalm picks up this point of contrast between mortal, powerless

human beings and the powerful, immortal, and merciful God.

### What Do You Think?

What experience do you have of trusting a person instead of God?

### Digging Deeper

Can this experience help you minister to someone who has been betrayed by someone they trusted? Explain.

psalmist asserts that God not only precedes the sea but created it, which speaks highly of God's great power over even the chaos it represented.

### What Do You Think?

What aspects of creation give you confidence regarding God's faithfulness?

### Digging Deeper

Beyond offering praise, how do you express your thankfulness for God's natural gifts?

## B. Perfectly Placed in God (vv. 5-10)

### 5. Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the LORD his God.

This verse returns to the one in whom trust should really be placed: *the Lord*. Jacob is singled out here among the patriarchs (see Exodus 3:15). The probable reason is that *Jacob* here refers to Israel, the collective name for God's people (Genesis 32:28; 35:10; Exodus 1:1, 7; etc.). The expression emphasizes God's special care for Jacob the individual in particular, then to his descendants by extension. Just as God cared for the man Jacob, so the person who calls on *the God of Jacob* for help is exceedingly *happy*. This trust stands in contrast to the misplaced faith in human beings (Psalm 146:3, above).

### 6a. Which made heaven, and earth, the sea, and all that therein is.

Here the psalm shifts to highlight some of God's acts and characteristics that make Him worthy of trust and praise. God's role as creator of the entire cosmos and all its occupants (Genesis 1) shows how infinitely powerful He is (compare Job 38–41). Similar appeals to God's creative might as justification for hope and trust can be found in Psalms 115:15; 121:2; 124:8; and 134:3. In fact, when the people of Judah returned from exile, they and their leaders likewise confessed their sins to God and referred to God's creation of the universe in their praises to Him (Nehemiah 9:1-6).

*The sea* sometimes serves as a metaphor for chaos in the Old Testament (examples: Psalms 74:13-15; 89:9; Jonah 2:2-6), and some ancient peoples believed that the chaotic sea predated the existence of the gods (compare Genesis 1:2). The

### 6b. Which keepeth truth for ever.

Here the psalmist introduces the next major set of reasons to trust in and praise God: His faithfulness. The claim that God *keepeth truth for ever* refers to God's constant loyalty to His people. The speaker does not switch topics here; God's faithfulness is rooted in His role as the creator of the cosmos. The link between God's fidelity and His role as creator was established in Genesis. After the flood waters receded, God made a covenant with humanity and all other living creatures, promising that He would never again destroy the world as He had before (Genesis 8:21-22; 9:9-17).

### 7a. Which executeth judgment for the oppressed.

God's care for *the oppressed* would have surprised many in the ancient context, as financial prosperity was often seen as a sign of divine favor. While God has sometimes blessed His people materially (examples: Genesis 24:35; 1 Kings 3:10-14), a lack of means is not necessarily a sign of divine disfavor, although it could be (example: Haggai 1:1-11). Even so, the psalmist notes that God pays special attention to those who don't have enough (examples: Leviticus 19:10; 25:35; Deuteronomy 15:7-11; Isaiah 58:6-12; Ezekiel 18:5-17). We can also point to Jesus' identification with these groups (see Psalm 146:7b-8a, below) in His teaching on judgment (Matthew 25:37-45) and in His own summary of His earthly ministry (see Luke 4:16-20, as quoting Isaiah 61:1-2).

We do well to note that asserting a particular care for the oppressed does not suggest God's lack of concern toward non-oppressed people or even oppressors themselves. After all, His care falls on

everyone regardless of one's standing (examples: Leviticus 19:15; Matthew 5:45).

**7b-8a. Which giveth food to the hungry. The LORD looseth the prisoners. The LORD openeth the eyes of the blind. The LORD raiseth them that are bowed down.**

One category of the oppressed are *the hungry*, pointing to a lack of necessities. The next three phrases should be read in parallel. The reference to opening *blind* eyes is most likely a metaphor for freeing *prisoners*, and the state of being *bowed down* is also associated with imprisonment (Isaiah 61:1-2).

**8b-9a. The LORD loveth the righteous. The LORD preserveth the strangers; he relieveth the fatherless and widow.**

These phrases highlight persons for whom God has a special concern. The first are *the righteous*, whom the text specifically identifies as those whom God loves. The second are *the strangers*, those who are foreign to the land. God's special concern for the plight of the alien is illustrated in the Pentateuch (also called the Torah, the first five books of the Bible), as multiple laws demand the fair and generous treatment of those who are not part of the people of Israel (Exodus 23:9; Leviticus 19:34; Deuteronomy 1:16; 24:14).

The third highlights God's special care for *the fatherless and widow*, also emphasized in the Torah (examples: Exodus 22:22-24; Deuteronomy 10:18; 27:19), wisdom literature (examples: Psalms 10:14, 18; 68:5; Proverbs 15:25), and the prophets (example: Isaiah 1:17; Jeremiah 22:3; Malachi 3:5). Indeed, James 1:27 affirms that God considers care for widows and orphans as a defining component of "pure" and "undefiled" religious faith.

### What Do You Think?

What is our responsibility toward people like those named in verses 7-9?

### Digging Deeper

How is your church working to address needs within your community?

## Global Help

The International Rescue Committee (IRC) is a shining example of an organization that works

tirelessly to champion the cause of the oppressed in times of conflict and disaster. With a global reach, it provides aid and assistance to those in need, especially in vulnerable communities. The organization offers essential services such as health care, education, and protection to those most in need. The IRC also provides people with the tools and resources to build better futures for themselves and their families. They empower individuals with vocational training, financial assistance, and other resources to create sustainable livelihoods.

The work of the IRC reminds us of the potential to make a positive difference in the world through helping those in need. But ultimately, this work is God's; His concern is global, and His help is available to all. How does your own work reflect God's heart for caring for "the least of these" (Matthew 25:40)? —O. P.

**9b. But the way of the wicked he turneth upside down.**

In looking after the righteous, the alien, the widows, and the orphans, God specifically acts against the designs and interests of *the wicked*. This is an example of what is called "antithetical parallelism." This feature of Hebrew poetry supports the point of the second thought (the half-verse before us) from the opposite perspective of the first thought (in the half-verse before this one).

**10. The LORD shall reign for ever, even thy God, O Zion, unto all generations. Praise ye the LORD.**

In contrast to human leaders, God will reign *for ever*. This eternity, coupled with His creative power, means that God is able to do anything He desires. And this God is the God of Zion, the name for the hill upon which Jerusalem was built (see 2 Samuel 5:6-7). By invoking the name *Zion*, the psalmist calls the readers' attention to the fact

## How to Say It

Israel	iz-ray-el.
Jerusalem	Juh-roo-suh-lem.
shofar ( <i>Hebrew</i> )	show-far.
Torah ( <i>Hebrew</i> )	Tor-uh.
Zion	Zi-un.



Visual for Lesson 11. Briefly go over this chart while discussing the Lesson Context; it can be used to review psalms from previous lessons.

that their God chose to place His glory in Jerusalem (1 Kings 8:1-11). With that reminder, the psalm concludes with a final exhortation to *praise ye the Lord*.

### III. Exhortation

(Psalm 150:1-6)

#### A. Where (v. 1)

**1. Praise ye the LORD. Praise God in his sanctuary. Praise him in the firmament of his power.**

Psalm 150 also opens with the exhortation *praise ye the Lord* (see Lesson Context; Psalm 146:1 [above]). But right away, we are confronted with an interpretive difficulty: Do the next two exhortations speak of where God is or where the person doing the praising is to be? We need to look for clues.

The precise location of God’s *sanctuary* and its proximity to *the firmament of his power* is debated (compare Psalm 11:4). The sanctuary could refer to the temple in Jerusalem (example: 1 Chronicles 9:28-29) or to God’s heavenly home (example: “holy habitation” in Psalm 68:4-5). The parallelism of the verses and the reference to *the firmament of his power*—a heavenly location—may support the celestial sanctuary (examples: Isaiah 6:1-4; Revelation 5). It is also possible, however, that the verse calls for worship in both earthly and heavenly realms. In that case, the psalmist would

have envisioned the entire universe gathering to praise God (compare Psalms 96, 148).

#### B. Why (v. 2)

**2. Praise him for his mighty acts. Praise him according to his excellent greatness.**

Any discussion of God, whether concerning the Father, Son, or Holy Spirit, will essentially deal with (or presuppose conclusions to) two issues: *who God is* (in His nature and essence) and *what God has done* (in His acts of creating, ruling, and redeeming). To *praise him for his mighty acts* honors God in terms of what He has done; to *praise him according to his excellent greatness* is to honor Him in terms of His essential being and character. General references to God’s “mighty acts” can also be found in Psalms 106:2; 145:4, 12; etc., with content expounded in texts such as Psalm 136.

#### C. How (vv. 3-5)

**3. Praise him with the sound of the trumpet. Praise him with the psaltery and harp.**

The next three verses identify the various instruments that the psalmist envisioned being used to praise God. These instruments are taken both from the religious rites of the priests and prophets and from the realm of the laity, which implies that every form of music should be mustered to glorify God.

The first instrument mentioned is the priestly ram’s horn *trumpet*, called the *shofar*. These were used in worship (Leviticus 25:9), as a signal in war (Joshua 6:4-9, 20), to warn of danger (Joel 2:1), to express joyous celebration (2 Samuel 6:15), to herald news (1 Samuel 13:3), at the installation of a king (1 Kings 1:34), and to call to assembly (Jeremiah 4:5).

*The psaltery and harp* were stringed instruments mentioned together seven times in the psalms (here and in Psalms 33:2; 57:8; 71:22; 81:2; 92:3; and 108:2). They were also used by the prophets in their ministering (1 Samuel 10:5; 1 Chronicles 25:1, 6), and David famously played such an instrument for Saul to drive away the spirit that afflicted him (1 Samuel 16:23).

**4. Praise him with the timbrel and dance. Praise him with stringed instruments and organs.**



*The timbrel* is similar to a modern tambourine, being small enough to be held in the hand. Use of this rhythm percussion instrument is associated with dances of joy several times in the Old Testament (examples: Exodus 15:20; Psalm 149:3), even joy that has the wrong focus (Isaiah 5:11-12).

The term *stringed instruments* likely refers collectively to the various kinds of such instruments rather than a third type. The *organs* could refer to a pipe or collectively to various kinds of wind instruments but distinct from horns.

### **5. Praise him upon the loud cymbals. Praise him upon the high sounding cymbals.**

The percussion section is mentioned in this verse. It is possible that two different instruments are in view here. Alternatively, the same instrument may have been used in different ways. Regardless of the exact items to which the text refers, the idea is that those present to praise God should make loud and joyful noises.

## **D. Who (v. 6)**

### **6. Let every thing that hath breath praise the LORD. Praise ye the LORD.**

The psalm concludes by identifying the persons who should praise God. *Every thing that hath breath* could refer to human beings, specifically, into whom God breathed the “breath of life” (Genesis 2:7). However, animals are also said to possess the “breath of life” (7:15). Consequently, it seems likely that the psalmist has invited all creation to participate in praising the Creator (compare Psalms 69:34; 103:22; 148:1-10).

## **What Sound?**

When my niece was about three, a favorite pastime of mine was to ask her what sounds different animals make. Some of these were quite easy for her—a cat, a dog, a rooster. But when I asked, for instance, how a bunny or a fish sounds, she would grow quite serious. Sometimes she would remain silent in her contemplation, and sometimes she’d vocalize something off-the-wall just to make us both laugh.

Imagine all the animal sounds we can mimic—and all those we don’t even know—joining in with our human worship. That is the call of Psalm 150:

to praise unabashedly. What a sound when *all* of creation joins in His praise! —J. A. K.

### **What Do You Think?**

How does it feel to assume that all of creation is praising God around you?

### **Digging Deeper**

What opportunities outside of weekly worship services do you have to join in praising the Lord of creation?

## **Conclusion**

### **A. Praise Your Heavenly Father**

I was eager to praise my earthly father. I saw all that he did for me and how he cared for me, and I always looked up to him. Many of you likely can relate to that.

But we often fail to praise our Heavenly Father the same way. We take His blessings for granted, as though these were given to us by nature rather than a loving God. We brag about what someone has done for us, but we never share with others the ways that God shows His mercy toward us. In fact, we are prone to grumbling and complaining about how difficult the circumstances of life can be.

Psalms 146 and 150 exhort us to praise God for all the great deeds He has done and continues to do for us. When we gather together in praise of our heavenly Father, we not only align ourselves with the admonitions of Scripture, but we also grow in our intimacy with God and with other believers. Moreover, when we remind ourselves of and meditate on God’s gracious acts on our behalf, we grow in our gratitude toward God and our resistance to grumbling. We can come to appreciate God’s blessings more and find joy in our lives even in (or especially in) difficult circumstances.

### **B. Prayer**

Heavenly Father, remind us daily of all Your mercies to us. Fill our hearts with gratitude and our mouths with Your praise. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

### **C. Thought to Remember**

God deserves our praise.

# Involvement Learning

Enhance your lesson with KJV Bible Student (from your curriculum supplier) and the reproducible activity page (at [www.standardlesson.com](http://www.standardlesson.com) or in the back of the KJV Standard Lesson Commentary Deluxe Edition).

## Into the Lesson

Begin today's session by reading each of the following statements to your class. Poll the class after each statement to see how many agree with it and how many disagree. *Option.* You may want to display these or distribute them on a handout (you create).

1. Too much praise will keep a child from reaching his or her full potential.
2. The most praiseworthy person in my life has also been the most influential.
3. I can praise you without diminishing myself.
4. There aren't many situations or people in my life really deserving of praise.

Divide the class into groups of two or three. Ask class members to choose one of the statements and to explain to their partner(s) why they agree or disagree with it.

After a few minutes for discussion, tell the class, "Today's lesson is all about praise we can always feel good about: praise to God our Father. The psalmist was effusive with his praise. Let's open our Bibles to discover why."

## Into the Word

Ask each group from the previous exercise to combine with one other group. In these new groups, class members should examine Psalms 146 and 150 to complete a handout of a chart (you create) with the following headings: *Chapter and Verse*, *Why Praise?*, and *How to Praise?*, noting for each section from the texts why and/or how the psalmist encourages praise.

*Option.* Ask some or all the groups to list the praiseworthy actions of God they find in Psalm 146. Besides each one, they should jot down ways they see God doing these things in our world today. If they have time, groups could do internet research to discover ministries or other agencies through whom God is working to accomplish each one.

Give the class six to eight minutes to work in groups before calling them together for an all-class discussion of the psalms, reviewing their group findings and conclusions.

*Alternative.* Distribute copies of the "Words About Praise" exercise from the activity page, which you can download. Allow learners to work in pairs to complete as instructed.

## Into Life

Challenge class members to identify their own personal reasons to praise God from the list of reasons they compiled in their Bible study. Tell them to write or circle the encouragements to praise that mean the most to them. Then, in their groups, they can share what they've chosen and why.

Encourage individuals to write a brief praise prayer of a few words or one or two sentences and to share what they've written with the group. Then each group should choose one of the prayers for the whole class to hear. Close today's session with a prayer made up of these praises read aloud by those who wrote them.

*Option.* Point some or all of your groups specifically to Psalm 146:7-9 and challenge them to brainstorm ways God could use class members to do each praiseworthy work. Ask them to consider how God would be praised by each idea they mention.

*Alternative.* Distribute copies of "Chronicle of Praise" exercise from the activity page. Encourage learners to complete the chart in their personal times with God each day in the coming week. (You may want to make time in next week's session for members to share any insights or conclusions that came to them because they completed this activity.)

In your closing prayer time, include prayers for God's help in pursuing their ideas in the coming days.

# A Song of Thanksgiving

Devotional Reading: Ephesians 5:1-2, 15-20

Background Scripture: Psalm 100

## Psalm 100

**1** Make a joyful noise unto the LORD, all ye lands.

**2** Serve the LORD with gladness: Come before his presence with singing.

**3** Know ye that the LORD he is God: It is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves; We are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.

**4** Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, And into his courts with praise: Be thankful unto him, and bless his name.

**5** For the LORD is good; his mercy is everlasting; And his truth endureth to all generations.



## Key Text

*Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name. —Psalm 100:4*

# Worship in the Covenant Community

## Unit 3: Psalms of Thanksgiving and Praise

Lessons 10–13

### Lesson Aims

After participating in this lesson, each learner will be able to:

1. Identify the psalmist's reasons for grateful praise.
2. Articulate why giving thanks is appropriate for all creation.
3. Make a plan to better recognize and seize opportunities for thanksgiving.

### Lesson Outline

#### Introduction

- A. An Invitation to Joy
- B. Lesson Context

#### I. An Invitation to Worship (Psalm 100:1-2)

- A. Open to All (v. 1)  
*Praise the Lord*
- B. With Gladness (v. 2)

#### II. An Invitation to Know (Psalm 100:3-5)

- A. Who God Is (v. 3a-b)
- B. Who We Are (v. 3c)  
*Why the Servant Smiled*
- C. Why We Should Praise (vv. 4-5)

#### Conclusion

- A. Looking to the Future
- B. Prayer
- C. Thought to Remember

## Introduction

### A. An Invitation to Joy

The confession that God constantly cares for humans points us to the reality of mystery. Why should God care? Would it be appropriate for an eternal being to care about such short-lived creatures as human beings? Given the apparently unnecessary suffering in the world, and in Israel's history specifically, how can we know that God cares? Most of the Bible concerns these questions. Its answers should provoke a profound sense of wonder in all of us.

Psalm 100 makes a simpler point, however. It confesses that God shows profound care for a whole people, the Israelites, preserving them during times of political and social turmoil, teaching them how to live better lives through the Torah, and listening to their prayers whether the people were praising or lamenting. That view of God's work lies at the very heart of the faith of both the synagogue and the church. We are part of a great flock tended by the shepherd who drives away the wolves and leads us to good pastures, as Psalm 23 says (see lesson 10).

### B. Lesson Context

Psalm 100 is familiar to many Christians through the hymn "All People That on Earth Do Dwell," whose tune is called "Old Hundredth." The superscription to Psalm 100 states the obvious. The psalm concerns praise, or better, thanksgiving. Anyone singing this psalm should come to God with deep gratitude.

The book of Psalms is actually a collection of five books or sections. Most Bibles note these book divisions (often with Roman numerals) at the beginnings of Psalms 1, 42, 73, 90, and 107. Altogether these five books feature 150 poems.

Psalm 100, today's text, is found in the fourth of these five books. Many scholars consider this section of Psalms (that is, Psalms 90–106) to be the answer to the problem presented in the first three books: the Davidic dynasty established (Psalm 2); the flourishing of that dynasty (Psalm 72); and the failure of that dynasty (Psalm 89). The emphasis in Book IV of Psalms is simply that God reigns!

The verbs throughout the psalm that are plural invite all who hear the psalm to join in praising God. The original singers were to express their appreciation for God’s work among them in the central location, the temple in Jerusalem (compare 2 Chronicles 5:2, 12-13). The reason for the gratitude appears in Psalms 93–99, which should be read along with Psalm 100. Since it is so short, it seems unlikely that it should stand by itself. Rather, it concludes a sequence of psalms that concern Israel’s joyous celebration of God’s benevolent kingship. Much of the psalm has precise parallels in Psalms 95, 96, and 98.

## I. An Invitation to Worship

(Psalm 100:1-2)

### A. Open to All (v. 1)

#### 1. Make a joyful noise unto the LORD, all ye lands.

The single Hebrew word here translated with the phrase *make a joyful noise* occurs 28 times in the book of Psalms. Four of those instances involve making such noise *unto the Lord* (see Psalms 95:1; 98:4, 6). The oldest English translation, that of the Wycliffe Bible of AD 1395, challenged the reader to “sing ye heartily to God.” The same verb is used for the shout at the siege of Jericho (Joshua 6:5, 10, 16, 20). The call to shout with joy in worship speaks to the high enthusiasm and excitement that should surround the praises of the faithful community (compare Ezra 3:11).

*All ye lands* translates a Hebrew phrase that appears 17 times in the Psalter. In 15 of those instances, the translation is “all the earth” or “the whole earth,” and that is the sense here (examples: Psalms 33:8; 96:9). Even so, some students think that the text calls the faithful of Israel, wherever they may be, to prayer and praise. This interpretation is supported by many texts that call Israel to faithful worship of the Lord (example: 95:6-10). And the focus might be on Israelites who were forced to migrate to many lands, and about whom the prophets were concerned (example: Hosea 11:10-11). This cannot be proven, however, as no date or author is given for the psalm.

Another interpretation is that the challenge

to prayer and praise is for Jew and Gentile alike, anywhere in the world. Like Psalms 148–150, this understanding of the text expects that not just Israelites will join in praising God, but all human beings (compare Psalms 22:27; 96:7). How will this occur? The psalm does not spell out how Gentiles should know about God’s mercy and kindness (although the gospel message will clarify this later).

The idea that Gentiles will come to know about Israel’s God is a repeated theme of the Old Testament. For example, Abraham’s family was to be a blessing to “all families of the earth” (Genesis 12:3; compare Galatians 3:8). The prophet Isaiah drew on this idea (Isaiah 2:1-4; 49:6; 60:3), as did other prophets (examples: Micah 4:1-4; Zechariah 9:10). A third possibility is that the writer might have embraced intentionally the ambiguity of whether he was speaking to Israel as dispersed in the world or to both Israelites and Gentiles everywhere. Certainly, the psalm eventually came to have the bigger vision. All human beings may join in the worship of God in the full knowledge that God welcomes all into a deep relationship (Acts 3:24-26).

#### What Do You Think?

When do you find yourself desiring to make a joyful noise to the Lord?

#### Digging Deeper

Do you ever stifle this urge? Might your answer change if you sensed “all the lands” joining in that celebration?

#### Praise the Lord

Every Sunday morning, believers from diverse backgrounds and walks of life gather as a congregation to worship and praise God. Despite their differences, they come together in love and devotion to God. They start their worship by singing hymns and offering prayers of thanksgiving, expressing their joy and gratitude for all the blessings in their lives. Their collective voices create a beautiful harmony that fills the sanctuary, and the spirit of unity and peace permeates throughout the congregation.

As they worship and praise, this congregation embodies the message of Psalm 100:1. They enter God's presence with joy and thanksgiving, recognizing and celebrating the goodness and faithfulness of God. Their worship is not merely ritualistic but is a genuine expression of their heartfelt devotion and gratitude toward Him. Their faith and hope in God's love and provision shines through their worship, and it serves as a powerful reminder that no matter how difficult the circumstances might be, the Maker's presence and goodness remain constant. Can the same be said of your own prayer, praise, and worship practices? —O. P.

## B. With Gladness (v. 2)

### 2a. Serve the LORD with gladness.

The invitation comes with certain expectations. The first is that serving *the Lord* can't be separated from worshipping Him (Matthew 4:10). The deity served is the deity worshipped, and vice versa (1 Kings 9:6, 9; 16:31). Another expectation concerns the attitude or motivation that people bring to that privilege. We do not *serve* God primarily out of fear of violating His rules, nor do we serve as those who merely tick off boxes as a matter of ritual or for personal gain. Either approach assumes that our good works will justify us in God's eyes. Rather, we serve *with gladness*, a word translated "joy" elsewhere. This approach dispels worry and allows for simple trust in God's mercy. The word translated "gladness" occurs 14 times in the book of Psalms, where it is also translated "joy" (Psalms 16:11; 43:4; 137:6). This sense of joy occurs in individuals and in the community.

The life of worship and service should be filled with joy whenever possible and deeply honest when it is not (compare 2 Corinthians 1:3-11; Philippians 1:12-18). While not under consideration in this psalm, it is important to recognize that Israel used laments to help them express the disorientation and pain they experienced (see the book of Lamentations). Asserting that we are to serve and worship the Lord with gladness is not an exclusive call to speak *only* happily to God. He has made room for all our experiences, as we see most clearly in the incarnation of Jesus.

### 2b. Come before his presence with singing.

The invitation to *come*, here and in Psalm 100:4 (below), is similar to Psalm 95:2, 6. Singing is mentioned more than 130 times in the Psalter, and joy takes concrete form as the community assembles in doing so. The psalm invites those hearing it to take delight in both God's merciful work and their fellow human beings' celebration of that work.

Ancient *singing* normally was accompanied by musical instruments, including stringed lyres or harps, wind instruments such as pipes, flutes, or ocarinas, and percussion instruments such as drums or shakers (compare last week's lesson on Psalm 150). The talents of the people come together to express their pleasure in God's goodness. We see a similar embrace of creativity in service to God in His calling of Bezaleel and Aholiab "to devise cunning works, to work in gold, and in silver, and in brass" (Exodus 31:4). We do well to consider how we, too, are allowing our skilled artisans to lead us into the worship of our creative God.

#### What Do You Think?

What role does music in general play in your life?

#### Digging Deeper

What are some "glad" songs that incline your heart to serve the Lord?

## II. An Invitation to Know

(Psalm 100:3-5)

### A. Who God Is (v. 3a-b)

#### 3a. Know ye that the LORD he is God.

We now come to the beating heart of Psalm 100. Here is the first key idea of the verse: *the Lord*—the God of Israel who rescued the people from Egyptian bondage, gave them the promised land, and sustained them repeatedly in times of crisis—is the one and only true *God*. Other "gods" do not merit the name.

Since the psalm probably addresses the whole world, and not just Israel alone, the confession that "the Lord he is God" is to be offered by all human beings. Or in other words, the evidence of God's deity, as revealed in the exodus and other

miraculous events of Israel's history, also extends to non-Israelites (Gentiles). This idea also appears in, for example, Psalms 46:10 and 83:18.

The main idea of the psalm is the call to *know* God. Human knowledge of God is always limited and entirely dependent on God's self-revelation. We can know only what God has equipped us to know. And the main thing we know is God's mercy to human beings. By calling Abraham and his descendants to be a people, God was forming a people who could be an example of the possibilities of righteousness and mercy for all human beings. The psalm invites its Jewish singers and all who overhear them to experience confidence in God's willingness to be with the reader in a deep relationship. Peoplehood is worth celebrating.

Knowing God is an important way the New Testament talks about the experience of being a Christian. The Gospel of John, in particular, speaks of evidence as it relates to coming to the knowledge of the deity of Christ (John 4:39-42; 6:69; 8:28; 20:30-31). What we can know, we know through the revelation of the Son (1:18; compare 1 John 1:1; 2:13-14; 4:2). This idea does not appear in this form in the Old Testament, of course. Yet its core ingredients do.

### **3b. It is he that hath made us.**

The second idea, or rather confession, is that the Lord's status as the unique God means that He is the Creator. Ancient religions sometimes thought of the creator as a retired deity, the ancestor of the current leader of the gods of their pantheons. For the Bible, there is only one God, and so God must be the Creator.

#### **What Do You Think?**

What reassurance can you take from God's forming His people, not our forming ourselves into His people?

#### **Digging Deeper**

How do you experience freedom in light of God's work forming us?

## **B. Who We Are (v. 3c)**

**3c. And not we ourselves. We are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.**

We did not make *ourselves*, having no godly power to do so. Saying so implies God's continued power over us and our relative powerlessness in the face of the Lord who formed us. The phrase *we are his people* implies a shared history and hope for the future, a deep relationship marked by prayer and service.

The last part of the verse restates and deepens that idea (compare Psalm 95:6-7). "Shepherd" was a royal title (example: 2 Samuel 24:17), with God being the heavenly king who cares for human beings (compare Psalm 23; John 10:11-18). While the image of Israel as a flock can have negative connotations—the sheep for the slaughter, etc. (Psalms 44:11, 22; 49:14)—it more ordinarily has a positive meaning. The image may be one of mutual love and desire for relationship (examples: 77:20; 78:52; 79:13; 107:41). Even the negative uses are such because they hope for a positive relationship that does not seem available at the moment (examples: 74:1; 80:1-7).

## **Why the Servant Smiled**

At the funeral of Kevin, a dear friend who dedicated his life to serving others, the officiant fittingly referred to him as a "smiling servant." Kevin recognized that God's people are in His safekeeping, just like sheep in a meadow under the care of a good shepherd. By embracing God's authority, Kevin knew he would be protected and find joy. He believed in God's protection and care, so he gave back to others with a warm, comforting smile that brought joy to those around him.

## **How to Say It**

Aholiab	Uh- <i>ho</i> -lih-ab.
Bezaleel	Bih- <i>zal</i> -ih-el.
Gentiles	<i>Jen</i> -tiles.
Jerusalem	Juh- <i>roo</i> -suh-lem.
Mishnah	<i>Mish</i> -nuh.
pantheons	<i>pan</i> -thee-ahnz.
tabernacles	<b>tah</b> -burr- <i>nah</i> -kulz.
Torah ( <i>Hebrew</i> )	<i>Tor</i> -uh.
Wycliffe	Wye-clif.
Yom Kippur	Yohm Ki- <i>poor</i> or Yahm Ki- <i>poor</i> .

Visual for  
Lessons 8 & 12



Ask learners to consider who they are inviting to the Lord's feast and how they are doing so.

The faith and trust behind his smiles were not just a knowledge of facts but also an understanding of the relationship between the Creator and the created. Until his last breath, Kevin completely understood this, so he smiled.

Kevin's life exemplified the peace and joy found, even in life's troubles, when we recognize God's love and care. Who reminds you to trust in God's care? And who are you reminding, by word and deed, to do the same? —O. P.

### C. Why We Should Praise (vv. 4-5)

#### 4a. Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise.

This psalm was to be sung in the temple as part of congregational worship (see Psalm 100:2b, above). *Gates* and *courts* together form the part of the temple precinct to which the congregation had access. The temple centered on the holy of holies, which only the high priest could enter once a year in order to offer a sacrifice for atonement (Hebrews 9:7). A court outside of this was open to priests, another outside that to men of Israel, and the courts on the outside perimeter were available to women and Gentiles.

Because a large group was being called to praise, this psalm probably was sung at a major holiday when Israelites made a pilgrimage from the countryside and gathered at the temple in Jerusalem. Some scholars have connected this song to the feast of tabernacles (see Levit-

icus 23:33-43) but without great certainty. In the third century AD, the collection of Jewish law called the Mishnah reported the tradition that the priests in the temple sang Psalm 94 on Wednesdays and Psalm 93 on Fridays. So it is possible that Psalm 100 also figured in daily rituals, but this is also very uncertain. There are not enough specific clues in Psalms 93–100 to answer the question confidently.

What is more certain is that the psalm envisions a congregation singing it inside the temple courtyards, as do Psalms 24:7-10; 120–134; 149–150. These speak of processions, dancing, and crowds preparing themselves for worship together. Psalm 100 also excludes usage during a day of fasting or remorse (like Yom Kippur—the Day of Atonement; see Leviticus 16; 23:26-32). Such an observance would require a different sort of psalm.

#### What Do You Think?

What physical places remind you of entering God's temple?

#### Digging Deeper

How does praise shift if you are doing it all the time, no matter where you are, since you are part of the temple of the Lord (1 Corinthians 3:16)?

#### 4b. Be thankful unto him, and bless his name.

To *bless* God means to praise Him and give thanks to Him, or to give Him all proper due (compare Psalm 96:2). The congregation should praise God and elevate His *name* above all others. The congregation should revere God and treasure the opportunity to be in His presence. Worship, then, is not primarily a moment for inspiring people, but a time for connecting people to God as it brings to memory our deep dependence on God's love.

#### 5. For the LORD is good. His mercy is everlasting, and his truth endureth to all generations.

The psalm ends with closely connected reasons for human praise. The statement that *the Lord is good* is no mere cliché, for many ancient deities were far from good. The notice of God's goodness



appears frequently in the book of Psalms, often as a reason for praise and confidence in the possibilities of a good life (examples: Psalms 25:8; 34:8; 86:5; 119:68; 145:9).

But how can God's goodness be proven? *His mercy* is seen in example after example of repeated acts of healing, forgiving, and rescuing Israel from oppressors. That merciful goodness has appeared again and again in Israel's history, as psalms reciting God's deeds show (examples: Psalms 105–106). God's goodness appears in the permanent nature of His trustworthiness (compare 98:3).

The word translated *truth* means "faithfulness," and it is translated that way in numerous passages (examples: Psalms 36:5; 89:8; 119:90). Thus, the idea is more than "factual accuracy." God's promises and actions are reliable, providing an unailing guide to human happiness.

Because God's faithfulness endures *to all generations*, Psalm 100 points to the future. The countless experiences of the people with God illustrate divine faithfulness. The people's worship should recall those experiences. It should also express their confidence that such faithfulness awaits their descendants. Hope is "baked into" the worshiping congregations, understanding of reality and its behaviors.

### What Do You Think?

How can you see God's faithfulness in your family's history?

### Digging Deeper

What stories should you pass on to younger generations so that God's faithfulness to your family will be known?

## Conclusion

### A. Looking to the Future

The center of Psalm 100 invites those singing it to know God's goodness. That goodness shows up in God's unailing loyalty to Israel and repeated acts to help and heal them and other human beings.

Psalm 100 concludes a group of psalms by

inviting all human beings, and especially the people of Israel, to worship God in the joyful knowledge that He loves them and will care for them. By ending a group of psalms this way, Psalm 100 creates a sort of infinite loop. It invites us to begin with Psalm 93 and sing the rest of the hymns of praise, and when we reach Psalm 100, we can start over again.

Throughout these hymns, God the king brings salvation and joy to a needy and expectant people. They acknowledge that blessing with the only resource they can: their collective singing.

Psalm 100 ends with a look toward the future. Far from regarding the fate of the succeeding generations as bleak or hopeless, this psalm assumes that an eternal God will always care for those who come after. The invitation to praise extends to all people. It is not a distraction from the nitty-gritty details of life but a way of helping us understand what those details can mean when we submit them to our Creator.

This perspective is worth recovering today because it frees us to find ways to bless our descendants rather than leaving them with problems and burdens. The hopefulness and joy of the psalm invites us to live in ways that future generations will remember us with approval. In reading or singing this psalm today, we can be confident that the God whom Israel trusted is still trustworthy. The hope to which they aspired, we also can embrace.

### B. Prayer

Our God and King, You are enthroned in the highest heaven and in the heart of the humblest person. You alone are God, and You have made us in wonderful ways. Help us to celebrate what You have done, are doing, and will do for all Your creation as You sustain and bless all the things You have made. Help us to recall who we are, Your treasured people, so that we may invite others into that same sense of belonging. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

### C. Thought to Remember

Know that the Lord is God and praise accordingly!

# Involvement Learning

Enhance your lesson with KJV Bible Student (from your curriculum supplier) and the reproducible activity page (at [www.standardlesson.com](http://www.standardlesson.com) or in the back of the KJV Standard Lesson Commentary Deluxe Edition).

## Into the Lesson

Group the class into pairs or triads and distribute or post these questions: 1—What is the last thank-you card or expression you received? 2—What is the last thank-you card or expression you sent? 3—How did you feel when you received thanks? when you did not?

Give the groups five minutes and ask each individual to choose one of the questions and answer it in their group. Tell the class, “Today’s psalm gives us words to express our thanks to the One who deserves it most. As we study, you can evaluate how well and how often you tell Him thanks.”

## Into the Word

Combine each group of two or three with another for Bible study. Assign all of your groups *one* of the following activities. Or use *two* or all *three* of these activities among the groups.

*Option 1.* Ask learners to brainstorm or research hymns and worship songs based on Psalm 100. Compare the lyrics of the songs with the Bible text to find those you feel most faithfully share its meaning. Consider singing together or listening to a public domain version of one of these songs, either now or toward the end of class.

*Option 2.* Distribute a handout (you create) with the following prompts for group members to answer as they consider Psalm 100:

Verses 1-2: Describe the emotions here. Write one sentence to summarize the main idea of these verses.

Verse 3: What does praise affirm about our relationship with God?

Verse 4: Where are we supposed to praise and thank God? What does this say about the kind of relationship He wants to have with us?

Verse 5: How do these statements about God qualify Him for praise like no one else?

*Option 3.* Distribute the “Why Worship?” exercise from the activity page, which you can down-

load. Groups should complete the activity as indicated before coming together as a whole group to discuss answers based on Psalm 100. Record answers on the board as learners speak.

Give your groups at least 10 minutes to work on any of these activities, and then allow several minutes for them to report and discuss as a class.

## Into Life

Divide the class into their prior groups. Choose one or two of the following activities, asking groups to complete them simultaneously.

*Option 1.* Distribute blank paper and pencils. In three subgroups, learners should jot down reasons to be thankful according to the category assigned to them: **The Personal Group**, **The Home and Family Group**, and **The Church Group**. Encourage them to be specific, even if trivial. After the minute has passed, ask volunteers to share one item from their list with their entire group. Ask volunteers, “How do you feel about thanking God for blessings like those you’ve listed?”

*Option 2.* Distribute card stock, markers, stickers, and other art supplies. Ask members in groups to make place cards for a family dinner, maybe even Thanksgiving dinner. Each card should contain a quote or paraphrase from a verse or section of Psalm 100, along with the name of one person at the table. As they’re working, volunteers should tell each other about the people who are coming to dinner. *Note.* Be sensitive that class members may be mourning the absence of family or friends from holiday gatherings this year.

*Option 3.* Distribute the “Responsive Reading” exercise from the activity page to be completed as indicated.

After calling time on the chosen activities, ask learners how they can better recognize and seize opportunities for thanksgiving in the coming week. Encourage them to write these plans down and act on them. Close class with prayer.

# God's Promised Presence

Devotional Reading: Exodus 33:12-23

Background Scripture: Psalm 139

## Psalm 139:1-12

1 O LORD, thou hast searched me, and known me.

2 Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off.

3 Thou compassest my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways.

4 For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O LORD, thou knowest it altogether.

5 Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me.

6 Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it.

7 Whither shall I go from thy spirit? Or whither shall I flee from thy presence?

8 If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there.

9 If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea;

10 Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me.

11 If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me.

12 Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to thee.



## Key Text

*O LORD, thou hast searched me, and known me.* —Psalm 139:1

# Worship in the Covenant Community

## Unit 3: Psalms of Thanksgiving and Praise

Lessons 10–13

### Lesson Aims

After participating in this lesson, each learner will be able to:

1. List the things that God knows based on Psalm 139:1-12.
2. Explain the imagery of light/dark and God's sight in this psalm.
3. Create a nightly reminder of God's loving care.

### Lesson Outline

#### Introduction

- A. Human Limitation
- B. Lesson Context

#### I. Unsearchable Knowledge (Psalm 139:1-6)

- A. Complete Awareness (v. 1)
- B. Complete Insight (vv. 2-3)
- C. Complete Understanding (vv. 4-6)  
*Talk to Someone*

#### II. Unavoidable Presence (Psalm 139:7-12)

- A. In Space (vv. 7-10)  
*To Be Known by God*
- B. In Darkness (vv. 11-12)

#### Conclusion

- A. God's Presence and Knowledge
- B. Prayer
- C. Thought to Remember

## Introduction

### A. Human Limitation

The progress of technology has facilitated an interconnected world. The sheer volume of information that is available thanks to the internet is staggering. But the wealth of knowledge also serves as a reminder of humanity's limitations in experiencing every corner of the globe within a single lifetime. Visiting every country might seem possible. But with approximately 4 million cities and towns across the globe, we realize that just seeing a country will not give us the experience of all those varied places—let alone lightly or uninhabited regions.

Moreover, humanity has only begun to explore the vast expanse of space and the depths of the oceans. In this regard, when we consider the smallness of our plot of land on earth compared to the vastness of space and the oceans, we are reminded of humanity's limited ability to explore. In today's lesson, the psalmist offers insight into this.

### B. Lesson Context

Although one ancient manuscript ascribes Psalm 139 to a man named Zechariah (not the prophet) sometime in the 700s–600s BC, most scholars accept the traditional attribution to David. According to Scripture, David was a man who sought after the very heart of God (1 Samuel 13:14), exemplified by his demonstration of faith when he faced Goliath (17:47). He was a man of integrity who chose to trust in God when presented with an opportunity to kill Saul in a cave (24:8-10). Even after conquering his enemies and receiving the promise that his kingdom would be established forever, David remained humble (2 Samuel 7:18; see commentary on Psalm 139:5b, below).

Several difficulties confront us when reading this psalm. First, there is no reference to a particular historical circumstance. This means that a specific historical context, even in David's life, cannot be determined. Context is a great help in interpretation, so the questions presented below reflect to some degree the question of the context of this psalm's being written. Second, a thorough examination of Psalm 139 reveals complexities

in its structure that complicate a straightforward interpretation of David's intent.

To analyze the psalm's content, some scholars have proposed dividing it into sections of praise (vv. 1-18) and lamentation (vv. 19-24) based on the initial expressions of gratitude followed by anguish. These can further be broken into four stanzas of verses 1-6, 7-12, 13-18, and 19-24. These issues also prevent this psalm from fitting neatly into conventional categories of psalms, which, when clear, can also aid in understanding ancient texts.

And finally, the text assumes that David was beset by wicked adversaries opposed to him and to God. These individuals harbored animosity toward God, profaned His name, and spoke maliciously against Him (Psalm 139:19-22, not in our printed text). Furthermore, David implored God to probe his innermost being and guide him toward eternal life (139:23-24, not in our printed text). But the connection between the verses we will study today (139:1-12) and these opponents is unclear, and how early lament or protest begins is also hazy.

## I. Unsearchable Knowledge

(Psalm 139:1-6)

### A. Complete Awareness (v. 1)

#### 1. O LORD, thou hast searched me, and known me.

This verse introduces a central theme of the chapter, which is further emphasized by its near repetition in the conclusion of this psalm (Psalm 139:23, not in our printed text). God's complete knowledge, often referred to as His omniscience, is the attribute that encompasses His infinite awareness and understanding of everything that has ever happened, is happening, or will happen. He is entirely aware of all things. But David did not set out to write a doctrine of God's knowledge. David assumed God's omniscience as fact and did not make an argument to convince others. David's intention was not to teach about God's infallible, complete knowledge, but instead to marvel at it in awe and perhaps even in fear (see 139:7-12, below).

We might think of this verse as beginning a courtroom drama, with the *Lord* trying the evidence of David's character (*thou hast searched me, and known me*). The Hebrew word translated *searched* is the same expression employed to describe a cross-examination in a judicial context (Proverbs 18:17). God is the judge who has meticulously scrutinized and comprehensively understood all the evidence required to judge the heart's motivations.

#### What Do You Think?

How do you feel knowing that God knows you?

#### Digging Deeper

How can acknowledging the sinful parts of yourself that God already knows prepare you to grow by the Spirit's leading?

### B. Complete Insight (vv. 2-3)

#### 2. Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off.

The psalmist employs the terms *downsitting* and *uprising* to convey God's knowledge of an individual's entire day (see 2 Kings 19:27; Psalm 44:21; Ecclesiastes 12:14; Hebrews 4:13; 1 John 3:20). The two extremes point to God's total knowledge; nothing is left out. (The literary device of naming opposite ends of a spectrum to indicate everything in between is called *merism*.) Jesus' knowledge of people's inner lives is one marker of His divinity recorded in the Gospels (examples: Matthew 12:25; Luke 5:22; John 4:16-19).

#### 3. Thou compassest my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways.

The psalmist emphasizes that God possesses knowledge of both public and private aspects of one's life, from their travels (*my path*) to their rest (*lying down*). The Hebrew term translated *compasses* in context is an image of sifting grains to separate the grain from the chaff (compare Ruth 3:2; Isaiah 41:16). This suggests God's metaphorically sifting David's life to separate chaff from wheat. A helpful analogy to clarify this notion involves likening the process to a gemologist who scatters

an array of gemstones across a table, enabling the individual examination of each specimen for quality (compare Jeremiah 17:10; see Psalm 139:23-24, not in our printed text).

### C. Complete Understanding (vv. 4-6)

#### 4. For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O LORD, thou knowest it altogether.

In human communication, the potential for misinterpretation looms large. This is perhaps especially apparent in text-based media when we realize how much of comprehension comes down to non-verbal cues, such as tone and body language. Even when face-to-face, myriad factors can create misunderstandings no matter how carefully words are selected—not least the words *themselves*, which can have wide variations in meaning and are highly context-dependent. Given the perils of communicating even when both parties are acting truthfully, the risk of being deceived by a bad actor is always high (consider Romans 16:18; 1 John 4:1). In stark contrast, God possesses an unparalleled ability to comprehend every *word* even when it is mere thought or intention. No context or body language confuses His understanding.

#### What Do You Think?

What other verses point to prayer as a gift to us rather than a need of God's?

#### Digging Deeper

What value can you discern in intentionally allowing prayers in the Bible to shape your prayer life?

### Talk to Someone

As clients express themselves, counselors carefully listen to their words, observe their body language, and assess their emotions. Therapists' training and experience allow them to pick up on subtle cues and anticipate the direction of the conversation. By utilizing their well-honed intuition, insight, and expertise, counselors can help their clients make sense of their experiences, uncover underlying issues, and start on a road to healing and growth.

Therapists and counselors exemplify how we can strive to know and understand those around us more deeply. But even a well-trained therapist or counselor could be fooled; after all, they're still human! In contrast, Psalm 139:4 emphasizes the all-knowing nature of God, who is aware of our every thought and word before we even speak to them. God knows us intimately, including our deepest thoughts and emotions. What comfort can you find this week in speaking to the Lord who knows you and loves you? —O. P.

#### 5a. Thou hast beset me behind and before.

Here David's focus shifts from the pure fact of God's knowledge to the action He takes with this knowledge. *Beset* is multifaceted, indicating an act of confinement, binding, or encircling. This can have positive or negative implications, depending on context. Most frequently, it denotes the plight of a city besieged by hostile forces (Deuteronomy 20:12, 19; 1 Samuel 23:8; Daniel 1:1; etc.). In one instance, however, the word is used by the beloved's friends: "If she be a door, we will inclose her with boards of cedar" (Song of Solomon 8:9). A similar concept, though with a different word entirely, is used to describe God's protection of Job: "Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side?" (Job 1:10). The evidence suggests David was experiencing God's presence *behind and before* as a hindrance of some kind.

#### 5b. And laid thine hand upon me.

The metaphor of God's *hand* might shed some light on the context of "beset." Although God is an immaterial being and does not possess physical appendages such as hands or feet, the writers of Scripture were constrained by the limitations of human language in their attempts to depict God in a way that would resonate with their audience. There is precedent for desiring God to turn His attention to someone else, as communicated here with the metaphor of His hand. For instance, after eating the forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden, the *last* thing Adam and Eve desired was an audience with the Lord (Genesis 3:8)! Job asked God to withdraw His hand (Job 13:20-21). And Ezekiel described God as striking His hands together

to punish Judah (Ezekiel 22:13). Later, John the Baptist uses a winnowing metaphor to describe Jesus' hand at work in judgment (Matthew 3:12; see Psalm 139:3, above).

We should not discount that David could have experienced God's attention as being too intense for the man to bear (compare Psalms 25:7; 32:4). This psalm has no confession of sin—and, in fact, it asserts David's blamelessness. But one wonders if God's nearness was bringing to light what David would have preferred to leave in darkness. We might think of the time between his transgressions with Bathsheba and her husband and Nathan's confrontation; David seemed to be living in denial of his sin (2 Samuel 11:1–12:13; contrast Psalm 51 [lesson 6]). This or a similar incident could account for wanting some space from God's knowledge and presence. Far from experiencing God's presence as an unmitigated blessing, David seems at least to struggle with the experience, if not to outright struggle *against* it.

**6. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it.**

This verse effectively conveys the profound distance between the positions of God and humanity (compare Job 42:2-3; Isaiah 55:9-11). After contemplating the inscrutable nature of God's mind, David concludes that God's *knowledge* is far beyond the grasp of human comprehension. Rather than succumbing to despair, the psalmist portrays this phenomenon positively, evoking a sense of awe and amazement toward God. Furthermore, this reality leads the psalmist to acknowledge that he is “fearfully and wonderfully made” (Psalm 139:14, not in our printed text).

## II. Unavoidable Presence

(Psalm 139:7-12)

### A. In Space (vv. 7-10)

**7. Whither shall I go from thy spirit? Or whither shall I flee from thy presence?**

This verse marks the beginning of Psalm 139's second stanza. This pair of questions can be read as an escape attempt (compare Genesis 3:10; Jonah 1:3) or as an oblique acknowledgment of sin (compare Isaiah's cry in Isaiah 6:5), praise, and adora-



Visual for Lesson 13. *Point to this visual as you pose the questions associated with verse 12 for class discussion.*

tion for God's constant *presence* (compare Psalms 16:11; 21:6; 51:11 [see lesson 6]; etc.), or some mixture of these. If the above reading of David's having found God's presence to be heavy is correct, then the first sense is most likely in view. David might have found God answering the king's questions with some questions of His own: “Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? saith the Lord. Do not I fill heaven and earth?” (Jeremiah 23:24).

But even after fleeing from God, Jonah found relief in God's ability to save even from “the deep,” considered to be the furthest place from God's heaven (see Jonah 2:2-6). So we might assume that, though David felt God's scrutiny too much, in the end, this would be a relief compared to a reality in which God was absent.

The portrayal of God's omnipresence (presence everywhere) within this psalm is unique in the context of the ancient Near East. Most, if not all, other deities in the region were considered to have a limited, geographic sphere of influence (example: 1 Kings 20:28). They were not expected to be present other than in the place where they reigned. This highlights a key difference between those so-called gods and the Lord: He reigns over and is present in all places, not to mention the fact that the regional gods are entirely fictional, to begin with! This understanding substantiates that David's writing stemmed from a deeply personal and intimate understanding of God rather than a

mere appropriation of general religious concepts from nearby cultures.

**8. If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there. If I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there.**

The word *if*, found four times in the English translation of Psalm 139:8-11, indicates the hypothetical nature of the declarations that follow. The first two of those verses give examples of places where David could not physically go to flee from God's presence (see Psalm 139:9, below). *Heaven* is obviously a no-go, as it is God's home (1 Kings 8:30, 39, 43; etc.), and David couldn't get there on foot in any case. In ancient Israel's understanding of the world, multiple levels of heavens existed above the earth (see Deuteronomy 10:14; 2 Corinthians 12:2). This suggests that the contrast of heaven with *hell* is another merism, where a combination of two contrasting parts refer to the whole. In this case, considering that the place of the dead was believed to be under the earth (example: Numbers 16:30), these two places are as far from one another as can be (compare Job 11:8; Isaiah 7:11; Amos 9:2; etc.). David's presence in either would not hide him from God.

**What Do You Think?**

How would you counsel someone who wants to trust God but struggles with the fact that He does not always intervene to prevent evil from occurring?

**Digging Deeper**

What assumptions about God and the world need to be confronted to face that question honestly?

**9. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea.**

In contrast to the vertical imagery of the previous verse, David shifts to horizontal imagery. *Wings of the morning* is a poetic reference to sunrise, which happens in the direction east. *The sea* refers to the Mediterranean Sea, which lay to the west of Israel. Taken together, we see another merism as David describes going as far east as possible and as far west as was known. Hence, the depicted imagery expresses God's abundant pres-

ence, extending as far as the distance between the east and the west (compare Psalm 103:12). What David knew instinctively the prophet Jonah would find out the hard way when he was told to go east to Nineveh but tried to flee by going west to Tarshish (Jonah 1:1-3).

**10. Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me.**

Having established the hypothetical situations of the previous two verses, David identified two comforting actions linked to God's omnipresence. First, David could be guided by the *hand* of God regardless of David's location. This assurance was grounded in the understanding that one is never in a place where God cannot provide guidance (example: Psalm 23:4 [lesson 10]).

Second, David asserted that one cannot be beyond the reach of God's protection and salvation, as exemplified by the phrase *right hand shall hold me* (compare Psalms 18:35; 21:8; 63:8). This assurance brought comfort to David, who had in mind his adversaries who sought to do him harm (139:19).

**What Do You Think?**

In which current situations do you find God's presence in your life comforting?

**Digging Deeper**

Do you find His presence alarming in others? Does this suggest that a new course of action would be wise for you?

**To Be Known by God**

Ignatius of Loyola (1491–1556) was the prominent founder of The Society of Jesus (the Jesuits). He authored a book titled *The Spiritual Exercises*, which focused on spiritual development. The book emphasized the importance of respecting and serving God as the sole Creator and supreme Lord of the universe.

Ignatius's teachings on the omnipresence of God were encapsulated in a section of his book called "Principle and Foundation," which serves as the fundamental basis for the spiritual exercises. Ignatius drew insight from Psalm 139 regarding



this. His interpretation of this passage is that our purpose in life is to be known by God, who is present in every situation.

We relate to God in (at least) three ways: as our Creator, Ruler, and Redeemer. God is omniscient (all-knowing) and omnipresent (present everywhere) in these aspects of His nature. What behavior or thought process do you need to change personally to better acknowledge this fact?

—O. P.

## B. In Darkness (vv. 11-12)

**11a. If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me.**

David introduces another conditional statement; the *darkness* here is figurative (metaphorical). Darkness characterizes the time when thieves are prone to operate (Job 24:16). Thus, this “if” statement fits David’s previous questions about attempted concealment.

**11b-12. Even the night shall be light about me. Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee, but the night shineth as the day. The darkness and the light are both alike to thee.**

These conclusions all speak to the futility of trying to hide anything from God. Even opposites such as *darkness* and *light* make no difference to God’s knowledge of David’s physical and spiritual locations and status. The metaphor of God’s illuminating presence is continued in the New Testament and is ascribed to Jesus Christ (see John 1:4-5; 3:19-21; etc.).

### What Do You Think?

What darkness would you like reassurance that God sees through?

### Digging Deeper

What difference does it make that Jesus has been revealed as the light of the world, which the world cannot understand (John 1:5, 9-10)?

## Conclusion

### A. God’s Presence and Knowledge

The vastness of the world’s information and the multitude of places yet to be explored can be

exciting and terrifying; God’s boundless wisdom and presence provide solace to believers in either and all cases. Even if humanity were to one day journey to the surface of Mars, God’s omnipresence ensures that He is already there. For those who trust in Him, the omniscience and omnipresence of God offer a sense of security and salvation. It is essential to recognize that God did not create the universe only to abandon it to its own devices. Rather, He is actively involved and present in every aspect of creation. There can never be too much to know for the infinite God.

David acknowledged his inability to comprehend all knowledge, which underscores the incomprehensibility of God’s omniscience. And it’s uncertain whether, in the writing of this poem, David was reassured or troubled by God’s full knowledge and relentless presence. But these characteristics certainly did comfort David in other cases.

Like David, we might find ourselves in a situation when God’s knowledge and presence make us uneasy. Or we might unreservedly embrace these attributes as comforts in our present circumstances. In either case, we can strive to know God better and to praise Him, offer Him our confusion and anxieties, and ask Him for help against all the evil we confront.

## B. Prayer

All-knowing and all-present God, we lift our hearts to You. May we take comfort in knowing that You are always with us and will never be surprised by anything we think, say, or do. Help us glorify You in all things so that Your presence and knowledge are a comfort and not a warning to us. We pray in Jesus’ name. Amen.

## C. Thought to Remember

Take comfort in God’s unsurpassed knowledge and presence.

## How to Say It

Ignatius	ig-nay-shus.
merism	mare-izm.
omnipresence	ahm-nih-prez-ence.
omniscience	ahm-nish-untz.

# Involvement Learning

Enhance your lesson with KJV Bible Student (from your curriculum supplier) and the reproducible activity page (at [www.standardlesson.com](http://www.standardlesson.com) or in the back of the KJV Standard Lesson Commentary Deluxe Edition).

## Into the Lesson

Divide the class in half for a debate. The **Out Loud Team** will argue for the benefits of having no personal secrets; the **Hush Team** will argue for the benefits of keeping one's secrets. Allow a few minutes for the debate teams to jot down their ideas before asking for opening statements, rebuttals, and final statements.

Instead of declaring a winner, ask the two halves to discuss in their own group what they thought were the ideas with the most merit from the other side. Then bring the class back together to discuss what ideas they found most compelling from both teams.

Lead to Bible study by saying, "We know we don't have any secrets with God. Is that always reassuring? Today's psalm leaves room for us to be both comforted and frightened by God's knowledge and presence."

## Into the Word

Ask a volunteer to read Psalm 139:1-12 out loud. As learners listen, have them jot down reasons this is a *comforting* psalm. Ask a second volunteer to read the lesson text one more time so learners can list reasons it is a *frightening* psalm. In pairs (or small groups), ask learners to discuss the reasons they heard for comfort and fright in this psalm.

Next, have the pairs consider whether the psalm is *either* comforting *or* frightening or if it can be *both* comforting *and* frightening. Encourage learners to cite verses in Psalm 139 that support their answers, as well as other evidence from the Bible. After a few minutes, bring the class back together to discuss their thoughts. *Note:* the class need not reach a consensus about this psalm in order to have a fruitful conversation.

*Alternative 1.* Distribute the "Known by God" exercise from the activity page, which you can download, to be completed as indicated in small

groups. After calling time, ask volunteers to share their work. Allow time for class discussion.

*Alternative 2.* If your class has artistically inclined learners, ask them to work in small groups to create visual representations of the scenes in which the psalmist cannot escape God's presence. These can be individual scenes (if they want to be more detailed) or longer comic-strip-type images if they work alone. As they work, have them discuss how such pictorial interpretations can be used to teach children and adults alike about God's presence. Encourage these learners to share their work with someone outside of class and come to class next week prepared to share about that experience. Allow time for volunteers to share their work with the whole class.

## Into Life

In learners' original pairs, have them brainstorm the implications of God's presence in a world that we see contains much evil. Ask them to consider what barriers to and opportunities for evangelism God's presence poses.

Distribute slips of paper and pencils. Display the following phrase: "Something most people don't realize about me, but I'm glad God does . . ." Ask students *anonymously* to jot down a response to this prompt. Collect the slips of paper and then redistribute them among the class members. Ask volunteers to read what's written on the slip they receive.

*Alternative.* Point students to the second exercise "Read and Reflect" on the activity page, to be completed as indicated.

After either activity, give learners one minute to silently reflect on what would be a meaningful nightly reminder of God's loving care. Ask volunteers to share their ideas. Encourage learners to create this reminder and place it somewhere it will be visible before learners go to sleep. Close class with a prayer.

# Resources to Support Deeper Study

These printed and digital products provide the most comprehensive resources for teaching the ISSL/Uniform Series available anywhere!

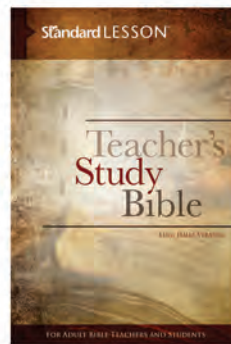


## Adult Resources

This pack provides 12 full-color visuals to illustrate the lesson each week. Also included are Digital Tools that feature digital images of all the visuals and a PowerPoint® presentation for each lesson.

## Teacher's Study Bible

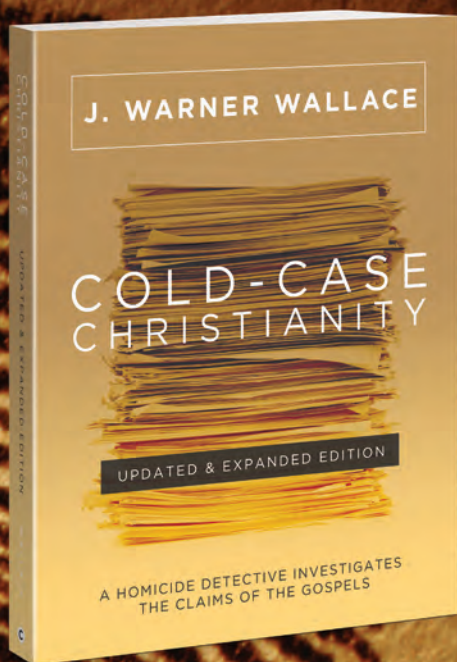
The Standard Lesson Teacher's Study Bible is a powerful and comprehensive resource for better understanding God's Word. Teachers—and serious students—will find depth and relevance on every page.



## Devotions®

Reflect on each Sunday's lesson outside of the classroom. Devotions® supplements the daily Bible readings recommended in Standard Lesson to challenge you to experience personal growth in Christ.

**Standard LESSON®**



# HOW DO WE KNOW THE BIBLE IS TRUE?

Homicide detective J. Warner Wallace applies ten common rules of evidence to make the case for Christianity in this updated and expanded edition of the apologetic classic that has changed lives around the world.



A devout atheist, **J. Warner Wallace** couldn't imagine believing in the Christian faith—until he applied the same step-by-step investigative process he utilized as a homicide detective to the case for Christianity. In light of the ten common rules of evidence he'd used to solve crimes throughout his career, Wallace could no longer deny the truth of Jesus Christ. And his life was never the same.

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