PSALMS
I SHALL NOT WANT

TEACHER GUIDE
SUMMER 2018 | SUNDAY SCHOOL

Dr. Daniel Hinton, author
Dear Immanuel,

Last Summer we spent the summer in the Psalms and I thoroughly enjoyed it. (With 150 Psalms we have quite a few to go before we run out!)

Our theme this summer is “I Shall Not Want”. This is the famous line from Psalm 23, the most famous of all the Psalms, and its theme. Since the Lord is our Shepherd he provides everything we need. God provides all we will ever need. Each Psalm gives witness to this: protection, provision, defense, justice, sweet mercy, forgiveness, compassion, wisdom, help, shelter, or healing. God provides everything we need. His provisions are so rich that it makes us want to sing about it! And so this summer we gather in the chorus of the Hebrew song book to sing the great songs of the faith along with those who have sung before.

As always, we are grateful for our own Danny Hinton for writing this curriculum.

I’m honestly filled with joy at the thought of growing together in God’s word this summer.

For truth in grace,

Steven Smith, Senior Pastor
## Teacher Guide: How To Use This Tool
Learn the best way to use this study in a Sunday School classroom setting.

## Literary Context
Understand the book as a whole.

## Redemptive Context: Reference Guide
This one-page chart most thoroughly describes the Psalms within salvation history. It is important to remind students throughout the study, of the Psalms’ connection to the other Old and New Testament books.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Lesson</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Reference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>LESSON 1</td>
<td>Life through God’s Torah · Psalm 1:1-6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>LESSON 2</td>
<td>Life through God’s Presence · Psalm 16:1-11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>LESSON 3</td>
<td>Life through God’s Provision · Psalm 23:1-6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>LESSON 4</td>
<td>Life through God’s Forgiveness · Psalm 32:1-11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50</td>
<td>LESSON 5</td>
<td>Life through God’s Loyalty · Psalm 42:1-11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>58</td>
<td>LESSON 6</td>
<td>Life through God’s Sovereignty · Psalm 46:1-6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>68</td>
<td>LESSON 7</td>
<td>Life through God’s Justice · Psalm 82:1-8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>78</td>
<td>LESSON 8</td>
<td>Life through God’s Transcendence · Psalm 99:1-9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>88</td>
<td>LESSON 9</td>
<td>Life through God’s Influence · Psalm 112:1-10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>98</td>
<td>LESSON 10</td>
<td>Life through God’s Care · Psalm 127:1-5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
START HERE  (5 Minutes)
Choose a story, discussion starter, or media clip in order to spark the interest of students. These are provided in each lesson.

READ THE TEXT  (2-5 Minutes)
Read the text. Keep students engaged by asking volunteers to read portions or have each student read one verse or paragraph until the entire text is completed.

REVIEW THE TEXT  (15-20 Minutes or 25-30 Minutes)
Take time to unpack the text. In the case of historical narrative, set the context, retell the story, highlight the major scenes and moments, and explain their significance.

CONTEXT - Historical background is provided to help understand the passage.
CONTENT - Concise observations and expert commentary are provided in order to help students understand the meaning of the passage. In this Bible Study section, teachers may choose the amount of information they’d like to cover using one of two routes.

• OPTION 1 TAKE THE DIRECT ROUTE - Follow the black text on the left side of the page for the simplest, most direct content. This option is great for discussion-based teachers. To allow more time for discussion, the direct route Review the Text section should take 15-20 minutes.
• OPTION 2 TAKE THE SCENIC ROUTE - Bulleted beneath the main text, you will find a gold arrow signaling additional commentary and content for those teachers focused more on lecture. Teachers who take the scenic route can expect the Review the Text section to take about 25-30 minutes.

CONCLUSION - Summary statements explain the main ideas of each passage.

DISCIPLING THROUGH THE PSALMS - Three practical reminders to share with those you are discipling along with relevant biblical references.

REFLECT ON THE TEXT  (5-10 Minutes)
In hopes of allowing students to reflect personally on the message of the text, and to allow for deeper relational ties important to discipleship, three questions will be provided to stimulate discussion in the class.

RESPOND TO THE TEXT  (5 Minutes)
While many students are accustomed to receiving uplifting, useful information in Sunday School, it is critical to allow time and space for students to open their hearts to absorb the truths presented and begin to apply them in their lives. These short exercises are intended to graciously nudge students toward personalizing the messages of the text and move toward Christ-likeness in application.

GOSPEL CHALLENGE  (5 Minutes)
A challenge each week from the Immanuel staff: Phil Spigner, Ross Spigner and Matt Hubbard.
INTRODUCTION & CONTEXT

• In Hebrew, the title Psalms means "Songs of Praise" or "Praises"

• In the New Testament, the Psalms are quoted more frequently than any other Old Testament book.

• This type of literature was common during this time even among Pagan religions.

• While David is the attributed author of most of the Psalms, fifty or so psalmists are considered unknown or anonymous. Asaph, David’s worship leader and other Levitical musicians composed most of the others. There is a good bit of debate regarding some of the authors.

• Dating the Psalms is a challenge. Since most are clearly written by David, some have divided the Psalms in similar fashion to the prophets: Pre-Exilic, Exilic, and Post-Exilic. See the Redemptive Context Guide for more on the time period of the Psalms.

TRACING THE MESSAGE

I. PREVAILING THEMES

a. Monotheism- praising the One True God to whom all humans must bow.

b. Creation & Fall- expressing the pain and emotion of a fallen creation and finding hope and healing in God.

c. Election & Covenant- God’s commitment to intervene for his people.

d. Covenant Membership- God’s people loving and enduring together.

e. Eschatology- the hopeful future for God’s people and the world found in Christ.1

1 Theme titles original to ESV Study Bible
II. TYPES OF PSALMS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Psalms</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Laments</td>
<td>Lay a troubled situation before the Lord, asking him for help. There are community (Psalm 12) and individual (Psalm 13) laments. This category is the largest by far, including up to a third of all Psalms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hymns of praise</td>
<td>Call God’s people to admire his great attributes and deeds. Examples include Psalms 8; 93; and 145.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hymns of thanksgiving</td>
<td>As with laments, there are community (Psalm 9) and individual (Psalm 30) thanksgiving psalms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hymns celebrating God’s law</td>
<td>(Psalm 119).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wisdom psalms</td>
<td>(Psalms 1; 37), reflect themes from the Wisdom Books (Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Songs of confidence</td>
<td>Enable worshipers to deepen their trust in God amid difficult circumstances (Psalm 23).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Royal psalms</td>
<td>Present the Davidic monarchy as the vehicle of blessing for God’s people. Some of these are prayers (Psalm 20), some are thanksgivings (Psalm 21). All relate to the Messiah, the ultimate heir of David, either by setting a pattern (Psalms 20–21) or by portraying the king’s reign in such a way that only the Messiah can completely fulfill it (Psalms 2; 72), or by focusing on the future (Psalm 110).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historical psalms</td>
<td>Take lessons from the history of God’s dealings with his people (Psalm 78).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prophetic hymns</td>
<td>Echo the Prophets, calling people to covenant faithfulness (Psalm 81).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

III. THE MESSAGE OF PSALMS

Psalms is a theological hymnbook, divinely inspired to reveal the majesty, power and splendor of Yahweh as He relates to Israel’s past, present, and future. In view of the New Covenant it also serves as a poetic treatise featuring God’s nature, the depths of the human soul, and the certain hope found for those who trust in the Creator.

IV. THE POWER OF THE PSALMS

“The Psalter is the prayer book of Jesus Christ in the truest sense of the word. He prayed the Psalter and now it has become his prayer for all time...we understand how the Psalter can be prayer to God and yet God’s own Word, precisely because here we encounter the praying Christ...because those who pray the psalms are joining in with the prayer of Jesus Christ, their prayer reaches the ears of God. Christ has become their intercessor...” - Dietrich Bonhoeffer

“The delightful study of the Psalms has yielded me boundless profit and ever-growing pleasure; common gratitude constrains me to communicate to others a portion of the benefit, with the prayer that it may induce them to search further for themselves.” - Charles Spurgeon

“[The Psalms are] a Little Bible, wherein everything contained in the entire Bible is beautifully and briefly comprehended.” - Martin Luther

“In the psalms, we have a collection of 150 prayers that were inspired originally by the Holy Ghost. If you want to know how God is pleased and honored in prayer, why not immerse yourself in the prayers that he himself has inspired?” - R.C. Sproul

“The psalms, like no other literature, lift us to a position where we can commune with God, capturing a sense of the greatness of his kingdom and a sense of what living with him for eternity will be like.” - Gordon Fee

“Of all the poems to exist, biblical psalms represent the poems that are inspired and infallible. They affirm the covenant of Abraham, tell the story of Israel, and ultimately point to Christ. These are the songs that best describe my faith as a Christian.” - Steven W. Smith

2 ESV Study Bible
Scholars believe that most of the Psalms were written between ~1,500 and ~500BC. Therefore, in the most general sense, the Psalms were written throughout Israel’s history, but during a particular period. Dating the psalms is quite the challenge as this poetry was collected and sung by Israel throughout its history. The chart above represents a timeline of biblical history. Many of the Psalms were written by David, Israel’s second king who ruled from 1010-971BC. It was during this time that the nation of Israel was united under one king. This was a time of victory and strife for Israel and also a time when God sent prophets warning of Israel’s demise should they continue to neglect God and his commands. The writing of the Psalms evidently continued through the division of the Kingdom in 922, through the Southern Kingdom’s deportation to exile in two waves, and even through the returning to the land under the ministry of Ezra and Nehemiah.

Psalms is the OT book quoted more than any other in the NT. It provides a poetic commentary on the historical events of Israel, it highlights God’s covenant to his people, and it points forward to the coming Messiah. “Most of all the psalms, read in light of the entire Bible, bring us to Jesus. The psalms were Jesus’s songbook. The hymn that Jesus sang at the Passover meal (Matthew 26:30; Mark 14:26) would have been the Great Hallel, Psalms 113–118. Indeed, there is every reason to assume that Jesus would have sung all the psalms, constantly, throughout his life, so that he knew them by heart. It is the book of the Bible that he quotes more than any other. But the psalms were not simply sung by Jesus; they also are about him…”

START HERE (5 Minutes)

Utilize one of the following tools to ignite the interest of your students. Tell a story, spark a discussion, or show a clip.

TELL A STORY.

Once, J.D. Greear, a pastor in North Carolina looked up a WikiHow article on how to be happy. I know some of you will lose all respect for me here, but I looked up on Wikihow: How to be happy (Wikihow, that repository of the human race’s collective wisdom) Top 8 ways to be happy:

1. Be optimistic.
2. Follow your gut.
3. Own yourself.
4. Make enough money to meet basic needs.
5. Treat your body like it deserves to be happy.
6. Stay close to family and friends.
7. Have deep, meaningful conversations.
8. Smile.

What do you think of this list? Is this a trusted road to happiness? If you believe this list falls short, which ones and why?
SPARK A DISCUSSION.

If life didn’t change at all for you from this moment forward: your situation didn’t improve; your marital status didn’t change; your career didn’t progress; your body didn’t feel any better... could you be happy with life?

SHOW A CLIP:  https://www.rightnowmedia.org/Content/illustration/98108

READ THE TEXT  (2-5 Minutes)

See Teacher Guide (p.4) for ways to creatively read the text.

Today’s Text:  PSALM 1:1-6

Blessed is the man
    who walks not in the counsel of the wicked,
    nor stands in the way of sinners,
    nor sits in the seat of scoffers;
2 but his delight is in the law of the Lord,
    and on his law he meditates day and night.
3 He is like a tree
    planted by streams of water
    that yields its fruit in its season,
    and its leaf does not wither.
In all that he does, he prospers.
4 The wicked are not so,
    but are like chaff that the wind drives away.
5 Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment,
    nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous;
6 for the Lord knows the way of the righteous,
    but the way of the wicked will perish.
REVIEW THE TEXT
(The DIRECT Route 15-20 Minutes or The SCENIC Route 25-30 Minutes)

CONTEXT

Pss 1-2 Introduction to the Psalter: The Righteous and the Wicked, The Lord and His King. The first two psalms of Book I introduce most of the great themes of the book of Psalms. These include the contrast between the two ways (that of the righteous versus that of the wicked), the importance of relying on God and his instructions, God's sovereignty and rule over all people and nations (and his attendant concern for them), the interplay between divine and human kingship, and God as a place of refuge for all.

Although composed separately, the two psalms complement each other well:

- Ps 1 presents the two “ways” on the level of the individual, while Ps 2 does so on the level of the nations.

- Ps 1 presents the ideal righteous individual, rooted in God's Word, while Ps 2 highlights God's chosen king, whose primary kingly duty was also to be rooted in God's Word (Deut 17:18-20).

- Ps 1 begins with the blessedness (1:1) of the righteous individual rooted in God's Word, while Ps 2 ends with the blessedness (2:12c) of all persons who take refuge in the Lord.

- Ps 1 speaks of the righteous one who “meditates” (ḥāgā ) on God's Word (1:2), while Ps 2 speaks of God's enemies who “meditate” (ḥāgā, which the NIV translates as “plot”) on rebellion (2:1). The difference in their focus (God's Word versus rebellion) reveals the contrasts between the two types of people.¹

CONTENT

(1) A godly and truly satisfied person is resolved not to participate in the harmful activities of the wicked.

Blessed is the man. The idea here is not the health, wealth, and prosperity type of “blessing” some have suggested. The idea that a person would necessarily escape all physical ailments, experience financial increase and little resistance from the world as a result of supposed holy living is inconsistent with the message of the Gospel. Rather, “blessed” is used here to represent a person who experiences maximum satisfaction and joy in God. This joy and satisfaction is not found in earthly increase but in the enjoyment of God and surrender to his will. In this way, the person who refrains from walking in… standing in… sitting in… is the person who truly prospers.

Let us also not forget that there is a certain level of blessing, favor, and prosperity that comes from resolutely living according to God's statutes. We could say that as a principle, things work out best when we live according to God's design. However, a problem arises when we assume that a life following God promises ease, comfort, and health. While following Christ doesn't guarantee earthly prosperity, a life wholly lived to God will certainly produce many tangible
blessings and a sparing from the brokenness that sin produces. In this way, the authors of the wisdom literature beckon the reader to heed the instruction of the Lord and tether oneself to the Word. There we will find a richness in life.

“TRUE PROSPERITY”
STEVEN W. SMITH, PhD

The metaphor of the tree may call to mind Psalm 1 which describes the blessed person who does not listen to the ungodly, but to God’s law. The blessed man in Psalm 1 is like a fruitful tree. Interestingly, Psalm 119 begins with a blessing for those who walk with God. The beginning of Psalm 1 and Psalm 119 are very similar. Look at them side by side.

Psalm 1
Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night.

Psalm 119: 1-3
Blessed are those whose way is blameless, who walk in the law of the Lord! Blessed are those who keep his testimonies, who seek him with their whole heart, who also do no wrong, but walk in his ways!

Psalm 1 describes the general blessing, while Psalm 119 describes numerous specific blessings. Psalm 1 is the introduction while Psalm 119 is the unabridged explanation.

This, in a sense, is a real prosperity teaching. To be clear, there is no “secret to prosperity.” Often we run from the blessings that seem so obvious, and this is written all over the pages of Scripture, and very loudly in Psalm 119: God blesses those who respond to Him through His word. The question is, how do we experience this prosperity? The answer, the subject of the next post, is to delight in the Lord.

“Who would not delight to read a book, the reading of which would change one from chaff to a cedar of Lebanon, from a Texas dust bowl to a Hawaiian orchard? Nobody deep down wants to be chaff—rootless, weightless, useless. All of us want to draw strength from some deep river of reality and become fruitful, useful people.”
–John Piper

1:1 Blessed. Hebrew āšrê; often translated “happy” or “fortunate.” It refers to how true happiness comes to those who refuse to identify with the way of the wicked but who instead are rooted in God’s word. (For the other main Hebrew word for blessing, see note on 3:8.) walk in step . . . stand . . . sit. These verbs of bodily motion are metaphors for the progressive internal attitudes and external behaviors of God’s enemies. The progression moves from casual identification (“walk in step”) to complete association (“sit”). The single righteous individual of vv. 1-3 contrasts with the many wicked ones in v. 1; that is, the righteous person is to stand out and away from the crowd.

The godly and truly satisfied person does not receive counsel from the wicked.

The godly and truly satisfied person is not found indulging in sinful activities.

The godly and truly satisfied person doesn’t position himself as a critical judge of others.
“Are you sorely depressed? Do waves of grief roll over your soul? Well, pour out your heart to God, for He knows, and knows how to help! If the Lord did not look after us in our best days, we would perish by the sunstroke of too much prosperity! And if He did not watch us in our worst days, we should be frost killed by the cruel arctic winds of adversity!”

– Charles Spurgeon

WHAT IS A SCOFFER ANYWAY?

DENNY BURK

1. A scoffer uses his mouth in sinful ways. Do not miss that the author parallels scoffers with the wicked and sinners. Wickedness often manifests most conspicuously in the way that a person speaks. As James says elsewhere, “The tongue is a fire, the very world of iniquity; the tongue is set among our members as that which defiles the entire body, and sets on fire the course of our life, and is set on fire by hell” (James 3:6).

We can do great good or great harm with our words (Proverbs 18:21). The scoffer is someone who is characteristically evil in the way that he speaks (Proverbs 1:22). But what is it about the scoffer’s words that are so evil?

2. The scoffer speaks with derision and contempt. Nothing is sacred to the scoffer. The scoffer thinks it is funny when someone sins (Proverbs 14:9; cf. Philippians 3:19), and he takes God’s judgment of sinners lightly (Proverbs 19:28). Sin and judgment are commonplace to the scoffer, and he rarely trembles at them.

3. The scoffer sets his derision on other people. The scoffer has a general sense of everyone else’s inadequacies, and very little sense of his own. He loves to take his seat and entertain his friends with narratives of other men’s shortcomings (Proverbs 18:8; 26:22). He is a man of division (Proverbs 16:28). He may be the life of the party, but when he goes out peace comes in (Proverbs 22:10; 26:20).

4. The scoffer is unteachable. Like fools in general (Proverbs 14:6), a scoffer does not delight in understanding but only in revealing his own mind (Proverbs 18:1). Not only does a scoffer resist reproof, he holds in contempt anyone who would attempt to correct him (Proverbs 9:8; 15:12). He always has to save face, and he will loudly condemn anyone who prevents him from doing so.

5. The scoffer is proud. The prideful man has three names: proud, haughty, and scoffer (Proverbs 21:24).

6. The scoffer is a negative example to the wise. The scoffer is a walking demonstration to wise people of how not to live (Proverbs 19:25). The scoffer will not learn from his own mistakes, but wise people will (Proverbs 21:11). Ironically, the scoffer may seek to save face, but wise people see him for what he is and take heed to themselves (1 Corinthians 10:12).

7. The scoffer goes to judgment. God has prepared judgment for the scoffer (Proverbs 19:29), and everything that he has done will come to nothing (Isaiah 29:20).
(2) The godly and truly satisfied person grows in God by the enrichment of the Word of God.

The godly and truly satisfied person's joy is found in God's Word. (v2)

For the person who has found true happiness in God, he finds joy in the pages of God's Word. The instruction and conviction it brings is like nourishment to the soul. Like water in the desert, those whose hope is firmly in God thirst for the Word as a necessity in life.

The godly and truly satisfied person consistently meditates on God's Word. (v2)

It is said that the Puritans would gather each morning and select one verse of passage from Scripture to meditate upon. They would meditate on that verse or passage throughout the day. Their intention was that if they could keep focused on God's Word, they would remember that God is with them, indwelling them and guiding them through the Holy Spirit. And if they could remember that God was with them, then they would trust him moment by moment. The godly person is happy in God because she recognizes God's presence as she dwells upon the Word.

We have, in so many ways, already taken the spot light off the Bible. When the Word is not central in our counseling, in our worship practice, in our financial practice, in our approach to preaching, or in our political engagement, it should not bother us when someone says the Word is not central. But it does. It bothers us because we are hearing someone label our practice; it exposes a sort of moral licensing that says, “As long as we yell loud enough about morality on certain things, we have the license to be silent on others.” But God is not silent, Scripture is not silent, and we cannot be silent. Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word. –Steven W. Smith

(3) The godly and truly satisfied person will not be blown away and forgotten.

The godly and truly satisfied person is, therefore, like a fruit bearing tree which does not wither.

The metaphor of a tree depicts well the life of a godly believer. A tree is healthy and growing and yielding, or it is dying and withering. Healthy fruit-bearing trees reproduce after their own kind. These trees have the constant nourishment from the nearby stream and constantly bear fruit as they should. The healthy believer doesn’t take life from others but bears fruit and is a blessing to others.

Thus it is written, “The first man Adam became a living being”; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit. (1 Cor 15:45)

(4) The godly and truly satisfied person escapes the punishment of wickedness.

The godly and truly satisfied person will not be blown away and forgotten.

The godly and truly satisfied person will not experience God's judgment and wrath.

6 The reason for the certainty of the judgment lies in God's knowledge of the affairs of humankind. God’s "knowledge" is a deep commitment to, love for, and care of his own; hence the translation "the LORD watches over." The Lord offers no protection to those who are not reconciled to him; rather, their end is destruction (cf. Mt 7:23; cf. vv.15-27).
The godly and truly satisfied person will not experience being cast out from the gathering of God’s children.

The godly and truly satisfied person will not perish, but is given eternal life.

- “God provides whatever you need when you live in submission to Him. He loves to bless His obedient children—moving out ahead of us, preparing the way, and bringing us into good and pleasant places. He doesn’t promise lack of trials but does promise eventual victory. So, when the storms of adversity strike, we are perfectly secure because He is our eternal shelter.”

**JESUS & THE CHAFF**

Not so the wicked! They are like chaff that the wind blows away. —Psalm 1:4

Chaff is the protective shell that encases seeds of grain. Grain, of course, has been an important part of the human diet for thousands of years. When humans started to farm, they needed a way to separate large quantities of edible wheat from its protective and inedible chaff covering and invented a process called wind winnowing. This simple method involved threshing, or using a pitchfork to throw the mixture into the air to allow the wind to blow away the lighter chaff, leaving the grains of wheat to fall back down to the ground to be recovered and eaten.

Psalm 1 uses this farming process as a spiritual metaphor, likening the wicked to chaff that “blows away.” Implicit in this image is that someone needs to separate the useless chaff from the valuable grain. Matthew 3:12 clarifies that Jesus is the thresher who will gather up the precious wheat (the righteous) and discard the chaff (the wicked) into the “unquenchable fire.” The unquenchable fire here denotes hell (see Isaiah 34:10; Jeremiah 7:20; Matthew 25:41). Psalm 1 looks ahead to the coming of Jesus, the righteous judge (see 2 Timothy 4:1).

We must be careful when interpreting certain passages that may appear to promote a form of salvation that is achieved through righteous works. Ephesians 2:8-9 tell us that our salvation is accomplished by grace through faith in Christ. The message of Psalm 1 is not that if we will steer clear of the wicked, read the Bible more, and refrain from judging people, we will therefore be deemed “godly” and “blessed” by God. Rather, Psalm 1 describes a person who has found true hope in throwing themselves at the mercy of Christ. They have not trusted in their own righteousness, but have trusted in God and have found the deep satisfaction they desire by rooting deeply in God’s Word. In fact, remember that the ultimate fulfillment of this type of righteous living is found in Christ alone. Though we could never alone live with this purity of heart, this is the righteous life which is imputed to us as believers (2 Cor 5:21), and the life we are empowered to live through the Holy Spirit. (Rom 8:5)
CONCLUSION

One of the identifying markers of a believer is that, in stark contrast to his hollow, hopeless, self-seeking peers, he has found hope and true happiness in a humble walk with God, on the basis of His Word.

Discipling Through the Psalms:

1. Remind them of the centrality of the Word of God. We live in a culture that values experience over evidence. The ultimate evaluator of truth is whether or not something “feels right.” For those you are discipling, be sure they understand that there is no vibrant walk with God void of following Jesus in His Word. Many people want to feel the presence of God or experience the peace of God, but not many want to meet God on his terms in the revealed Word of God. Those we disciple should see us consistently in the Word, responding to the Word, and being conformed into Christ’s image by His Word.

2 Tim 3:16 All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work.

Hebrews 4:12 For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

2 Tim 2:15 Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth.

2. Remind them of the benefits of rooting oneself in the Word of God. Reading the Bible can sometimes feel like a chore. And certainly there are times when reading and studying God’s Word feels more like a discipline than it does a joy. But those who have walked with God through His word for a number of years know that there begins to be joy in the discipline. Psalm 1 says that the person who roots himself in the Word of God flourishes. There is blessing, stability, and hope for those who go deep in God’s Word. Refrain from badgering those you disciple about reading the Bible with more regularity. Instead, remind them of the great benefit.

Psalm 19:7-11 The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple; the precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes; the fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever; the rules of the Lord are true, and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb. Moreover, by them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward.

Psalm 119:9-11 How can a young man keep his way pure? By guarding it according to your word. With my whole heart I seek you; let me not wander from your commandments! I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you.

Prov. 4:20-22 My son, be attentive to my words; incline your ear to my sayings. Let them not escape from your sight; keep them within your heart. For they are life to those who find them, and healing to all their flesh.

“Eternal punishment is just as long as eternal life. Mark it down. Everyone will spend eternity somewhere – in heaven or hell. And the path you take will determine the destiny you reach. Which way are you going?”

–H.B. Charles
3. Remind them of the urgency in knowing and responding to the Word. Young people are notorious for banking their eternity on the false assurance of time. “Someday I’ll turn my life over to God,” they say. Reading the Bible is not just a new habit your students are learning to adopt. It is the difference in life and death. As they read, Psalm 1 can help remind them of the urgency of knowing and responding to God. Draw out in them a deep gratitude for the Word which is stabilizing their life and has offered the gift of eternal life. And help them see the role of the Word in the lives of non-believers. How they respond to the message of the Bible is a matter of life and death. For those who are determined to live for themselves, they will be blown away. “…the way of the wicked will perish.”

Matt 10:28 And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell.

Matt 3:12 His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and gather his wheat into the barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.

Acts 4:12 And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.

REFLECT ON THE TEXT (5-10 Minutes)

The purpose of discussion questions is to (a) allow the teacher a way to gauge the level of comprehension and (b) allow students to develop bonds around spiritual truth.

Why do you think a person finds true satisfaction, hope, and happiness in a humble walk with God rather than a self-centered life of pleasure-seeking?

Does this Psalm describe your spiritual life? Do you sense that the constant nourishment of the Word has brought forth fruit and health in your life? Do you feel rooted even when your peers appear to be shaken by the winds of the world?

Knowing that the steady diet of God’s Word in our lives brings forth this type of hope and fulfillment, why is it that we so quickly neglect it as a consistent spiritual discipline? What are your biggest barriers to being a person who is saturated in God’s Word?
RESPOND TO THE TEXT  (5 Minutes)

The purpose of these short activities is to encourage students to personalize the truth and begin to develop an application in their lives.

Look at the picture provided.
(http://simplyworshipconference.org/2014/01/23/lawnpaintortrees/)

Take a couple minutes to re-examine the text. If you were to design an art piece in your home, what part of Psalm 1 would you choose to stencil in over this image? Each person share which verse they would choose and why. We only have so much wall space in our home. Is Psalm 1 a passage worth hanging somewhere in your home? Why might you choose Psalm 1 over a different passage? Or why not?
GOSPEL CHALLENGE (from the staff)

Scripture is living and active. According to Hebrews 4:12, the word of God is “sharper than a double-edged sword piercing to the division of soul and of spirit. . . discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.” Our evangelism is greatly enhanced when we share Scripture, letting it do the inner work of speaking to a person’s heart.

For this week’s Gospel challenge, consider memorizing three verses that can be shared when presenting the gospel. Feel free to choose your own, but here are three verses from the gospel of John:

- John 1:12 – But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God
- John 3:16 – For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life
- John 14:6 – Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No man comes to the Father except through me.”

HOME 22:6

SING | The classic hymn “Alas and Did My Savior Bleed”

ALAS, AND DID MY SAVIOR BLEED
AND DID NOT SOVEREIGN DIE
WOULD HE DEVOTE THAT SACRED HEAD
FOR SUCH A WORM AS I

AT THE CROSS, AT THE CROSS, WHERE I FIRST SAW THE LIGHT
AND THE BURDENS OF MY HEART ROLLED AWAY
IT WAS THERE BY FAITH I RECEIVED MY SIGHT
AND NOW I AM HAPPY ALL THE DAY.

READ | Take time to read Psalm 1 as a family.

PRAY | Pray that God would give you the courage and wisdom to root yourself in His Word. Pray for those who are openly living for themselves, wandering hopelessly without a foundation.
SOURCES

1 NIV Zondervan Study Bible, Psalm 1-2
3 http://stevenwsmith.net/2016/02/psalm-119-a-text-driven-life-3-the-blessed-life/
4 NIV Zondervan Study Bible, 1:1
5 Expositor’s Bible Commentary Old Testament, Psalm 1:1
6 http://www.spurgeongems.org/vols55-57/chs3270.pdf
7 http://www.dennyburk.com/are-you-a-scoffer/
9 Expositor’s Bible Commentary Old Testament, Psalm 1:6
10 NASB Charles Stanley Life Principles Bible Notes
11 Case for Christ Study Bible, Psalm 1:1-6
START HERE (5 Minutes)

Utilize one of the following tools to ignite the interest of your students. Tell a story, spark a discussion, or show a clip.

TELL A STORY.

“Men have pursued joy in every avenue imaginable. Some have successfully found it while others have not. Perhaps it would be easier to describe where joy cannot be found:

- **Not in Unbelief** — Voltaire was an infidel of the most pronounced type. He wrote: “I wish I had never been born.”
- **Not in Pleasure** — Lord Byron lived a life of pleasure if anyone did. He wrote: “The worm, the canker, and grief are mine alone.”
- **Not in Money** — Jay Gould, the American millionaire, had plenty of that. When dying, he said: “I suppose I am the most miserable man on earth.”
- **Not in Position and Fame** — Lord Beaconsfield enjoyed more than his share of both. He wrote: “Youth is a mistake; manhood a struggle; old age a regret.”
- **Not in Military Glory** — Alexander the Great conquered the known world in his day. Having done so, he wept in his tent, before he said, “There are no more worlds to conquer.”
- **Where then is real joy found?** — the answer is simple, in Christ alone.”
SPARK A DISCUSSION.
1. Would your friends say you are a happy person? Why?
2. Would your friends say you are a person full of joy? Why?
3. Is there a difference between happiness and joy?

SHOW A CLIP.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EzkJ3-4nnwo

READ THE TEXT (2-5 Minutes)
See Teacher Guide (p.4) for ways to creatively read the text.

Today’s Text: PSALM 16:1-11

1 Preserve me, O God, for in you I take refuge.
2 I say to the Lord, “You are my Lord; I have no good apart from you.”
3 As for the saints in the land, they are the excellent ones, in whom is all my delight.
4 The sorrows of those who run after another god shall multiply; their drink offerings of blood I will not pour out or take their names on my lips.
5 The Lord is my chosen portion and my cup; you hold my lot.
6 The lines have fallen for me in pleasant places; indeed, I have a beautiful inheritance.
7 I bless the Lord who gives me counsel; in the night also my heart instructs me.
8 I have set the Lord always before me; because he is at my right hand, I shall not be shaken.
9 Therefore my heart is glad, and my whole being rejoices; my flesh also dwells secure.
10 For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol, or let your holy one see corruption.
11 You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

REVIEW THE TEXT
(The DIRECT Route 15-20 Minutes or The SCENIC Route 25-30 Minutes)

CONTEXT
Ps 16 Lord, You Alone Are My Portion and My Cup. In this psalm of trust, David reflects on his relationship with God, giving thanks for the blessings that God has afforded him. These have come because of David’s God-oriented life, making him worthy to live on God’s holy mountain (15:1; cf. 2:6). David begins with a brief petition, affirming his close relationship with God and his delight in God’s holy people, in contrast to those who follow after other gods (vv. 1-4). Life seems to be going well because he is praising the Lord and keeping his eyes on him (vv. 5-8). David ends with a strong affirmation of security in the Lord that extends even beyond death (vv. 9-11).
V 1–2: SUPPLICATION David prays for safety and refuge, acknowledging that every good thing comes from God. V 3: SAINTS God’s set-apart people (‘saints’) are the object of David’s delight, as well as God’s, of course! V 4: SORROWS Idolatry will only bring sorrow upon people. V 5–6: SUPPLY David expresses his delight with God’s supply and inheritance. V 7–8: STABILITY David praises God and His counsel, which he experiences even in the dark hours of the night. He sees God always before him and at his right hand, and knows that he will therefore not be shaken. V 9–11: SECURITY God’s presence will be with David to the grave, through the grave, and beyond the grave. Eternally, he will be at the right hand of God.

CONTENT

One of the beautiful elements of the Psalms is that songs and poetry often give readers a glimpse into the deep heart emotions of the author. In Psalm 16, David expressed his confidence and hope in God.

Have you ever been a part of a time of musical worship when you were overcome with a sense of joy?

One of the reasons why Hebrews tells us not to give up the habit of meeting together as believers (Heb. 10:25) is that we worship God, study His Word and spur each other to godliness throughout the ebb and flow of life. The Psalms show us how to offer praise and prayer to God in every season of life. There are prayers of lament, songs of praise, cries for help, words of wisdom. Here, we see David put into words many of the emotions we feel when we are fully satisfied in God. When we lay in bed at night and we call to mind all the ways in which God has protected us, provided for us, and blessed us over time, Psalm 16 is what boils up in our hearts. When our friends are crumbling in anxiety as they face the challenges of the world, and we cling to Jesus, remembering the security of our soul for eternity, Psalm 16 is what comes out of our mouth.

(1) David possesses deep confidence based upon God’s historic faithfulness.

What a statement of praise?

I say to the Lord, “You are my Lord; I have no good apart from you.” (v2)

Everything that’s good in David’s life, he attributed to God. This is a posture of true gratitude. Even though we’d like to think we have this posture, as Americans, we often drift into the idea that the good that we possess has come by the work of our own hands, and that God simply helped.

The lines have fallen for me in pleasant places; indeed, I have a beautiful inheritance. (v6)

When David surveys his life, he sees God’s hand of provision.

David worships God for who He is. (v8) The Lord gives him counsel (v7), He is at David’s right hand, he is the source of every blessing (v5-6), the Lord will not abandon David (v10), and He provides David with the pathway to true life (v11).
**16:7 — I will bless the Lord who has counseled me; indeed, my mind instructs me in the night.** David made a habit of pondering—thinking about—God’s Word, His blessings, His commands, and how He was working through His people. Even at night, thoughts of the Lord’s faithfulness filled David’s mind. When God is our focus, it is easier for us to hear Him when He speaks. Remember, listening to God is essential to walking with Him.

Having demonstrated his abhorrence of idolatry and his decision not to join in with those who poured out a drink offering, the psalmist now recognizes how good the Lord is to his own. Loyalty to the Lord is in response to his acts of beneficence. Using language reminiscent of the conquest of Canaan, the psalmist reflects on all that the Lord has done. However, he goes beyond the occupation of Canaan in considering God’s benefits. The Lord promised the members of the priesthood to be their share and inheritance (Nu 18:20; Dt 10:9; 18:1). Israel as a whole was his inheritance (Jer 12:7-9). But the godly can join in with the experience of the psalmist, wherever and whenever they live. God deals kindly with his children in that he bestows on them his covenant blessings and promises.

(2) **David possesses great hope in his present and future destiny.**

What is your response to God’s faithfulness? David says he experiences the “fullness of joy” in God’s presence. Evidently, those who experience the fullness of joy exhibit some rare characteristics.

David refuses to give his heart or mind to idols. (v4) He blesses the Lord. (v7) He places God in the position of highest honor in his heart and his life. (v8) His heart is glad, his whole being rejoices, and his soul is at peace. (v9)

---

**IN ITS PLACE, LET’S PUT HAPPY IN JESUS**

**BILL ELLIFF**

George Mueller was the great man of God who is known for his extraordinary faith. He prayed in over 50 million dollars without mentioning a need to anyone as he build massive orphanages, which stand to this day, in Bristol, England. His fruitful life has encouraged millions. But the secret of his success, I believe he would say, was his morning practice.

Each morning Mueller would go out to a place where he walked with his Bible in hand. His goal, he said, was to stay in the Word and prayer until he got his soul “happy in Jesus.” Biblical study was not about a ritual, but re-centering the relationship that sustained him above all else.

Most people, even professing followers of Christ, never get happy in Jesus. They walk around with the worry of the world sitting on their shoulders like Atlas. This is why our Christianity is so uninviting to those far away from God. We must realize that this delight is not only about us and Him, but others. It is what makes us fit for service to a depressed world. It gives us an unusual stability and infectious joy that intrigues and invites them to Christ.

The men and women who have been great for God are made satisfied, secure, and joyful in the presence of Christ. To live there should be our greatest pursuit and the first priority of every day.  

---
The Westminster Catechism famously asks the question, “What is the chief end of man?” The answer: to glorify God and enjoy him forever. We must not forget that God’s goodness, his character, he shares with us for our good. It is true that we are the created and he is the Creator. He is otherly in this sense. But a life lived to God is not intended to be one of despair. David says, “God holds my lot.” God is in control and come what may in this life, a soul placed in his hands is a soul at peace.

- God is always present at his "right hand." Therefore, his confidence in the Lord is the result of his experience of God’s goodness, grace, and fatherly instruction. As a sage, the psalmist can claim God’s promise that the wise and righteous "will not be shaken" (cf. 15:5; 21:7; 62:2, 6; 112:6).

The New Testament understanding of this type of hope is perhaps depicted best by Jesus in Matt. 13:44-46:

“The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in the field, which a man found and hid again; and from joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking fine pearls, and upon finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it.”

Or like Paul explained it in Phil. 3:7-8:

“But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ....”

“God will bring you — body and soul — through life and death to full and everlasting pleasure, if he is your safest refuge, and your supreme treasure, and your sovereign Lord, and your trusted counselor.”

—John Piper
A PROPHECY IN PSALMS?
CASE FOR CHRIST STUDY BIBLE

Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure, because you will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay. —Psalm 16:9–10

When the apostle Peter addressed the crowd on the day of Pentecost he quoted Psalm 16:8–11, declaring that the psalmist David prophesied of Jesus and his resurrection (see Acts 2:25–28). The Messiah, David’s promised Son, would not be abandoned to the grave nor see decay (see Psalm 16:10; Acts 2:29–32). Some skeptics, however, find believing in a bodily resurrection too difficult to accept and point to other theories to explain what happened to Jesus’ body.

“I think people who push these alternative theories would admit, ‘Yes, our theories are implausible, but they’re not as improbable as the idea that the resurrection actually occurred,’ ” says Dr. William Lane Craig, a philosopher and theologian. “However, at this point the matter is no longer a historical issue; instead it’s a philosophical question about whether miracles are possible.

“I would argue that the hypothesis that God raised Jesus from the dead is not at all improbable. In fact, based on the evidence, it’s the best explanation for what happened. What is improbable is the hypothesis that Jesus rose naturally from the dead. That, I would agree, is outlandish. Any hypothesis would be more probable than saying the corpse of Jesus spontaneously came back to life.

“But the hypothesis that God raised Jesus from the dead doesn’t contradict science or any known facts of experience. All it requires is the hypothesis that God exists, and I think there are good independent reasons for believing that he does. As long as the existence of God is even possible, it’s possible that he acted in history by raising Jesus from the dead.”

—Adapted from interview with Dr. William Lane Craig

CONCLUSION

True fulfillment and maximum pleasure are found only in Christ. Only when we lay down our counterfeit temporary pleasures and run to Jesus will we find the earthly and eternal pleasure we are seeking.

Discipling Through the Psalms:

1. Remind them that one evidence of our salvation is our turning from idols. The world has given itself over to things they have labeled “best.” “Making the most money is the highest goal. Being completely free sexually brings about maximum happiness in life. Once I get that ______, life will be complete.” The world has placed its hope in false gods. Psalm 16 reminds us to resolve not to run after false gods. Teach those you’re discipling to be different from the world by refusing to give your heart to such things. Rather, with a purity of heart, a single-mindedness, give yourself to Christ and his mission.

“You may never know that Jesus is all you need, until Jesus is all you have.”
~ Corrie Ten Boom
1 Thessalonians 1:9  “For they themselves report about us what kind of a reception we had with you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God…”

Galatians 4:8  “However at that time, when you did not know God, you were slaves to those which by nature are no gods.”

1 Cor 6:9-11  “Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.”

2. “If all I had was God’s grace, I’d have enough.” Remind those you’re discipling that we have no good apart from God. Though we like to think we fully surrender to God, many times we accidentally want God AND something else. This shows itself most clearly when we lose something we didn’t realize we had come to idolize. You see, we had proclaimed that God was all that we needed, but we were happy with God because he had given us a certain job with a certain salary. When budget cuts came, and our position was eliminated, we shook our fist at God as if we were entitled to the job. The Psalmist seems to say here (like Job of the Old Testament) that if he was stripped of everything, he could cling to God and still find hope. Help those you disciple see that this is where true life is found. “Come what may, my hope is in God.” This is easier said than lived.

2 Cor 12:19  “But he said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.’”

Philippians 4:19  “And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.”

John 14:8  “Philip said, ‘Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us.’”

3. Remind them that in the presence of God there is fullness of joy. Have you ever just been moving through life and things just seem to be lining up and falling your way? Maybe at work one day or at home one night, you are overcome with a sense of peace and weightlessness? Your soul says, “Things are good. I have nothing concerning me. I feel good.” If we’re honest, these deepest senses of satisfaction come when life’s circumstances have moved favorably in our direction. Vacation is coming. Our favorite team is headed to the playoffs. We’re in with the boss. The reality is, God wants us to have that sense of peace through every moment of life. And this Psalm reminds us that this is only found as we dwell in the presence of God. Teach those you disciple to hunger for time with God in His Word. Remind them that the Holy Spirit indwells us, and we are called to set our minds on the Spirit and to be led by the Spirit. As we walk daily with Christ, there is fullness of joy.

1 Peter 1:8-9  “…and though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory…”

John 17:13  “But now I come to You; and these things I speak in the world so that they may have My joy made full in themselves.”

Romans 15:13  “Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you will abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.”
REFLECT ON THE TEXT  (5-10 Minutes)

The purpose of discussion questions is to (a) allow the teacher a way to gauge the level of comprehension and (b) allow students to develop bonds around spiritual truth.

\textit{How would you respond if someone you’re close to or someone you’re discipling asked, “I am a Christian but I don’t seem to ever have joy. What should I do?”}

\textit{How does Psalm 16 stimulate your personal joy in God? Is there a certain verse that is particularly moving?}

\textit{What does Psalm 16 seem to tell us about joy in the midst of struggles? How does joy relate to present circumstances? Can a person really have joy when their world is falling apart?}

RESPOND TO THE TEXT  (5 Minutes)

The purpose of these short activities is to encourage students to personalize the truth and begin to develop an application in their lives.

\textit{Take 1-2 minutes and try to remember a time in your life when you experienced maximum joy. What did it feel like? What were your thoughts? Why was that moment so joyous? In your mind, was God part of this moment? How so?}

\textit{The idea: You may receive all kinds of examples. The idea here is to remind the students that true joy (peace, satisfaction, satisfying hope) is found only in God. We tend to have joy when we feel as though “all is right in the world.” Amazing things like meeting your first grandchild, seeing your favorite artist in concert for the first time, getting engaged to be married, or receiving a clear scan on a post-chemo report give us that breathe-easy feeling. But unless our life is firmly in the hands of Christ as we’ve trusted him and his work on the cross even these moments of great significance are mere shadows of true joy.}

\textit{Take a few minutes to go around the room and share about the joyous times of life.}
Psalms 16:2 acknowledges that none of us are good apart from God. Paul would later acknowledge a similar truth when he said in Philippians 3:7-9, “But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. . . I count them as rubbish, in order that I might gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ.” Praise God for a goodness that comes as God’s gift.

This week’s Gospel challenge is to give God the credit for the goodness you display. Perhaps a person will compliment your goodness, seem impressed about the difference your life is compared to the world. In those instances, a truth and strategy for sharing the gospel is to acknowledge, “I’m really not that good.” Perhaps you could vulnerably explain, “I appreciate your kind words, but to be honest, I really struggle to be kind, good, etc.. Any goodness that I show is because God is transforming me to be like his Son.”

HOME 22:6

SING: “I Stand Amazed in the Presence”
Hymn: https://www.hymnal.net/en/hymn/h/290
Modern: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d-xP91CjLgY


PRAY: Before praying, verbalize to one another the types of things in this life that have robbed you of your joy in Christ. Then pray together that God would restore your joy by drawing you to Him and his Word daily.
SOURCES
1 https://bible.org/illustration/pursuit-joy
2 NIV Zondervan Study Bible, Ps16
3 The Bible Panorama, Psalm 16
5 NASB Charles Stanley Life Principles Bible Notes
6 Expositor’s Bible Commentary (Abridged Edition): Old Testament  Ps 16:5-6
7 https://www.2prophetu.com/templates/lprint/details.asp?id=35585&PG=resources&CID=34841
8 Expositor’s Bible Commentary (Abridged Edition): Old Testament  Ps 16:7-8
9 https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/the-path-to-full-and-lasting-pleasure
10 The Case for Christ Study Bible, Psalm 16:7–11  Resurrection Prophesied
START HERE (5 Minutes)

Utilize one of the following tools to ignite the interest of your students. Tell a story, spark a discussion, or show a clip.

TELL A STORY.

“I used to work for a financial consulting firm in which I had occasion to talk with scores of businessmen each week. I’ll never forget the conversation I had had with an angry businessman from a certain part of Canada. He was in the fisheries business and had been for some time. His whole family had taken their livelihood from the industry as far back as he could remember. I was talking with him during the time in which the Canadian government was shutting down large parts of his industry, due to budget cuts and the depletion of fish stocks. In a matter of a few months his entire life disintegrated in front of him—he looked on helplessly as he lost his entire income and accrued assets. When I spoke with him that day he cursed the government and as we spoke it became evident that he was overcome with anxiety and fear about the future—his future and that of his wife, children and immediate family. He was gripped with anxiety for his financial future.” -Dr. Greg Harrick
SPARK A DISCUSSION.

What is a shepherd? We don’t live in a culture where we experience many shepherds. One of the classic, most quoted Psalms is the 23rd which depicts God as a Shepherd. Using your smartphone or a piece of paper, take 1 minute and write out as many verbs, every action word you can think of, to depict what you believe a shepherd does.

Give the class one minute. Make it more fun by turning it into a competition.

At the end of one minute, allow the class to begin to present their verbs. If a verb on your page/phone is mentioned, don’t say it again. If you have a unique verb, say it. Continue presenting verbs until no one has any more unique verbs to present. You should have a thorough list.

SHOW A CLIP.

https://www.rightnowmedia.org/Content/illustration/105344

READ THE TEXT (2-5 Minutes)

See Teacher Guide (p.4) for ways to creatively read the text.

Today’s Text: PSALM 23:1-6

1 The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.
2 He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters.
3 He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name’s sake.
4 Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.
5 You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.
6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.
LESSON 3

READ • REVIEW • REFLECT • RESPOND

REVIEW THE TEXT

(The DIRECT Route 15-20 Minutes or The SCENIC Route 25-30 Minutes)

CONTEXT

- 23:1–6 This psalm is probably the best known passage of the OT. It is a testimony of David to the Lord's faithfulness throughout his life. As a hymn of confidence, it pictures the Lord as a disciple's shepherd, king and host. David, by using some common ancient Near Eastern images in Ps. 23, progressively unveils his personal relationship with the Lord in 3 stages.

I. David’s Exclamation: “The Lord is my shepherd.” (23:1a)

II. David’s Expectations (23:1b-5b)
   A. “I shall not want.” (23:1b-3)
   B. “I will fear no evil.” (23:4, 5b)

III. David’s Exultation: “My cup runs over.” (23:5c-6)

CONTENT

Let's begin this week by unpacking some of the poetic language of such a familiar Psalm. It is so often read or cited for all kinds of occasions, it might be helpful to take a moment to consider the meaning of these beautifully written lines.

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.

- 23:1 my shepherd. This beautiful metaphor of a divine Shepherd who cares for his people, individually and corporately, occurs numerous places in the OT (e.g., 80:1; 95:7; 100:3; Gen 48:15; 49:24). The NT also portrays Jesus as our great and good shepherd (e.g., John 10:11,14; Heb 13:20; 1 Pet 5:4; Rev 7:17).

David of course is not suggesting that God-fearers never lack anything. And he certainly isn’t claiming that God-fearers have zero desires (“I shall not want”). David suggests, rather, that the Good Shepherd knows what we need and knows what is best for us. And among those things, we lack nothing.

1 The first word of the psalm, “The LORD,” evokes rich images of the provision and protection of the covenant-God. The emphasis of the psalmist is on “my.” The temptation in ancient Israel was to speak only about “our” God (cf. Dt 6:4), forgetting that the God of Israel is also the God of individuals. The metaphor of the shepherd is not only a designation or name of the Lord, but it points toward the relation between God and his covenant-children: “I shall not be in want.”
2 He makes me lie down in green pastures.  
He leads me beside still waters.  

3 He restores my soul.  
He leads me in paths of righteousness  
for his name’s sake.  

When the body is plagued by the results of the fall, we can overcome when our soul is refreshed and nourished by the Good Shepherd.

Notice that David addresses God directly at times in this Psalm. David said “he” does this, but then switches to say “you” are with me. Is it harder for you to talk about God or talk to God?

4 Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,  
I will fear no evil,  
for you are with me;  
your rod and your staff,  
they comfort me.

WHAT DOES DAVID MEAN BY THE “SHADOW OF DEATH?”

The idiom "shadow of death" portrays death as a deep shadow or as deep darkness. This imagery is consistent with the shepherd metaphor because the shepherd leads the flock through ravines and wadis where the steep and narrow slopes keep out the light. The darkness of the wadis represents the uncertainty of life. The "straight paths" at times need to go through the wadis, but God is still present. The shepherd who guides is always with the sheep. The presence and guidance of the Lord go together. He is bound by his name ("for his name's sake") to be present with his people (cf. the meaning of “LORD” in Ex 3:12).  

Walking with God doesn’t assure our excusal from suffering and hardship. In fact, remember “I shall not want”? Hebrews 12:7-8 says “7 Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as his children. For what children are not disciplined by their father? 8 If you are not disciplined—and everyone undergoes discipline—then you are not legitimate, not true sons and daughters at all.” Sometimes the consequences of our sin lead us to the valley of the shadow of death. Sometimes the consequences of a broken world lead us there. And sometimes God allows personal hardship for the purposes of our own sanctification. Whatever the reason for your season in the valley of the shadow of death, we need not fear. He is with us.

“Not only will Christ lead his people to true and lasting peace, but he will do so by a vicarious and effectual death. Without this wretched self-sacrifice there can be no lasting peace beside still waters, no restful sleep in green pastures.”  
–Owen Strachan

“Your Shepherd’s provision is based on His grace, not your ability. By His grace, He refreshes you. By His grace, He restores you. By His grace, He makes you righteous.”  
–David Platt
5 You prepare a table before me
in the presence of my enemies;
you anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.

23:5 prepare a table. To set out food was a gesture of hospitality (Ge 18:1 – 8; Ex 2:18 – 20). To do so in front of someone (enemies) would publicly establish the right relationship that exists between host (in this case God) and the guest (the psalmist). Perhaps the image of Yahweh as a protective shepherd-king continues here (cf. 2Sa 9:7; 2Ki 25:27 – 30). anoint … with oil. Olive oil could be used to treat dry or cracked skin, so it was a sign of hospitality to offer oil to visitors. A text from an Aramaic speaking community in Egypt (c. 300 BC and related culturally to Jews) uses the word for oil to speak of invigorating an old man. In a diplomatic letter from the Assyrian king Ashurbanipal (c. 650 BC) to vassal tribes in Arabia, he boasts of his good treatment of them expressed by putting oil on their heads as an act of friendliness. Thus, the psalmist is refreshed by being in God’s hospitable presence.

6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me
all the days of my life,
and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord
forever.

When our soul is downcast, what things do we turn to (other than God) to try to restore our souls?

What happens when we trust in the things of this world to satisfy our souls? Does it bring forth goodness and mercy following us all the days of our life?

Ultimately, the person who turns to God in the dark times, who walks with God in the good times, and follows the God Shepherd no matter what, is living on this earth what he will continue to live in the life to come. He will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

“My father used to tell a story about two flocks of sheep that grazed in fields adjacent to one another. One flock was filled with strong, healthy sheep that were cared for by a faithful shepherd. The other flock was filled with weak, sickly sheep that suffered because of the carelessness of their negligent shepherd. One day, a weak sheep made its way to the fence that separated the two flocks and collapsed. And the strong sheep on the other side of the fence all passed by and mocked the sickly sheep. Finally, the strongest of the sheep stood before the dying sheep. Looking up, the poor sheep said, “Go ahead, join the others in mocking me.” But the strong sheep said, “I will not, for if it were not for my shepherd, I would be just like you.” This is the testimony of every person who trusts in the Lord.”

“We are never so conscious of the presence of God as when we pass through life’s valleys.”
-James Montgomery Boice
PSALM 23 FOR THE DESPERATE AND DOWNTRODDEN
CHARLES STANLEY

How does He do this? He restores our souls through fellowship with Himself. Even though at times we stray far from Him, He remains the Good Shepherd. Though we wander, He receives us back gladly and willingly pardons His wayward sheep.

Why would we ever leave such a loving Guide? Most likely you have never made a conscious decision to forsake the Father; instead, you may have slipped away slowly and subtly as a result of wandering desires and selfish attempts to meet your own needs. But when you strive to attain comfort and safety apart from God, you stray farther and farther away from Him.

Luke 15 presents a wonderful picture of the warm reception awaiting a lost “sheep.” Did the shepherd scold or punish the wayward lamb? No. Instead, all of heaven celebrated because the lost had been found. Likewise, heaven rejoices when a wandering child of God returns “to the fold.” Jesus tells us, “There will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance” (Luke 15:7).

In restoring our souls, God is more than a pardoning Shepherd. He is also a providing Shepherd. He knows what we need before we even ask, and He delights in meeting our needs (Matt. 7:9–11). That means He knows what you need physically, emotionally, and spiritually, right now. In fact, He is already at work, accomplishing and providing the things you need, even though you may not even have thought of them yet.8

“We’re looking to build a name for ourselves. Remember what Psalm 23 says? He guides us in righteousness for his namesake. It’s not that you go out and make a great name for yourself. It’s that the Great Shepherd knows your name.”7 -David R. Klinger

CONCLUSION

God is the Good Shepherd and he provides for and protects his children. He gives us all we need for a life lived for his glory.

Discipling through the Psalms

1. Remind them of the peace of God’s presence. Inevitably, those you disciple will experience the anxieties, doubts, and troubles of this world. When you come to Psalm 23, remind those you disciple that there is peace in walking with God. Is there a time when you were plagued with doubt, disappointment or fear? Share with those you are teaching how God restored your soul.

1 Peter 5:7 “Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.”

Philippians 4:7 “And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

Matthew 11:28-30 “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”
2. Remind them of the hope we have in times of trial. In one of the most powerful examples of hope in suffering, Lamentations 3 says that the author calls certain things to mind and it brings forth hope. Amidst suffering, persecution, failure, and a sense of hopelessness, he calls to mind that God’s mercies are new every morning (v22), that God is faithful (v23), and that the Lord is all that he needs (v24). Evidently, remembering these truths brought forth hope. In the same way, our hope is in God. Though it is not easy, teach those you disciple to hope in God throughout trials. David shows us the beautiful picture of someone who walks through severe trials but does not fear. As Christians, we should suffer with a similar resolve and comfort.

John 16:33 “I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”

2 Cor 4:8-9 “We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed.”

1 Pet 5:10 “And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast.”

3. Remind them of the abundant life in Christ. John 10:10 says, “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.” Of course many have misunderstood this to mean that those who follow Christ will experience a life free from hardship and full of earthly success and health. It may come as a disappointment to those you disciple that Christ did not promise us a life of ease. However, point her heart toward the true meaning of this text. “Life to the fullest” is exactly what David depicts in Psalm 23. The richest, fullest life is not one that is satiated by the accumulating of materials, titles, or notoriety. We know these things to leave us increasingly empty when we give our lives to them. Rather, the abundant life is found when we, as disciples of Christ, say, “Come what may, my hope is in you.” True joy is found as we walk beside still waters and through the valleys of the shadow of death clinging to Christ.

Psalm 16:11 “You will make known to me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; In Your right hand there are pleasures forever.”

1 Timothy 6:18-19 “They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life.”

Matthew 6:33 “Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.”
REFLECT ON THE TEXT (5-10 Minutes)

The purpose of discussion questions is to (a) allow the teacher a way to gauge the level of comprehension and (b) allow students to develop bonds around spiritual truth.

*Do you refer to God as your Shepherd? When you think about this imagery, how does it help your prayer life? What do you mean when you say “God, you are my Good Shepherd.”*

*When was a time when you walked through the valley of the shadow of death? Would you be willing to share what part God played during this season? Did you experience the type of comfort and peace amidst it?*

*Do you ever have trouble accepting the unconditional, unrelenting love of God toward you? Do you imagine the day when we will see God face to face and walk with him beside actual still waters? What will it be like once we are freed completely from the effects of sin in the world?*

RESPOND TO THE TEXT (5 Minutes)

The purpose of these short activities is to encourage students to personalize the truth and begin to develop an application in their lives.

**Memorize Psalm 23 as a class.** Take 2-3 minutes to assign 1-2 verses to each person in your class. Ideally, there might be 12 people present, and each person would take ½ of a verse. For those with smaller classes, you will need to assign larger sections. For those with larger classes, you may need to divide the group into “teams” of 10-12.

**Give the students 2-3 minutes to memorize their verse to the best of their ability.** Then, recite the 23rd Psalm as a class by each person reciting their part. As always, be lighthearted about this. They may need to glance at their Bible as they recite their part.
LESSON 3

The Challenge: at the beginning of next week’s class, let’s see if we can recite this as a class from memory. This week, as you memorize your verse or two, reflect on its particular meaning as part of the whole of Psalm 23.

GOSPEL CHALLENGE (from the staff)

Psalms 23:4 says, “Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil.” Life is broken. All people experience the valleys, the hardships, and deaths of loved ones. Yet, as Christians, the hard times are never the end of the story. God is with us like a shepherd watches over his sheep. We have no reason to fear the hard times, no reason to fear death.

This week’s Gospel challenge is to use the moments in life that seem like you in the valley as a way to talk about the gospel. In fact, Paul considered his moments of trial to be some of his greatest moments of opportunity to share Christ. Second Corinthians 4:9-12 says, “persecuted, but not forsaken, struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies. For we who live are always being given over to death for Jesus’ sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh.” Consider taking the time to meet with a co-worker or classmate to share some of the hardships you go through. Describe some of the ways you experience the brokenness of this world and describe the hope you have in Christ.

HOME 22:6

SING: “It is Well with My Soul”
Hymn: https://www.hymnal.net/en/hymn/h/341
Modern: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3jhrID3C7aE
Hymn Story: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BdsAOgLihW0

READ: There is a fantastic paraphrase of Psalm 23 in The Jesus Storybook Bible. Here is a reading of the paraphrase: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K6fM4_8VU-8

PRAY: In your family prayer time, address God as the Good Shepherd and praise him for the way he is a shepherd to you and your family.
SOURCES

1 Macarthur Study Bible, Ps 23:1-6
2 NIV Zondervan Study Bible
3 Expositor’s Bible Commentary Old Testament, Ps 23:1
4 Expositor’s Bible Commentary Old Testament, Ps 23:2-4
5 NIV Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible, Ps 23:5
7 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZqbbLS-I0uM
8 Charles F. Stanley Life Principles Bible Notes, Ps 23:2-4
START HERE (5 Minutes)
Utilize one of the following tools to ignite the interest of your students. Tell a story, spark a discussion, or show a clip.

TELL A STORY.
You have never been so tense in your life. You have been held in custody without bail on a murder charge. The courtroom battle has dragged on for weeks, draining your vitality and weighing upon you with increasing anxiety. Finally, the big moment has arrived. With your hands manacled, the bailiff leads you into the courtroom. The jury files in after several days of deliberations. The courtroom falls silent as the judge calls the court to order. He asks, “Mr. Foreman, do you have a verdict?” Your heart is pounding and your mouth is dry as you watch him rise. The rest of your life depends upon his words. “Your honor, the jury finds the defendant not guilty.”

Not guilty! A flood of relief sweeps over you and tears of joy well up in your eyes. Not guilty! It’s as if a heavy weight has dropped from your shoulders! The bailiff unlocks your handcuffs and you hear the judge declare, “You are free to go.” Freedom from condemnation! Life suddenly takes on new meaning. You are free from confinement, free from the constant pressure of the charges against you, free to begin a new life, because you have been released from those charges. Can you imagine how that would feel?
SPARK A DISCUSSION.

By a show of hands, which do you think is a bigger problem in our world? Too much guilt?
Or not enough guilt?
Who thinks our culture is plagued by too much guilt?
Who thinks our culture could benefit from more guilt?
Make your argument for why you feel the way you do.

SHOW A CLIP.

https://www.rightnowmedia.org/Content/illustration/128221

READ THE TEXT (2-5 Minutes)

See Teacher Guide (p.4) for ways to creatively read the text.

Today’s Text: PSALM 32:1-11

1 Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.

2 Blessed is the man against whom the Lord counts no iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit.

3 For when I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long.

4 For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer. Selah

5 I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not cover my iniquity; I said, “I will confess my transgressions to the Lord,” and you forgave the iniquity of my sin. Selah

6 Therefore let everyone who is godly offer prayer to you at a time when you may be found; surely in the rush of great waters, they shall not reach him.

7 You are a hiding place for me; you preserve me from trouble; you surround me with shouts of deliverance. Selah

8 I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you with my eye upon you.

9 Be not like a horse or a mule, without understanding, which must be curbed with bit and bridle, or it will not stay near you.

10 Many are the sorrows of the wicked, but steadfast love surrounds the one who trusts in the Lord.

11 Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, O righteous, and shout for joy, all you upright in heart!
CONTEXT

- 32:1–11 This psalm has been classified by the early church as one of 7 penitential psalms (cf. 6; 38; 51; 102; 130; 143). Among these, Pss. 32 and 51 stand out as confessional giants. As historically related to the life of David and especially in connection with the Bathsheba episode (cf. 2 Sam. 11–12), Ps. 51 would have preceded Ps. 32. The overall thrust, intent, and development of Ps. 32 may be summarized as follows: life’s most important lessons about sin, confession, and forgiveness are skillfully shared by David through two avenues of approach.

I. First Avenue: Remembering these lessons. (32:1-5)
   A. Lessons about Results (32:1, 2)
   B. Lessons about Resistance (32:3, 4)
   C. Lessons about Responses (32:5)

II. Second Avenue: Relaying these lessons. (32:6-11)
   A. Lessons about Responses (32:6, 7)
   B. Lessons about Resistance (32:8, 9)
   C. Lessons about Results (32:10, 11)

CONTENT

Today’s text features a sinner (David, the author) experiencing the blessings of forgiveness. For those new to faith, it may be hard to figure out just how God works with his people. Is he an angry judge? Is he a loving Father? Is he permissive? Does he hold grudges? Psalm 32 provides us with a portrait of a repentant follower of God experiencing the results of forgiveness.

(1) The happy and fulfilled person is one whose sins have been confessed and forgiven.

In previous lessons in this series, we learned that the word “blessed” is used in Psalms to describe happiness, joy, or satisfaction. It can also mean to experience God’s favor. Nevertheless, David’s Psalm teaches us that true life in God is found when our sins are confessed, we feel the freedom of forgiveness, and we walk with a clean conscience. Notice David does not say:
(a) Blessed is the one who has never sinned.

(b) Blessed is the one who keeps his sins to himself.

(c) Blessed is the one who serves a God who thinks nothing is truly sinful.

(d) Blessed is the one who knows he is a sinner.

The Bible sets up for us the theology we need. God is holy and just. There are things that dishonor him and don’t bring about his glory or human flourishing. The blessed one in this life is the one who has acknowledged that brokenness and has thrown herself at the mercy of God and found forgiveness.

(2) Sin (and especially the covering up of sin) brings forth a normal sense of guilt.

3 For when I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long.

4 For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer.

5 VAIN RESPONSES TO GUILT THAT AVOID GOSPEL REPENTANCE
   DAVID PRINCE

Blame shifting
Blaming others, circumstances, and God for causing your actions. There is always an external reality that made your actions virtually inevitable.

Rationalization
Explaining your actions away by assuring yourself that you are better than many others.

Medicating
Numbing yourself to your actions by medicating with something external to you: drugs, alcohol, achievement, power, success, etc.

Cynicism
Tear others down in an attempt to make you feel better about yourself and your actions.

Personal Penance
Attempting to atone for your actions by self-harm or feeling really, really bad and counting yourself worthless.2
32:4 your hand was heavy on me. While not all suffering is caused by divine discipline, Ps 32 addresses one such case. Mesopotamian laments often dwell on this theme. In one poem, the worshiper recognizes the god Marduk's punishment and states: “Heavy was his hand upon me.” Similarly, in an Egyptian hymn dating about 1250 BC, the worshiper notes that even as he lay on his deathbed because of Amun's wrath, he looked for the god's mercy. A royal Hittite prayer, perhaps a generic template for such laments, appeals to the sun-god to reveal the sin that the worshiper presumes to be the cause of his illness and to be merciful.

In other words, he was quite literally sick because of his refusal to “come clean” with God. His body ached because his soul was in rebellion. Spiritual decisions always have physical consequences. “The Spanish Inquisition,” wrote Charles Spurgeon, “with all its tortures was nothing to the inquest which conscience holds within the heart” (1b:82).

So many times in life we commit “private” sins. These sins of the heart and mind, and sins done in secret produce a unique type of temptation. With public sin, it would be difficult to ignore. Relationships would be broken. The consequences are at times a bit more evident. But with secret sin, we are tempted to believe that because others may not know, God doesn't know. David reminds us here that to follow that inclination to clam up and shut down is like death to our soul. We waste away. We lose our strength. Our soul groans all day long. Something is not right. And we know it.

(3) The guilt we experience in sin should drive us toward God who forgives.

I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not cover my iniquity;
I said, “I will confess my transgressions to the Lord,” and you forgave the iniquity of my sin.

3-5 The description of the anguish of suffering is compared to the wasting away of “bones” and the sapping of physical strength. God's discipline weighed so heavily that the psalmist nearly succumbs under its pressure. God's discipline, like the hot, dry Mediterranean summer climate, dries up the psalmist’s vigor like a plant in the heat of summer. In a truly repentant spirit, the psalmist confesses his sin. The three synonyms for sin associated with three synonyms for forgiveness are now associated with three verbs for confession: (1) he “acknowledged”, (2) he “did not cover up”, and (3) he did “confess”.6

“People generally fall into 2 errors when it comes to God's mercy:
Those who feel like they are good enough they don’t need deep forgiveness and those who feel like they are so bad they can’t obtain deep forgiveness.

For those who feel like you are good enough that you don’t need deep forgiveness, I can only pray that God would open your eyes to how sinful you are; how much you are in need of mercy. I pray you’ll stop covering your sin, both to yourself and others so that God can cover it.

And to those who think you are too bad to obtain deep forgiveness, I pray that God will open your eyes to how wide, how high, how deep and how long is the love of God for
you; how extravagant was his grace in sending Jesus to the cross for you; how sufficient his
sacrifice was for your sins; how powerful was his resurrection from the dead on your behalf;
how ready the Holy Spirit now stands to fill you with that power; and how much mercy he
now extends out to you.”

Forgiveness is not only a New Testament idea. Throughout the OT God provides a way for
sinful people to be reconciled to himself. The sacrificial system demonstrates this pattern of
confession and restoration that God desires.  For those of us in Christ, we must remember that
forgiveness is only possible because of the death of Christ on our behalf. The forgiveness we
receive from God is a purchased forgiveness.  Remember, it is not as though God has forgiven
every sin that has been committed by any person on earth.  He is not permissive in that way.
Our sins have been paid for on the cross, and therefore, 1 John 1:9 says, “If we confess our sins,
he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

(4) Confessing our sin restores us to joyous fellowship with the Father.

10 Many are the sorrows of the wicked,
but steadfast love surrounds the one who trusts in the Lord.

11 Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, O righteous,
and shout for joy, all you upright in heart!

Ultimately, forgiveness rescues us from the flood of God’s wrath. David alludes to this truth
in his use of the metaphors “dried up” and “rush of great waters” in verses 4–6. Because
of its arid climate, Palestine has many wadis, or seasonal rivers. During the wet season, rain
flows down the mountains and produces many flowing streams. But during the dry season,
these river beds will dry out, creating parched, cracked riverbeds. At the beginning of the
subsequent rainy season, flash floods can occur in these wadis when the water suddenly
pours down from the sky and rushes into the dry channels.
Satan lives in the darkness and longs to keep us there as well. He does this because lies live best in the darkness. God knows this, which is why when He calls us to Himself, He calls us into the church.

God has created the church to be many things, one of which is to be a community of people who help each other fight sin and love Him. He calls us into relationships where we speak truth to one another (Ephesians 4:15, 25), confess sins to one another (James 5:16), and love each other enough to chase after each other if we stray (Matthew 18:10-20; Galatians 6:1-2; James 5:19-20).

The question I want you to ponder is this: Who knows you? I mean who really knows you? Who not only has permission, but is currently acting upon the permission to ask you penetrating questions? Are you answering those questions honestly or are you hiding details and painting up your sin to guard your image?

Do not hide from God’s gracious aid of loving relationships.

Psalm 32 tells us that confession is not only a desire of God and a command for believers, but there is a blessing in it. Hidden sin brings forth sorrow and forgiven sin brings about rejoicing. Isn’t this, in essence, why a Christian worship service is so powerful?

“My sins are gone. I’ve been set free.”
“And sinners plunged beneath that flood lose all their guilty stains.”
“Sin had left a crimson stain. He washed it white as snow.”
“And as he stands in victory, sin’s curse has lost its grip on me.”

Many times we forget that we have access to forgiveness because of Christ. “He saved me, sure. But I am certainly not on his good list right now,” we say. Do we suppose that God would save us from our past sins only to condemn us in the present? There are many things in this world that can bring about sorrow and sadness. Today, perhaps we can resolve to not let it be because of our own hidden sin.

CONCLUSION

Vibrant is the soul of a disciple whose sins have been confessed and forgiven.

Discipling through the Psalms

1. Remind them that God’s unconditional love and forgiveness extends even to heinous sins we have committed. One of the barriers to confession and restoration is that our disciples have convinced themselves that they will not be accepted in the eyes of God. We must remind them that we do not earn God’s love and acceptance by our good deeds or lack of sin. Though he is disappointed with our sin, he delights in forgiving his children.

Romans 8:1 There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”

1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Romans 8:38-39 For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.
2. Remind them that unconfessed and hidden sin rots the soul. Take time to be authentic with those you are investing in and make them aware that you have sin struggles you are battling. Teach them what a normal pattern of repentance and confession looks like. One of the great tragedies of discipleship is when a mentor tries to present a false purity, a false holiness to someone they are developing. This teaches the protégé when she sins that something must be wrong with her. She has no choice but to try to tackle the sin problem alone, or simply hide it.

Romans 3:23 “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God…”

Revelation 2:5 “Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent.”

2 Corinthians 7:10 For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death.

3. Remind them of the joy in having a clean conscience. Do you remember when you were living for yourself? Do you remember when you did not have a desire to obey and honor Christ? A self-seeking life leads to trouble. Doing things we know to be wrong, and stepping on people to achieve our own desires brings about a certain anxiety in life. Will I be found out? What will happen when my boss finds out I lied about that? Will my friend find out I threw him under the bus to save myself? And if there is a God, he must think I’m a pitiful person. These are the things we lived with before Christ. Encourage those you are discipling to not fall into a pre-salvation mindset. Though our struggle with sin remains, our enslavement to it has ceased. We are free to confess our sins to God and each other and live in harmony with a clean conscience.

Hebrews 10:22 “Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.”

Titus 1:15 “To the pure, all things are pure, but to the defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure; but both their minds and their consciences are defiled…”

Philippians 4:6 Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.

REFLECT ON THE TEXT  (5-10 Minutes)

The purpose of discussion questions is to (a) allow the teacher a way to gauge the level of comprehension and (b) allow students to develop bonds around spiritual truth.

Of course you do not have to share with the group, but how do you feel you’re doing in this area? Do you sometimes go days and weeks mulling over your sins before confessing them to God and others? How do you convince yourself not to bring these before God?
Is there someone in your life who you trust who can help you walk through a matter of confession that needs to take place? Perhaps sharing about this relationship could help others develop a similar kind of friendship. How is confession a part of your friendship?

Would you be willing to share about a time when you tried to hide your sin? Did you ultimately come to a place of confession and forgiveness? Did the consequences of your sin cause you to go public with it? How did it feel once you finally brought it before God and asked for his forgiveness?

**RESPOND TO THE TEXT (5 Minutes)**

The purpose of these short activities is to encourage students to personalize the truth and begin to develop an application in their lives.

Spend a couple of minutes this morning reflecting on areas of your life that need confession. On a piece of paper or using your smartphone, allow everyone in the class 3-4 minutes to answer the following questions personally. Remind the students that their responses are only for themselves and will not be shared.

- List one personal sin or struggle that you need to specifically bring before God for forgiveness and restoration.

- List the name of one person you have sinned against for which you have not asked forgiveness.

- List the name of one person in your life whom you trust, who it might be worth approaching about developing an accountable relationship where struggles and sins can be shared openly.

Encourage the students to pray this week about how God may have them respond to these things. What things need to be confessed to God? Is it time to reach out to someone with whom you have a grievance? And is there someone who would serve you well as an accountability partner that you’ve simply never thought to ask? Perhaps this week God will beckon you to respond.
Gospel Challenge (from the staff)

Prayer changes lives. Psalm 32:6 encourages the godly to pray so that the rush of great waters does not reach us. In other words, David is asking God for deliverance.

For this week’s Gospel Challenge, offer to pray for someone. Perhaps, you can talk with a neighbor or co-worker, and simply ask them, “Is there anything specific I could pray for, for you?” You can even commit to pray for that person for the next three weeks. Who knows what God might do? As a result of your prayers, God may change a person’s life dramatically, giving evidence of his existence and power. Follow up with the person after those three weeks and maybe there will be an opportunity to further share about Christ.

Home 22:6

Sing: Take time to learn a simple tune that communicates the Gospel.
Gospel Song by Sovereign Grace Music  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3FZMsV5YCDM

Lyrics:
Holy God in love became
Perfect man to bear my blame
On the cross he took my sin
By his death I live again

Read: Read Psalm 51 as a family as a supplement to Psalm 32.

Pray: Is confession to God part of your normal pattern of prayer? This week, be intentional about acknowledging your sins and asking God consistently for his forgiveness and grace.

Sources

1 Macarthur Study Bible, Psalm 32:1-11
2 http://equip.sbts.edu/article/repentance-as-a-path-to-joy/
3 NIV Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible, Psalm 32:4
4 http://www.samstormsm.com/all-articles/post/the-blessedness-of-forgiveness--psalm-32-
8 http://www.insight.org/resources/daily-devotional/individual/magnificent-relief
9 http://equip.sbts.edu/article/repentance-as-a-path-to-joy/
10 https://www.ligonier.org/learn/devotionals/joy-forgiveness/
11 http://garrettkell.com/category/spiritual-warfare/
**Tell a Story.**

From Chuck Swindoll:

The Bible is filled with references to water. From the creation account where we read that “the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters” (Genesis 1:2), all the way to the last chapter of Revelation where we’re told of “a river of the water of life, clear as crystal” that is flowing from God’s throne (Revelation 22:1), we find literally hundreds of occasions where water is mentioned in the Scriptures. Because water plays such a major role through so many scenes found in the Bible, it should not be surprising to us that water is vital to our health and well-being. It not only cleanses our bodies from impurities, it refreshes and satisfies us when we are thirsty. But we must not overlook a spiritual dimension. We read in the ancient book of Psalms, As the deer pants for the water brooks,

So my soul pants for You, O God.

My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. (Psalm 42:1–2)

Do those words express your feelings? Do you find yourself thirsty for a deeper relationship with the living God? Has your world become parched and barren, leaving you like that deer, panting for the kind of water that can satisfy your soul?"
SPARK A DISCUSSION.

Depression is not a topic we often discuss at church. After all, we’re supposed to be a people of joy and hope, right?

Imagine a friend of yours comes to you and reveals that she has felt so far from God recently. She’s been to see a counselor, and other areas of her life are in normal order. But she feels hopeless. She is anxious about the future. And she tells you that it has been months since she has felt real joy. How would you counsel her Scripturally?

SHOW A CLIP.

https://www.rightnowmedia.org/Content/VideoElement/197266

So much of life brings about exhaustion and distraction, where can we turn for rest? In this video created in cooperation with the Association of Biblical Counselors, Garrett Higbee, Executive Director of the Biblical Counseling Coalition, describes the state of our souls when they are weary and encourages Christians to turn to Christ for rest.

READ THE TEXT (2-5 Minutes)

See Teacher Guide (p.4) for ways to creatively read the text.

Today’s Text: PSALM 42:1-11

1 As a deer pants for flowing streams, so pants my soul for you, O God.
2 My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God?
3 My tears have been my food day and night, while they say to me all the day long, “Where is your God?”
4 These things I remember, as I pour out my soul: how I would go with the throng and lead them in procession to the house of God with glad shouts and songs of praise, a multitude keeping festival.
5 Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my salvation
6 and my God. My soul is cast down within me; therefore I remember you from the land of Jordan and of Hermon, from Mount Mizar.
7 Deep calls to deep at the roar of your waterfalls; all your breakers and your waves have gone over me.
8 By day the Lord commands his steadfast love, and at night his song is with me, a prayer to the God of my life.
9 I say to God, my rock: “Why have you forgotten me? Why do I go mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?”
10 As with a deadly wound in my bones, my adversaries taunt me, while they say to me all the day long, “Where is your God?”
11 Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my salvation and my God.
REVIEW THE TEXT
(The DIRECT Route 15-20 Minutes or The SCENIC Route 25-30 Minutes)

CONTEXT

- 42:1–11 As in the case of Pss. 9 and 10, Pss. 42 and 43 were originally probably one. Some ancient manuscripts put them together; Ps. 43 has no title while the rest around it do. In form, Ps. 42 may be considered an individual lament. This psalm also exemplifies a primary characteristic of Book II of the Psalms, the preference of the ascription “God” (or parallels to it) for the Deity. The occasion and situation of Ps. 42 are historically unspecified; however, what is obvious is that the psalmist’s situation was intense and greatly aggravated by his surrounding mockers. Consequently, Ps. 42 is a dirge of two stanzas.

I. Stanza One: The Psalmist Sings of His Drought (42:1-5)
   A. The Content of This Stanza (42:1-4)
   B. The Chorus of This Dirge (cf. v. 11) (42:5)

II. Stanza Two: The Psalmist Sings of His Drowning (42:6-11)
   A. The Content of This Stanza (42:6-10)
   B. The Chorus of This Dirge (cf. v. 5) (42:11)

CONTENT

In this Psalm, the author finds himself in a place of spiritual depression. His soul is downcast and he describes his current circumstances as bleak. Psalm 42 is quite an authentic look into the real struggle of a believer to cling to God in the most hopeless moments.

(1) He describes his state.

His enemies taunt him saying, “where is your God?” (v3, 10)
He is cast down in turmoil (v5, 11)
He appears to be weeping continuously (v3).
He likens his situation to emotional drowning. (v7)

If you have ever gone through a spiritually dark season, you know how quickly Satan can attack our thinking. Think of all the times we don’t exactly think clearly. When we’re tired, afraid, overwhelmed, even bored, our mind can drift into patterns of thinking we typically would not fall to. It is too shallow to say that we can think our way out of a dark season, but it would also be foolish not to see in Psalm 42 the way that the Psalmist uses the truth stored up in his mind to jumpstart a more hopeful thought pattern; one that is rooted in who God is.

What is interesting about the author’s situation is that he’s depressed, but he’s striving to “snap out of it,” and find his hope in God.
“If David applied for a staff position in our churches and gave us his “diary of worship” to better understand his life, would we hesitate to give him serious consideration? I am sure we would want clarification on his imprecatory psalms as well as many other parts. Is it possible that we have a lot to learn in our churches from this man after God’s own heart? Do we sanitize our worship in a way that would never allow someone to express the range of emotions found in the Psalms?”

(2) He reminds himself of what is true.

“Hope in God; for I shall again praise him...”

He uses this phrase twice, beckoning his spirit to find hope in God. Notice though how he goes about finding his hope in God. He remembers. He calls things to mind. This is a critical part of discipleship. The thoughts of the hopeless person are cloudy. And yet this psalmist evidently knows that the key to hoping in God is to remember who God is and what he’s done.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LAMENT</th>
<th>HOPE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>42:1-4</td>
<td>42:5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42:6-7</td>
<td>42:8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42:9-10</td>
<td>42:11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43:1-2</td>
<td>43:3-5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When you are stuck, deep, despondent, or in despair, think back to what God has delivered you from in difficult times past. Remember how he has never really failed you. Remember your way all the way back to Mount Calvary and the empty tomb. Remembering God’s historic faithfulness is the first step in enjoying his present faithfulness to you, even if you don’t feel it.

You may be talking to yourself about why you feel so tired. Or maybe you woke up this morning with a sense of dread and you’re not sure why... Perhaps you’re reliving a conversation that didn’t go too well. Or maybe [you’re] preparing yourself for a conversation that may be difficult by conjuring up as many renditions as you can imagine, so you can cover all the contingencies. Maybe your mind has traveled back to your distant past and, for reasons you don’t understand, you’re recalling events from your early childhood....

The point is that you are constantly involved in an internal conversation that greatly influences the things you decide, say, and do....

“He preaches truth to his heart, reminding his turbulent soul that God alone is his saving hope.”

–Christina Fox

“When you actually remember God, you do not sin. The only way we ever sin is by suppressing God, by forgetting, by tuning out his voice, switching channels, and listening to other voices. When you actually remember, you actually change. In fact, remembering is the first change.”

-David Powlison
DEPRESSION AND SELF-LEADING
MARTYN LLOYD-JONES

Have you not realized that most of your unhappiness in life is due to the fact that you are listening to yourself instead of talking to yourself? Take those thoughts that come to you the moment you wake up in the morning. You have not originated them, but they start talking to you, they bring back the problems of yesterday, etc. Somebody is talking. Who is talking to you? Your self is talking to you. Now this man’s treatment was this; instead of allowing this self to talk to him, he starts talking to himself....

The main art in the matter of spiritual living is to know how to handle yourself. You have to take yourself in hand, you have to address yourself, preach to yourself, question yourself. You must say to your soul: ‘Why art thou cast down’—what business have you to be disquieted? You must turn on yourself, upbraid yourself, condemn yourself, exhort yourself, and say to yourself: ‘Hope thou in God’—instead of muttering in this depressed, unhappy way. And then you must go on to remind yourself of God, Who God is, and what God is and what God has done, and what God has pledged Himself to do. Then having done that, end on this great note: defy yourself, and defy other people, and defy the devil and the whole world, and say with this man: “I shall yet praise Him for the help of His countenance, who is also the health of my countenance and my God”.

CONCLUSION

Discipling through the Psalms

1. Remind them that in this world, there will be troubles. Have you ever discipled someone who recently had a dramatic conversion experience? One common feature of a story like this is that, at some point, the emotions and excitement around their newfound salvation wear off and it sometimes leads to a deep disappointment. “Was what happened to me real? Or did I just get caught up in the moment?” “Why am I still struggling with the same sins?” “The challenges in life I faced before still haunt me.” If we have not discipled them well, they will be ill-equipped for this season and doubt their salvation. The goal of the Christian life is not the absence of challenge or trial. The goal of the Christian life is to grow more in the likeness of and obedience to Christ as we unwaveringly cling to Him through the ups and downs of life. Be sure to take time to teach those you’re discipling that they can expect trials and hardship in this life. And they must be prepared to hope in God when there appears no hope.

John 16:33 “I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.”

James 1:2-4 Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

1 Peter 5:6-7 Humble yourselves, therefore, under God’s mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.
2. Remind them that following Christ is not mainly rooted in emotions. If you listen carefully to some testimonies, you can hear some indicators that a profession of faith may have been rooted more in emotionalism than in repentance and faith in Christ. “I walked to the front and I told the pastor I needed to get right with God. He prayed for me and it felt so good. I had chills,” they say. “I just felt this tremendous peace and burden lifted.” Many times when we repent and ask God for forgiveness through Jesus, we do experience these kinds of emotions. However, emotions are tricky, and feelings are a lousy lord. If our feelings come to rule us, there is no authority there. We are on shifting sand. So teach those you’re discipling that our faith is not rooted in how we feel, but rooted in the truth of God which is found in His Word.

1 Cor 14:15 “What am I to do? I will pray with my spirit, but I will pray with my mind also; I will sing praise with my spirit, but I will sing with my mind also.”

Proverbs 3:5-6 “Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.”

John 14:1 “Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me.

3. Remind them to store up God’s Word in their hearts so there is something to call to mind to cling to during dark times. Throughout the Psalms, we see the writers cry out to God according to his attributes. The writers don’t seem to aimlessly ask God to rescue them. They don’t say, “Rescue me. Please rescue me. I really need rescuing. I need it right away.” Their crying out is rooted in their relationship with God and knowledge of Him. Psalm 51 says, “Have mercy on me according to your unfailing love.” When Satan tempts us to despair, if we have nothing to cling to, we will be swept away in his lies. Teach those you are discipling to memorize Scripture.

Psalm 119:11 “I have stored up your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.”

Colossians 3:16 “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.”

Psalm 40:8 “I delight to do your will, O my God; your law is within my heart.”

**REFLECT ON THE TEXT (5-10 Minutes)**

The purpose of discussion questions is to (a) allow the teacher a way to gauge the level of comprehension and (b) allow students to develop bonds around spiritual truth.

All of us experience various level of spiritual depression. We are blue. Our souls are downcast. We’ve reached a place of despair. Would you be willing to share about a season in your life when you’ve experienced this?
There is much to deliberate regarding the use of medication when it comes to depression. It is important to visit a biblical counselor or a medical expert when you become concerned about your emotional well-being. In addition to any recommendations from a counselor or doctor, what is the function of the Word of God in a time of spiritual depression?

What is the relationship between life’s circumstances and our hope in God? How do we find hope even when our challenging circumstances have not changed?

**RESPOND TO THE TEXT** *(5 Minutes)*

How has your thinking changed? Take 5 minutes and respond to the following two questions as a way of personalizing the content we covered this morning.

How would you describe spiritual depression before our lesson today?

In what way(s) has your thinking changed? Has something been added to your understanding? Has something been corrected? Reinforced? Have you thought of this subject from a different angle?

Taking time to reflect in this way urges the student to be sure to internalize the message, not merely to be grateful for the stimulating information transfer.

**GOSPEL CHALLENGE** *(from the staff)*

Twice in Psalms 42, the Psalmist repeats the idea of, “Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my salvation and my God” (v. 5, 10). Admittedly, we all have seasons when we doubt whether God is going to come through. We wonder like the psalmist, “Where is my God?” (v.3). Hold on. Believe in the steadfast love of God even when He seems distant. Such times of perceived distance easily discourage us from sharing the gospel.
This week’s Gospel Challenge is to reflect on the ways God has proven himself faithful in the past. Share your testimony of how you became a Christian with your family and close friends. Perhaps you can go to a family member or friend and say, “Hey, we’ve been friends for a long time now, I was just curious to know how you came to know Christ.”

HOME 22:6

SING: Sing the classic hymn “Leaning on the Everlasting Arms”

What a fellowship, what a joy divine,
Leaning on the everlasting arms;
What blessedness, what a peace is mine,
Leaning on the everlasting arms.

Leaning, leaning, safe and secure from all alarms;
Leaning, leaning, leaning on the everlasting arms.

O how sweet to walk in this pilgrim way,
Leaning on the everlasting arms;
O how bright the path grows from day to day,
Leaning on the everlasting arms.

What have I to dread, what have I to fear,
Leaning on the everlasting arms?
I have blessed peace with my Lord so near,
Leaning on the everlasting arms.

READ: Read Psalm 42 together.

PRAY: Go around as a family and tell each other why it is that you are hopeful about your future. What do God and his Word have to do with it? Thank God for the hope that we possess in Him. Pray for those who may be hurting or experiencing a sense of distance from God.

SOURCES

2 Macarthur Study Bible, Ps 42:1-11
3 https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/dont-sanitize-the-psalms/
4 https://bible.org/seriespage/psalm-42-43-dealing-depression
5 https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/jared-c-wilson/remembering-is-the-first-change-2/
6 Tripp, Paul David. A Shelter in the Time of Storm, p.56
7 https://bible.org/seriespage/psalm-42-43-dealing-depression
START HERE  (5 Minutes)

Utilize one of the following tools to ignite the interest of your students. Tell a story, spark a discussion, or show a clip.

TELL A STORY.

From Chuck Swindoll:
Below is the story of a hymn written by great reformer, Martin Luther.
Among his voluminous works, Luther wrote some 36 hymns. “A Mighty Fortress Is Our God,” however, is far and away the most well-known.
Based on Psalm 46, the hymn is a celebration of the sovereign power of God over all earthly and spiritual forces, and of the sure hope we have in him because of Christ. After its publication, it gained immense popularity throughout reformed Europe.
It was … the Marseillaise of the Reformation. It was sung at Augsburg during the Diet, and in all the churches of Saxony, often against the protest of the priest. It was sung in the streets; and, so heard, comforted the hearts of Melanchthon, Jonas, and Cruciger, as they entered Weimar, when banished from Wittenberg in 1547. It was sung by poor Protestant emigrants on their way into exile, and by martyrs at their death. It is woven into the web of the history of Reformation times, and it became the true national hymn of Protestant Germany. (see footnote¹ for more on this source)
The hymn became closely associated with Luther himself, as it embodied in its words and melody
so much of the character of its author — bold, confident, defiant in the face of opposition. This association is symbolized in the monument to Luther at Wittenberg where the first line of the lyrics is engraved on the base.

There are at least 7 documented theories on the time and circumstances in which the hymn was written. Benson concludes, along with several other historians, that the most likely story is that it was written in October 1527 as the plague was approaching. The evidence for this date is the printing history surrounding it (no copies beforehand, and a growing number of copies afterwards).

There is debate about where the tune came from. In times past, it was believed to have been borrowed by Luther, perhaps from an old Gregorian melody. More recently, however, scholars are inclined to believe that Luther wrote it himself. (The story that the tune came from a tavern song that was popular in Luther’s day is the result of a misunderstanding of German musical terminology.)

There have been many attempts to translate the hymn into English. The two most enduring are Thomas Carlyle’s “A Safe Stronghold Our God Is Still” and Frederic Henry Hedge’s “A Mighty Fortress Is Our God,” Hedge’s translation being far more popular. ²

SPARK A DISCUSSION.

Have you ever known anyone who, when troubles come, seems unwavering? Is this a characteristic you wish you had? Why do you suppose these people don’t get anxious and worried like the rest of us?

SHOW A CLIP.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GrMoki4-weM

How can a soldier have no fear facing possible death?

READ THE TEXT

See Teacher Guide (p.4) for ways to creatively read the text.

Today’s Text: PSALM 46:1-6

1 God is our refuge and strength,  
a very present help in trouble.

2 Therefore we will not fear though the earth gives way,  
though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea,  
though its waters roar and foam,  
though the mountains tremble at its swelling. Selah

4 There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God,  
the holy habitation of the Most High.

5 God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved;  
    God will help her when morning dawns.

6 The nations rage, the kingdoms totter;  
he utters his voice, the earth melts.
REVIEW THE TEXT
(The DIRECT Route 15-20 Minutes or The SCENIC Route 25-30 Minutes)

CONTEXT

- 46: Title The new element in this title is “Alamoth.” The early Gr. translation (LXX) interprets this technical term as “hidden things.” However, the Heb. word normally has to do with “girls” or “young maidens.” Consequently, the most likely conjecture about this phrase is that it is a technical musical notation, possibly indicating a song which was to be sung with female voices at a higher range.³

- 46:1–11 Psalm 46 was the scriptural catalyst for Martin Luther’s great hymn, “A Mighty Fortress Is Our God.” This psalm also launches a trilogy of psalms (i.e., 46, 47, 48); they are all songs of triumph. Furthermore, it has also been grouped among the so-called “songs of Zion” (cf. Pss. 48, 76, 84, 87, 122). Psalm 46 extols the adequacy of God in facing threats from nature and the nations. God indeed protects (cf. vv. 1, 7, 11) His people upon the earth (cf. vv. 2, 6, 8, 9, 10). The major burden of Ps. 46 is that God provides stability for His people who live in two exceedingly unstable environments.

I. The Unstable Environment of Nature (46:1-3)
   A. The Affirmation of His Stability (46:1)
   B. The Application of His Stability (46:2, 3)

II. The Unstable Environment of the Nations (46:4-11)
   A. The First Chorus (46:4-7)
   B. The Follow-Up Chorus (46:8-11)⁴

CONTENT

Many of the hymns covered in this series depict a crying out to God. Amidst hopelessness, we have learned that God provides hope. Believers can appeal to God on the basis of his faithfulness and character, and in any circumstance, the believer can find hope in God. This particular hymn extols God not just for his personal power and sovereignty in the life of the believer but it proves a reminder of God’s infinite sovereignty as it relates to the entire earth.

(1) Trouble comes.

Are you becoming tired of this theme? Psalms clearly reminds believers that one of the results of the fall in Genesis 3 is a broken world. Scholars have debated about what circumstance in Israel’s history this Psalm describes. Of course these texts tell us about the nature of God and man and therefore have great application for believers today, remember that these poems were written regarding specific circumstances.

It is important to recognize the type of trouble mentioned here. Earthly circumstances had become downright frightening. This is not a downcast soul, sadness of spirit, or even the loss
of a loved one. God is present and sovereign in those circumstances as well. But here, the psalmist says that the “earth gives way” (v2), “the mountains be moved.” Evidently this is poetic language depicting an earthquake.

*Have you ever experienced an earthquake? Those who have not can only imagine the panic when one of the most constant and dependable parts of the earth (the ground) gives way.*

Psalm 46 beckons believers, “Though the strongest, most predictable, trustworthy thing in the world begins to shake and display its fallibility, you need not fear.”

*Would you say that this is the Church’s attitude regarding culture? Does the church say with confidence, “Though the earth gives way, we will not fear,”?*

THE IDEA: We are guilty of forgetting God’s sovereign hand and growing fearful when our circumstances shift unfavorably.

WHAT IS SELAH ANYWAYS? CHUCK SWINDOLL

Well, as best we can tell, *Selah* was an ancient musical notation. Music scores today have unique notations or signs that musicians understand. Some look like arrowheads pointing left or right signifying to the musician to increase or diminish the volume. In biblical days *selah* probably meant “pause.” I have a friend who, every time he reads the Psalms and comes across *selah*, he simply reads, “Pause and let that sink in.” Not bad.5

(2) God is present in suffering and hardship.

V1 says God is a “very present help” in trouble. Remember Psalm 23? Why did the Psalmist not fear when he walked through the valley of the shadow of death? Because he knew that God was with him.

When the world shifts and comforts are challenged, there is a tendency to believe that we are alone. God’s Word reminds us of his presence. In fact, many times when we ask God to “show up,” we forget that God indwells us. The problem is, if we experience even one-minute of this life focused on the earthly, the temporary, the horizontal, we are at risk of forgetting that God is with us. Remember the end of the Great Commission? “I am with you even to the end of the age.” (Matt. 28:20)

“As God is all-sufficient, our defense and our might are equal to all emergencies . . . . He is not as the swallows that leave us in the winter; He is a Friend in need, and a Friend indeed. When it is very dark with us, let brave spirits say, ‘Come, let us sing the forty-sixth!’” -Charles Spurgeon
He establishes His throne and residency here with such authority and certainty that our text affirms:

1. God is in the midst of her. **HIS PRESENCE**
2. She shall not be moved. (HCSB, “toppled, cf vs. 2,6) **HIS POWER**
3. God shall help her at the break of dawn. **HIS PROMISE**

In times of trial, ask God to give you a fuller sense of his presence, for he is already with you.

(3) **God is in control.**

It is not good enough for someone to be with you in your time of need. For what good is it to be accompanied in danger by someone who offers no reprieve? It is not only that God is with you in your suffering but God is the one who is with you. The God who Created all things, who holds the universe in his hand, who holds all things together, and who will hold the wicked ultimately accountable, holds you. This is precisely why there can be no fear.

Now you see why Psalm 46 speaks with such relevance. In times of physical catastrophe, since God is our refuge, we will not **fear**. At the threat of warfare, since God is our refuge, we will not be **moved**. With a future that seems uncertain, we will not **worry**. We’ll remember He brings an end to wars. War is nothing new to Him. Chariots, spears, arrows have a way of making us churn within. But, **stop!** We will not worry.

Our God simply speaks with what Revelation 19:15 calls a “sharp sword” and with only a word “He strikes the nations.” They rage and rebel, they toss to and fro jockeying for power and world domination. They build what they think is an invincible world empire. Oh what fools we are!

**CONCLUSION**

We can face the depths of pain, uncertainty, and strife of the world because the one true and sovereign God is with us.

**Discipling through the Psalms**

1. Remind them to get perspective. Discipling in the USA presents challenges that discipling in other contexts does not. The fact is, most of those we invest in and teach have been afforded more luxuries and comforts than most in this world. Now, it is not as though the struggles of the wealthy are less important to God, or that he is less present, but this would provide a great opportunity to remind those you disciple of the context in which the Psalmist recognizes God as refuge and strength. Israel hopes in God when their lives are on the line. Israel sings this Psalm of hope when their people are taken from their land and scattered throughout the world. The power of the Psalm is not that we can trust God that he will be with us during our upcoming geometry exam, though he will. It is that when nothing in the world seems stable, and there is nothing in the world to remind us that things will turn out ok, God is a worthy refuge.

“The only safe place in the world is in God alone.”
–H.B. Charles, Jr.
2 Cor. 4:17-18 For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.

Hebrews 13:8 Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.

Romans 12:3 For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned.

2. Remind them of God’s sovereignty. Psalm 46 provides a wonderful opportunity to expand on the doctrine of God. He is all-powerful. He is all-knowing. And he is in control. Not only because of his power, and his grace, and his love for us, but because of his sovereignty we can trust him. Remind those you disciple that God has displayed his power over nature (the calming of the sea, the parting of the sea, the pillar of fire.) Everyone and everything answers to God. He is not surprised and he cannot lie. When our hope is in him, we are truly secure.

Psalm 115:3 “Our God is in the heavens; he does all that he pleases.”

Proverbs 16:9 “The heart of man plans his way, but the Lord establishes his steps.”

2 Chronicles 20:6 “O Lord, God of our fathers, are you not God in heaven? You rule over all the kingdoms of the nations. In your hand are power and might, so that none is able to withstand you.”

3. Warn them of the danger of hoping in their own abilities and strength. There are two inappropriate responses to danger and hardship in this life. We are guilty of both. First, those we disciple will feel the temptation to give up, to withdrawal. “Life hasn’t gone my way,” they will say. “It is what it is.” But perhaps even more common is your disciples’ tendency to try to muster up the strength and creativity to fight their own battles. They are resolved to depend on no one, to find a will and a way, and work themselves out of challenges in life. While hard work and creativity are noble characteristics, it is this kind of thinking that often leads people to sin, to dishonor people, to make unethical decisions and to neglect their spiritual health on their way to “fighting their way out of” difficulties. Remind those you disciple that not only does God want to be your refuge and strength, but that in your own strength, you cannot accomplish His will.

John 6:63 It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is no help at all. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life.

John 15:4-5 Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.

1 Cor 2:1-5 And I, when I came to you, brothers, did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God with lofty speech or wisdom. For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling, and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, so that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.
REFLECT ON THE TEXT (5-10 Minutes)

The purpose of discussion questions is to (a) allow the teacher a way to gauge the level of comprehension and (b) allow students to develop bonds around spiritual truth.

What is something in your life, or on this earth… if it began to fail, you admit that you would become fearful?

Is there someone in your life whom you trust who can help you walk through a matter of confession that needs to take place? Perhaps sharing about this relationship could help others develop a similar kind of friendship. How is confession a part of your friendship?

Would you be willing to share about a time when you tried to hide your sin? Did you ultimately come to a place of confession and forgiveness? Did the consequences of your sin cause you to go public with it? How did it feel once you finally brought it before God and asked for his forgiveness?

RESPOND TO THE TEXT (5 Minutes)

Case Study: A missionary friend sends you a text message from their assignment to ask for your prayers. One of their children has become ill and the medical treatment there is sub-par. Not only that, but due to political unrest, they cannot foresee a time when they will be able to leave the country to obtain proper medical care. She is afraid.

The Assignment: Take 2-3 minutes and write a 1-2 sentence encouragement to her based on Psalm 46. Put it in your own words but use what we learned today as a guide.

Finally, go around the room and share what you said to your friend. Let that be a comfort to all of us as we go through trials of many kinds.
GOSPEL CHALLENGE  
(from the staff)

Psalms 46:10 describes how God will be exalted among the nations. According to the Southern Baptist Mission Board, there are 3,562 overseas missionaries as well as 3,261 unengaged and unreached people groups (http://www.sbc.net/BecomingSouthernBaptist/FastFacts.asp). Our church alone has 11 partnerships (4 national, 7 international). One of those partners in the Amazon is strategically trying to reach an unreached people group called the Quilombola. You can find more info on our church website ibclr.org/missions/our-partners.

This week’s Gospel Challenge is to pray for missionaries. Perhaps select one specific GO Partner of our church and commit to praying for them this week and the advancement of the gospel among the nations.

HOME 22:6

SING: Take time to learn “Refuge and Strength” taken from Psalm 46.
https://www.rightnowmedia.org/Content/KidsSeries/136067?episode=7

READ: Google a short story or two from Jews who endured the Holocaust. Ask your family how they would handle the apparent hopelessness of this tragedy. How could they hope in God when all hope was lost?

PRAY:
Benediction from The Valley of Vision
Continue to pray with me in the words of a historic prayer from the Puritans:
O God All-Sufficient,
you have made and uphold all things by the word of your power; darkness is your pavilion,
you walk on the wings of the wind;
all nations are nothing before you;
one generation succeeds another,
and we hasten back to the dust;
the heavens we behold will vanish away like the clouds that cover them, the earth we tread on will dissolve as a morning dream;
But you, unchangeable and incorruptible, are for ever and ever,
God over all, blessed eternally,
Infinitely great and glorious you are.
We are your offspring and your care. Your hands have made and fashioned us. You have watched over us with
more than parental love,
more than maternal tenderness. You have held our soul in life,
and not allowed our feet to be moved.
Your divine power has given us all things necessary for life and godliness. Let us bless you at all times and forget not how you have
forgiven our iniquities,
healed our diseases,
redeemed our lives from destruction,
crowned us with lovingkindness and tender mercies, satisfied our mouths with good things,
renewed our youth like the eagle’s.
May your Holy Scriptures
govern every part of our lives,
and regulate ... all our duties,
so that we may adorn your doctrine in all things.⁹

SOURCES

1 https://archive.org/details/studiesoffamilia00bensuoft
2 https://www.challies.com/articles/hymn-stories-a-mighty-fortress-is-our-god/
3 Macarthur Study Bible, Ps 46
4 Macarthur Study Bible
5 http://www.insight.org/resources/daily-devotional/individual/a-very-present-help1
7 http://www.insight.org/resources/daily-devotional/individual/facing-an-uncertain-future
9 The prayer that follows is an adaption of the Puritan prayer “God Over All” in Arthur Bennett, ed., The Valley of Vision: A Collection of Puritan Prayers & Devotions, new ed. (Carlisle, Pa.: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2002), 382–3. This prayer was used as part of Praying the Bible Series by The Summit Institute, the equipping ministry of the Summit Church in Raleigh-Durham, North Carolina. http://summitrduinstitute.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Episode-003_-Psalm-46.pdf
Utilize one of the following tools to ignite the interest of your students. Tell a story, spark a discussion, or show a clip.

TELL A STORY.

Leadership is a God-given privilege. There is no greater satisfaction than what comes from unselfishly seeking the physical and spiritual welfare of those entrusted to our care or supervision. William Wilberforce, popular leader in England from 1780 to 1833, died with the satisfaction that the emancipation bill for which he had expended so much of his time and energy would be passed. The end of slavery in the British Empire was assured.

On the other hand, leadership is not always given recognition. A woman I knew, whose role had been that of mother and Sunday school teacher, faced death with contentment. She expressed gratitude to the Lord for entrusting these responsibilities to her and enabling her to fulfill them honorably.

Leadership, however, can be abused. Those who vie for prestige, power, and expensive perks will someday appear before God to give an account. Psalm 82 describes God’s judgment of self-serving leaders.

We too will one day give account for our lives. So let’s fulfill our God-given role with the solemn realization that “to whom much is given, from him much will be required” (Lk. 12:48).
SPARK A DISCUSSION.

Let’s go around the room and I want us to list all the ways in which God has given us leadership or a position of followership. Who has God called you to lead? (perhaps make a list of all of the positions mentioned). Who has God called you to follow? (perhaps make a list of all of the positions mentioned).

Does God have different expectations of leaders than followers? How so?

SHOW A CLIP.

https://www.rightnowmedia.org/Content/illustration/272775

THE IDEA:

Leaders and followers are called by God to honor Christ from their unique position.

READ THE TEXT (2-5 Minutes)

See Teacher Guide (p.4) for ways to creatively read the text.

Today’s Text: PSALM 82:1-8

1 God has taken his place in the divine council; in the midst of the gods he holds judgment:

2 “How long will you judge unjustly and show partiality to the wicked? Selah

3 Give justice to the weak and the fatherless; maintain the right of the afflicted and the destitute.

4 Rescue the weak and the needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked.”

5 They have neither knowledge nor understanding, they walk about in darkness; all the foundations of the earth are shaken.

6 I said, “You are gods, sons of the Most High, all of you;

7 nevertheless, like men you shall die, and fall like any prince.”

8 Arise, O God, judge the earth; for you shall inherit all the nations!
REVIEW THE TEXT
(The DIRECT Route 15-20 Minutes or The SCENIC Route 25-30 Minutes)

CONTEXT

82:1–8 This psalm, like Pss. 2 and 58, focuses on the injustices of tyranny. The psalmist pictures God standing in the assembly of earthly leaders, to whom He has delegated authority, and condemning their injustices. The final prayer of the psalmist (v. 8) is that God Himself will take direct control of the affairs of this world.

I. The Assembly of World Leaders Before God (82:1)

II. The Evaluation of World Leaders by God (82:2-7)

III. The Replacement of World Leaders with God (82:8)

CONTENT

It seems as though in verse 1 and verse 8, the Psalmist speaks. In verses 2-7, God speaks.

(1) God desires justice on earth.

V1. God has taken his place in the divine council; in the midst of the gods he holds judgment:

There is some debate regarding what the Psalmist refers to here. The point is that the one true God presides over this council and he judges.

1. God is ready to judge, “presiding” as the Great Judge. For Israel there is no other God than the Lord. He embodies within himself all the epithets and powers attributed to pagan deities. There are three options for explaining “the great assembly” of the “gods.” The gods are: (1) human judges who are condemned by the Great Judge for being unjust; (2) the principalities and the powers of other nations that oppress Israel; (3) pagan deities judged by God, who rule the darkness of the world.3

Whose people are really “underneath” an earthly leader? When we remember that these are God’s people, we realize that leaders are mere stewards. They are God’s instruments.

V2-4. “How long will you judge unjustly and show partiality to the wicked? Selah

Give justice to the weak and the fatherless; maintain the right of the afflicted and the destitute.

Rescue the weak and the needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked.”

82:3–4 In the OT a first-order task of kings and judges was to protect the powerless against all who would exploit or oppress them (see 72:2, 4, 12–14; Pr 31:8–9; Isa 11:4; Jer 22:3, 16).4
God’s message to the gathered council is that they are guilty of a failure to pursue justice on behalf of the weak.

V5  They have neither knowledge nor understanding,  
    they walk about in darkness;  
    all the foundations of the earth are shaken.

“The foundations of the earth” refers to the moral standard which God constituted on the earth to be followed by all humans. Their lack of attention to justice means the very moral fabric by which the world is to function is shaken.

This idea is echoed in Romans 1 when Paul says the wrath of God is being revealed against the godlessness of the world… “For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened.” (Rom 8:21) Their hearts were darkened. In the same way, this gathered council (be they leaders of the world, or false gods of the day) walk in darkness.

Consider Deut. 24:17-19  
“You shall not pervert the justice due to the sojourner or to the fatherless, or take a widow's garment in pledge, but you shall remember that you were a slave in Egypt and the Lord your God redeemed you from there; therefore, I command you to do this.”

“When you reap your harvest in your field and forget a sheaf in the field, you shall not go back to get it. It shall be for the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow, that the Lord your God may bless you in all the work of your hands.”

Caring for the oppressed, the homeless, the widows and the orphans was to be part of the very identity of Israel as a people. In some way, their own slavery and oppression at the hands of the Egyptians was to be a reminder to them.

6 I said, “You are gods,  
    sons of the Most High, all of you;  

7 nevertheless, like men you shall die,  
    and fall like any prince.”

If the council is to be taken as men, leaders of the nations at the time, then the Psalmist sarcastically refers to them as “gods”, since they perhaps have set themselves up as such. But they are to be reminded that in God’s economy, though they believe they are like gods, they shall perish like every other man.

If the council is to be taken as the gods of the day, the point stands. God will judge the false gods and the leaders who enact the kind of tyranny and immorality depicted here.

(2) God will one day enact final and complete justice on the earth.

Throughout the OT, God unleashes his judgment. There is punishment for wicked. There is divine retribution for evil and the oppression of God’s children. Of course it is not always executed in the timing or manner which the people prefer, but nonetheless it is on display. This psalm certainly reinforces the notion that judgment is coming for the wicked leaders who neglect the weak among them.
But further, the Psalmist seems to anticipate the day when God enacts final judgment on the world, restoring all things, and reinstating order and justice to the nations according to his perfect rule.

Revelation 21:5
5 And he who was seated on the throne said, “Behold, I am making all things new.” Also he said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.”

THE CASE FOR CHRIST: PSALM 82:1–8
HOW DOES JESUS USE PSALM 82 TO DEFEND HIS POSITION TO THE JEWS?

“I said, ‘You are “gods”; you are all sons of the Most High.’ ” —Psalm 82:6

In John 10:22–39, the Jews attempt to stone Jesus for blasphemy when he says, “I and the Father are one” (John 10:30). In response to the crowd’s threats, Jesus quotes Psalm 82:6 to defend himself against the erroneous charge.

First, Jesus appeals to their “Law” (John 10:34), meaning the Old Testament. He intends to use these very texts, which the Jews would twist to condemn him, to vindicate himself. Next, he quotes Psalm 82:6, which represents God as addressing a group of judges or rulers whose tasks were divinely appointed—whom God calls “gods” and “sons of the Most High.” By quoting Psalm 82:6, Jesus is essentially saying that if these terms can be applied to regular human beings, how could they accuse him of blasphemy when he applied these terms to himself, “the one whom the Father set apart as his very own and sent into the world” (John 10:36)? Jesus also appeals to the powerful miracles the Jews had witnessed, which are evidence of his authority.

The Jews could not win a Scriptural debate with Jesus, nor could they deny the power of his argument. Between his miracles and his use of God’s Word, Jesus provided further evidence to justify his claim to be one with God.5
CONCLUSION

God is not blind to the injustices of the world. He sits in authority over the rulers of the world, enacts justice according to his sovereignty, and will certainly return with full and final judgment.

Discipling through the Psalms

1. Remind them that leaders are called to a higher standard. God places leaders over people and gives them authority. It is not their authority. It is His authority. If the person you are discipling aspires to be a leader, or shows leadership promise, remind them that with great responsibility comes a great accountability. Leaders are accountable to God in a way that followers are not. This is why the primary posture of a leader is humility before God. In our world of corrupt leadership and the idolizing of “celebrity” leaders, we must model and draw out a purer, more biblical form of leadership in those we disciple.

Mark 10:45 “For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

Luke 12:48 “Everyone to whom much was given, of him much will be required, and from him to whom they entrusted much, they will demand the more.”

Hebrews 13:17 “Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you.”

2. Remind them of the proper attitude for being under authority. Our culture has largely abandoned the divine function of roles and exchanged them for an idolatry of leadership. We esteem the leaders with the largest platforms and social media followings. We look down on those who may not possess the talent to obtain an executive or marketplace leadership position. As a result, as believers, we often fail to recognize that we are all under authority. If we’re honest, we don’t want to admit it. We want to answer to no one. However, listening to the Psalmist rebuke wicked leaders ought to also remind us that we, too, are underneath leaders. Citizens to the governmental leaders. The church to its overseers. Children to their parents. Wives to their husbands. Employees to employers. And all to Christ. Help those you are discipling have a healthy respect and reverence for those whom God has placed in leadership. You see, this is quite different from the celebrity infatuation, jealousy, or criticism we typical feel. Remember their great responsibility. Remember their accountability. Pray for them. Encourage them. Honor them. And remember their authority has been dispensed by God.

Hebrews 13:7 “Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith.”

James 3:1 “Not many of you should become teachers, my fellow believers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly.”

Romans 13:1 “Everyone must submit to governing authorities. For all authority comes from God, and those in positions of authority have been placed there by God.”

3. Remind them that they are responsible for how they follow. While leaders are placed divinely in our lives, we still are personally responsible for how to respond to those leaders. Ask your disciple, who do you follow? Acts 5:29 says “we must obey God rather than people.” The idea here is that when corruption, immorality, and injustice prevail, we must
be prepared to stand for truth and refuse to dishonor God’s name. Like Daniel’s friends, we must be ready to stand boldly and tell our leaders that we will not pay homage to the false gods of our day even if it costs us greatly. (Dan 3:13-18) The New Testament commands us to confront one another when sin is present or when we sin against one another. A critical characteristic of the life of a disciple is that she recognizes injustice and speaks even when it appears she is alone.

James 1:27 “This is pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father, to visit orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world”

Matthew 18:15 “If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone.”

Ephesians 4:15 “Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ…”

REFLECT ON THE TEXT (5-10 Minutes)

The purpose of discussion questions is to (a) allow the teacher a way to gauge the level of comprehension and (b) allow students to develop bonds around spiritual truth.

It has been long understood that part of our theology includes a God who is in control of the events of the earth. “Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God.” (Romans 13:1). Why does God allow evil leaders to remain in power when injustice and corruption endure?

One area of wickedness described here is neglecting the powerless. In what ways have we as Christians become guilty of neglecting the weak, hurting, and powerless?

Is there a gospel parallel between God’s call to Israel in Deut 24 to remember their own slavery as a catalyst for seeking justice for the hurting around them?
RESPOND TO THE TEXT  (5 Minutes)

Divide a dry erase board into 3 sections.

In the first section, let’s develop a list through a group discussion, of the injustices we see in the world around us. Who are the hurting? The under-resourced? The forgotten?

In the second section, have everyone shout out things that your family personally is involved with that assist these people.

In the third section, can we think of any programs and initiatives that all of us are a part of through the work of our church body? List these.

Even though we may justify that we are not intentionally harming some of these people, may we not fall into the trap of a proud, self-centered, neglectful version of a walk with the Lord.

GOSPEL CHALLENGE  (from the staff)

Our city has many people who are “weak and needy...in need of deliverance” as our text has said today. Just take a drive around the city, looking around at some of the busier intersections. They are there. They may even be accompanied by a sign stating their need. But their eternal need is not food, clothing, or money, but the Good News of Christ.

This week’s Gospel Challenge is to combine the good works of meeting the needs of those in our city with sharing the Good News of Jesus. Rather than giving someone money to purchase a meal or even giving them a meal, offer to meet them right then at McDonald’s, Popeyes, etc., offering to feed them, but also taking the time to share the Gospel with them. After all...doing good works without sharing the Good News is at best a good commission. We have been called to be a part of the Great Commission...where doing good works and sharing the Gospel are inseparable.
HOME 22:6

SING: Sing the catchy, modern song “I Will Follow” by Chris Tomlin. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1ohhmGsfxI

READ: Read Psalm 82 together as a family. Does Psalm 82 describe your family and its attitude toward the hurting and neglected? How do we use our power, wealth, and influence for the sake of others?

PRAY: Take time to pray for the leaders in your life. Teachers, coaches, bosses, pastors and parents need your prayers as they seek to (hopefully) steward their role with excellence toward God.

SOURCES

1 https://odb.org/1998/06/22/leadership/
2 Macarthur Study Bible, Psalm 82
3 Expositor’s Bible Commentary (Abridged Edition): Old Testament, Psalm 82:1
4 Case for Christ Study Bible, Ps 82:3-4
5 Case for Christ Study Bible
START HERE  (5 Minutes)

Utilize one of the following tools to ignite the interest of your students. Tell a story, spark a discussion, or show a clip.

TELL A STORY.

We must heed the memorable words written by Robert Murray McCheyne to the Rev. Dan Edwards on 2 October 1840 after his ordination as a missionary to the Jews: ‘I trust you will have a pleasant and profitable time in Germany. I know you will apply hard to German; but do not forget the culture of the inner man,—I mean of the heart. How diligently the cavalry officer keeps his sabre clean and sharp; every stain he rubs off with the greatest care. Remember you are God’s sword,—His instrument,—I trust a chosen vessel unto Him to bear His name. In great measure, according to the purity and perfections of the instrument, will be the success. It is not great talents God blesses so much as great likeness to Jesus. A holy minister is an awful weapon in the hand of God.’

1 Peter 2:9 says, “But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.”
SPARK A DISCUSSION.

Imagine you invited a Muslim colleague to join you for church. Because of the friendship and trust you built, she agrees because she’s interested in learning more about Christian culture. After the closing hymn, “Holy, Holy, Holy” she leans over to you and asks, “What do you mean when you say God is holy?” How would you answer this?

The word *holy* means “sacred, set apart from the profane (unholy) and for God.” Baker’s Encyclopedia of the Bible says, “The primary Old Testament word for *holiness* means ‘to cut or to separate.’ Fundamentally, *holiness* is a cutting off or separation from what is unclean, and a consecration to what is pure.”

SHOW A CLIP.

https://www.rightnowmedia.org/Content/VideoElement/182897

READ THE TEXT (2-5 Minutes)

See Teacher Guide (p.4) for ways to creatively read the text.

**Today’s Text:** PSALM 99:1-9

1 The Lord reigns; let the peoples tremble!
   He sits enthroned upon the cherubim; let the earth quake!

2 The Lord is great in Zion;
   he is exalted over all the peoples.

3 Let them praise your great and awesome name!
   Holy is he!

4 The King in his might loves justice.
   You have established equity;
   you have executed justice
   and righteousness in Jacob.

5 Exalt the Lord our God;
   worship at his footstool!
   Holy is he!

6 Moses and Aaron were among his priests,
   Samuel also was among those who called upon his name.
   They called to the Lord, and he answered them.

7 In the pillar of the cloud he spoke to them;
   they kept his testimonies
   and the statute that he gave them.

8 O Lord our God, you answered them;
   you were a forgiving God to them,
   but an avenger of their wrongdoings.

9 Exalt the Lord our God,
   and worship at his holy mountain;
   for the Lord our God is holy!
REVIEW THE TEXT
(The DIRECT Route 15-20 Minutes or The SCENIC Route 25-30 Minutes)

CONTEXT

99:1–9 The theme of this psalm is summed up in its last phrase: “the Lord our God is holy” (v. 9). The psalmist encourages praise to the king for His holiness (vv. 3, 5, 9), which is the utter separateness of God’s being from all other creatures and things, as well as His moral separateness from sin. The psalmist also exults in the truth that such a holy God has had an intimate saving relationship with Israel throughout her history (vv. 6–9).

I. Exaltation of the King’s Holiness (99:1-5)

II. Examples of the King’s Holiness (99:6-9)

CONTENT

Psalm 99 provides a wonderful description of God’s greatness. The prevailing message of Psalm 99 is that God is holy. (v3, v5, v9) But the psalmist goes to great length to let the reader (worshipper) understand why God is worthy to be praised. Often in the psalms, God is to be praised for who he is and what he has done. It is rare that these two things are separated from each other because what God has done flows out of who he is. And he reveals to his Creation who is he by what he does.

(1) Notice the description of God.

How many descriptions can you find demonstrating who God is?

How many descriptions can you find demonstrating what God has done?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHO HE IS</th>
<th>WHAT HE DOES HAS DONE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Great in Zion (v2)</td>
<td>He reigns (v1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exalted among all people (v2)</td>
<td>He sits on a throne. (v1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He is holy (v3)</td>
<td>Established equity (v4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loves justice (v4)</td>
<td>Executed righteousness and justice in Jacob. (v4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He is holy (v5)</td>
<td>He answered the call of Moses, Samuel, and Aaron (v6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He is a forgiving God (v8)</td>
<td>He spoke to Moses, Samuel, and Aaron (v7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He is an avenger of their wrongdoings.</td>
<td>He gave them statutes (v7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(v8)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He is holy. (v9)</td>
<td>He answered them (v8)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1-5 The Lord is highly exalted in heaven, as he "sits enthroned between the cherubim." The imagery of the cherubim derives from the ark of the covenant, whose lid was a gold slab on which two cherubs with spread wings stood (Ex 25:17-22). The ark of the covenant signified the establishment of God’s kingdom on earth and as such became known as his “footstool.” The sovereign and glorious rule of the Lord should inspire all inhabitants of the world to “tremble” and “shake.” The nations must praise the “name” with which the acts of redemptive history are associated—the name "LORD".

99:4 is mighty … loves justice. Two chief characteristics of God’s reign. established equity. That is, created conditions in the world that embody equity—especially for Israel (see 96:10 and note). Jacob. A synonym for Israel (see Ge 32:28). just and right. Justice and righteousness, as in 97:2. Though even the heavens proclaim God’s righteousness (see 97:6), it is in the whole complex of his saving acts in and for Israel that the righteousness of God’s reign is especially disclosed (see 98:2 and note).

(2) God demonstrates his holiness in his character which is clearly divine.

One of the major theological tenants of Psalm 99 is what scholars call God’s otherly-ness. It is his uniqueness from humanity. He is beyond-human in this way. His characteristics are beyond what we can fully comprehend and his perfect character is so otherly, so different from our experience with humans, it brings forth awe and worship.

How is this depicted in the psalm? Where is it clear that God is different from humanity?
(a) He reigns. He sits above this world, ruling. He is not subject to this world. He created the world and is transcendent above the world.

(b) He is holy. He is perfect. He is pure. He is completely and eternally good and righteous.

(c) He is fair. He deals with his creation and his people (i.e. “Jacob”) justly.

(d) He speaks supernaturally. In the Old Testament, God revealed himself to prophets, speaking and guiding supernaturally through various means. God continues to speak supernaturally through the Holy Spirit’s inspiration and illumination of his written Word, the Bible.

(e) He forgives and he avenges. God is love and God is just. God in his holiness reveals himself to humans as merciful and yet just.

This must be why Isaiah 45 says, “Look to me, and be saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is no other.”~ Isaiah 45:22

There is no one like our God!

Though often forgotten today, the Bible does not forget the holiness of God. In the King James Version, holiness is referenced more than 400 times in the Old Testament and another 181 times in the New Testament. Some of these references are to God Himself, others to humans, and yet others to items separated to God (such as items in the temple). It remains that anything holy finds its root in the nature and character of God.

To call God holy is to speak of His majesty and purity. He is “utterly distinct from his creation and exercises sovereign majesty and power over it.” The Lord is wholly other. Although we are made in His image, He is still far above and beyond us. As the psalmist writes in Psalm 99:1-2, “He is exalted above all peoples.” His throne is “above the cherubim.” He sits above even the most powerful, otherworldly creatures. The Lord is perfectly pure. He is separate from sin, evil, and the defiled. Nothing can taint Him. He is incorruptible.

(3) Notice the only good and proper response to God’s holiness.

“Let them praise your great and awesome name.”

“Exalt the Lord”

“Worship at his footstool”

The proper response to God’s greatness is worship. Remember that to think of worship merely as ascribing praise to God through music and song is short-sighted. Worship is a theme woven through all of Scripture. Biblical worship is to give one’s heart to something. It is to show someone or something how much it is worth. This is precisely why Romans 12:1-2 says that a follower of Jesus’ act of worship is to offer himself as a living sacrifice. In this way, worship is far more than a song. Worship is the way people organize their lives in devotion to certain things they find “worthy” of their affection. Worship is a disciple’s decision to surrender her life to King Jesus in humble and resolute devotion.
Because of the Lord’s greatness, holiness, and justice, the people of God must submit themselves to his lordship by exalting him. Thus they may give leadership to the nations. Worship is an act of submission to his kingship and a proper response to his awe-inspiring presence.  

HOLINESS, WRATH, AND THE GOSPEL

J.C. RYLE

“Man,” said a thoughtless, ungodly English traveler to a North American Indian convert, “Man, what is the reason that you make so much of Christ, and talk so much about Him? What has this Christ done for you, that you should make so much ado about Him?” The converted Indian did not answer him in words. He gathered together some dry leaves and moss and made a ring with them on the ground. He picked up a live worm and put it in the middle of the ring. He struck a light and set the moss and leaves on fire. The flame soon rose and the heat scorched the worm. It writhed in agony, and after trying in vain to escape on every side, curled itself up in the middle, as if about to die in despair. At that moment the Indian reached forth his hand, took up the worm gently and placed it on his bosom. “Stranger,” he said to the Englishman, “Do you see that worm? I was that perishing creature. I was dying in my sins, hopeless, helpless, and on the brink of eternal fire. It was Jesus Christ who put forth the arm of His power. It was Jesus Christ who delivered me with the hand of His grace, and plucked me from everlasting burnings. It was Jesus Christ who placed me, a poor sinful worm, near the heart of His love. Stranger, that is the reason why I talk of Jesus Christ and make much of Him. I am not ashamed of it, because I love Him.”

CONCLUSION

God is supremely righteous and holy. His greatness surpasses understanding. Let us worship the Holy One with lives dedicated to him.

Discipling through the Psalms

1. Remind them that God is to be revered. We have seen the pendulum swing in church life in the way we approach God. There was a time when some believed that church felt too stuffy, too religious, and made people feel as though they could not be themselves at church. So strides were made to be sure that it was clear that God is approachable, God wants a personal relationship with us. God did not set things in motion on earth only to withdraw. As with most pendulum swinging, there are some positives about this. But one negative part of this shift is that we have lost some of our reverence for God. It wasn’t long before we heard leaders prompting teenagers to talk to God just like you would talk to a best friend. “What’s up God?” they would say as they started to pray. And of course, we know their motives were mostly pure. But have we accidentally forgotten the holiness of God? Have we forgotten that though He is our friend, he is also the God and judge of the universe? Be sure to encourage those you disciple to approach God the way Scripture tells us to approach God. Both reverently, and personally.
Hebrews 12:28 “Therefore, since we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us show gratitude, by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe…”

1 Peter 2:17 “Honor all people, love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the king.”

1 Timothy 1:17 “Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.”

2. Remind them to be worshipful in their personal time with God. “Worship him at his footstool.” Ask those you disciple about their personal time with God. Is it worshipful? Is it all about their own requests? They would do well to develop the habit of praising God for who he is and what he has done during every moment of communion with God. Ask them, “Is God’s greatness, holiness, and splendor in your view today?” One evidence that you are recognizing God for who he is, is that you will pause to spend time with him, to worship Him.

James 4:8 “Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.”

Matthew 6:6 “But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.”

John 15:4-5 “Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing…”

3. Remind them of the importance of personal holiness. If we are being conformed into Christ’s likeness, we should be growing in personal holiness. God’s purity, goodness, and righteousness should remind us of his demand on our lives for holy living. Be sure not to suggest that a believer must be perfect in order to earn God’s continual favor. Rather, because of God’s acceptance and adoption of us as sons and daughters, we are delighted to grow into his likeness. Many believers have fallen into licentiousness boasting in the grace of God by excusing ongoing patterns of sin, continuing to live according to the flesh. Psalm 99 gives us an opportunity to fixate on the holiness of God and our desire to live according to the Holy Spirit and please him with our words and deeds.

Romans 6:1-2 “What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it?”

John 14:15 “If you love me, you will keep my commandments.”

1 Peter 1: 13-16 “Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, “You shall be holy, for I am holy.”
REFLECT ON THE TEXT (5-10 Minutes)

The purpose of discussion questions is to (a) allow the teacher a way to gauge the level of comprehension and (b) allow students to develop bonds around spiritual truth.

**What if God were not holy? How would this affect Christian doctrine?**

*How does your prayer life currently include a recognition of God’s holiness? Do you struggle with showing reverence toward God by remembering his greatness and majesty? Or do you struggle with intimacy with God because you forget that in his holiness he is also relational, dwelling in us?*

**Would you say you’re “holy” in the sense that you’re set apart from the world? How so? When a neighbor comes into your home, when your child’s friend from school comes over for a visit, is your home different than the homes they typically encounter? Would you be willing to share with the group some ways in which your life looks a lot like the world and less like the life of a Jesus-follower?***

RESPOND TO THE TEXT (5 Minutes)

What do you suppose is the point of Psalm 99 in your own life? Write on a piece of paper or type into your smartphone these three words: Think, Feel, Do.

For 2-3 minutes read back through the text and ask yourself these three questions:

In light of Psalm 99, how would God have me think differently?

In light of Psalm 99, how would God have me feel differently?

In light of Psalm 99, what would God have me do differently?

Come up with a one sentence answer to each of these to reflect on this week.
GOSPEL CHALLENGE (from the staff)

Back in the 1990’s, a new believer came to faith in Christ after hearing the Gospel no less than 7 times, on average. The number of times it takes for someone to hear the Gospel before responding to it has risen significantly over the past two decades.

This week’s Gospel Challenge is to think back to our individual salvation stories. Think back to the moment we gave our lives to Christ. Now, think back to how many times we actually heard the Gospel and maybe even who shared the Gospel with us before we responded? What if #2 on that list chose not to share with us the Gospel? What about person #1…or #6? Realistically, we do not know how many times it will take someone to hear the Gospel clearly before responding. That is up to the Holy Spirit. But culturally, it has been revealed to take multiple times. Which number in the count might we be for someone else? No matter what mathematical process is used, we cannot get to #7…or #10…or #26 without a #2…or #8…or #17.

HOME 22:6

SING: Sing the classic hymn Holy, Holy, Holy!

Hymn Lyrics: https://hymnary.org/text/holy_holy_holy_lord_god_almighty_early

Modern Version: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AgHrNNM23p8

Bonus Song: Clear the Stage, Ross King
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p6MvZLDBFpU

READ: As you read Psalm 99, ask the kids if they can find all the mentions of God’s holiness. Ask them why they think it’s important to the psalmist to highlight God’s holiness among all his other features.

PRAY: As each person prays, try to begin with praising God for who he is. Before thanking him for what he has done or asking him to intervene, each person must tell God how awesome He is, how holy, how good and pure.
SOURCES
3 Macarthur Study Bible, Ps 99:1-9
4 Expositor’s Bible Commentary, Psalm 99:1-5
5 Case for Christ Study Bible, Psalm 99:4
6 http://www.ronniefloyd.com/blog/6770/bible-studies-for-life/the-holiness-of-god/
7 https://blog.lifeway.com/womenallaccess/2017/03/01/attributes-god-holy/
8 http://www.capitolhillbaptist.org/sermon/right-wrong/
9 Expositor’s Bible Commentary, Psalm 99:9
10 J.C. Ryle, Holiness
START HERE  (5 Minutes)

Utilize one of the following tools to ignite the interest of your students. Tell a story, spark a discussion, or show a clip.

TELL A STORY.

In the movie Karate Kid, young Daniel asks Mister Miagi to teach him karate. Miagi agrees under one condition: Daniel must submit totally to his instruction and never question his methods. Daniel shows up the next day eager to learn. To his chagrin, Mister Miagi has him paint a fence. Miagi demonstrates the precise motion for the job: up and down, up and down. Daniel takes days to finish the job.

Next, Miagi has him scrub the deck using a prescribed stroke. Again, the job takes days. Daniel wonders what these activities have to do with karate, but he says nothing. Next, Miagi tells Daniel to wash and wax three weather-beaten cars and again prescribes the motion. Finally, Daniel reaches his limit, “I thought you were going to teach me karate, but all you have done is have me do your unwanted chores!”

Daniel has broken Miagi’s one condition, and the old man’s face pulses with anger. “I have been teaching you karate! Defend yourself!” Miagi thrusts his arm at Daniel, who instinctively defends himself with an arm motion exactly like that used in one of his chores. Miagi unleashes a vicious kick, and again Daniel averts the blow with a motion used in his chores. After Daniel successfully defends himself from several more blows, Miagi simply walks away, leaving Daniel to discover
what the master had known all along: skill comes from repeating the correct but seemingly mundane actions. The same is true of godliness.

SPARK A DISCUSSION.
If you choose to “spark a discussion” to start class, read the text first, and then ask this question, “Would this be a good list for young women to use as a standard for a potential suitor in marriage?” Why or why not?

SHOW A CLIP.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ljxdpJ6heGk

READ THE TEXT  (2-5 Minutes)
See Teacher Guide (p.4) for ways to creatively read the text.

Today’s Text: PSALM 112:1-10

1 Blessed is the man who fears the Lord, who greatly delights in his commandments!

2 His offspring will be mighty in the land; the generation of the upright will be blessed.

3 Wealth and riches are in his house, and his righteousness endures forever.

4 Light dawns in the darkness for the upright; he is gracious, merciful, and righteous.

5 It is well with the man who deals generously and lends; who conducts his affairs with justice.

6 For the righteous will never be moved; he will be remembered forever.

7 He is not afraid of bad news; his heart is firm, trusting in the Lord.

8 His heart is steady; he will not be afraid, until he looks in triumph on his adversaries.

9 He has distributed freely; he has given to the poor; his righteousness endures forever; his horn is exalted in honor.

10 The wicked man sees it and is angry; he gnashes his teeth and melts away; the desire of the wicked will perish!
ACROSTIC PSALMS

An acrostic is a literary device in which each new line of a poem begins with a different letter, arranged so that the whole series of letters conveys something meaningful. In all of the acrostic psalms of the OT, these letters follow the order of the Hebrew alphabet. However, much more elaborate messages can be expressed. For example, in Ashurbanipal’s (Assyrian king, c. 650 BC) Hymn to Marduk and Zarpanitu, the sequence of Akkadian signs that begin each set of lines spells an entire sentence: “I am Assurbanipal, who has called out to you: give me life, Marduk, and I will praise you!”

This is an acrostic prayer. The first letter of each section forms the sentence, “I am Ashurbanipal who calls on you. Give me life, Marduk, I will glorify you.”

Egyptian examples offer numerical sequences or complex messages that involve both horizontal and vertical patterns. They are more dependent on puns to accomplish their stylistic objective. Acrostics depend on writing, and therefore would not be composed orally. Likewise, they are intended to be read, not just heard, because of the importance of the visual element. Because of this, we come to understand that only a limited audience would appreciate the formal elements. This is especially clear in the Babylonian examples, where a variable sign needs to be read with one value in the poem, but with a different value in the acrostic. Some of the Babylonian examples also contain a pattern in the last sign of each line. Another variation is found in those examples where the acrostic is repeated each stanza. Nevertheless, in the case of the Hebrew alphabetic acrostics, the alphabetic element could serve as a mnemonic device.

Ps 111 and Ps 112 are both acrostics of the Hebrew alphabet, which helps pair these psalms together in a way that they complement each other in the themes and expressions mirrored by these adjacent psalms. Ps 9 and Ps 10 each contain half of the Hebrew alphabet, so unified, they form an acrostic of the whole. Acrostics can serve, then, to suggest that the meaning of the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. Ps 25, 34, 37, 119 and 145 are also acrostics of the Hebrew alphabet. Perhaps those acrostics simply ornament each psalm with an aesthetic beauty that complements the message.¹

¹ Cuneiform tablet containing a portion of Assurbanipal’s Hymn to Marduk.
CONTENT

Psalm 112 expands on the message of Psalm 1 from earlier in this series. It answers the question, “What does the life of a believer look like?” Today, we will compare this depiction in Psalm 112 with the depiction of a disciple that Paul gives Timothy in 2 Timothy.

(1) **The psalmist describes a follower of God.**

He fears the Lord. (v1)

She delights in God’s commands. (v1)

1 Those “blessed” by the Lord show themselves to be in active pursuit of godly wisdom. They begin with the fear of God and end with finding “great delight in his commands.” These commands reflect “grace and truth” as exemplified by Jesus (Jn 1:14).

His children benefit from his upright ways. (v2-3)

2-3 The blessed are righteous, and they make every effort to establish God’s righteous kingdom on earth, for their way of life shows a concern for God’s majesty, glory, and greatness (111:2-3). The Lord rewards them with many and blessed descendants, wealth, and honor. They enjoy success in life, and their children share in the blessing of their godly parents. Thus godliness has its rewards in this life, in future generations, and in the life to come.

She shines with God’s character even in dark times. (v4)

He takes care of the poor. (v5)

She is secure in God throughout the storms of life. (v6-8)

6-8 Because the wise hold to the precepts of God, they are “steadfast” in that they “will never be shaken,” they “will have no fear,” and their “heart is steadfast” and “secure.” The wise may experience all kinds of surprises in life, but they will persevere in doing good. In all situations of life, their trust is in the Lord, knowing that “in the end” God will turn the gloatings and fortunes of the wicked. Godliness has its rewards in this life and in the life to come.

Our natural response to pain is surprise. But it shouldn’t be. God told Paul, “I’m appointing you to make my name famous among Gentiles, and part of that involves your suffering.” Psalm 112:7 says that “the righteous have no fear of bad news,” not because they won’t get any, but because in the midst of it “their hearts are steadfast, trusting the Lord.”

Does that describe your attitude toward pain? It will if you believe that God has appointed you to overcome the world, and that the way he does is not always by delivering you from adversity, but by using your adversity to reveal a hope that goes beyond this world. That takes the sting of surprise and shock out of suffering. “Jesus told me about this, so I saw it coming.”
(2) Paul describes the life of a disciple to his primary disciple, Timothy.

A disciple is like a child. “To Timothy, my beloved child:” (2 Tim 1:2)

1:2 To Timothy. After naming the designated recipient, letters included greetings. Although most letters were private correspondence, some were written with a wider eventual audience in view (cf. “you all” in 6:21; 2Ti 4:22); Paul addresses Timothy but might also bolster Timothy’s public authority through the letter. my true son in the faith. See 1Co 4:17 and note on 1Co 4:14. Grace … peace. See note on Ro 1:7.

In the same way a child loves his parents, receives their instruction, and becomes like them, a disciple loves and learns from Christ and his Word.

A disciple is like a soldier. “Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him.” (2 Tim 2:3-4)

In the same way a soldier suffers for the cause, is undistracted in his commitment to the mission, and seeks to please his commander, a disciple endures when hardship comes, lives according to the Spirit and not the flesh, and seeks to please Christ, not men.

A disciple is like an athlete. “An athlete is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules.” (2 Tim 2:5)

For an athlete competing in intense competition, all is lost if they do not compete according to the rules. Like an athlete, a disciple is called to obey the Word of God in pursuit of spiritual victory, especially a promise of spiritual reward (“crowned”).

5 In addition to military metaphors, Paul is also fond of athletic metaphors. The Christian, and especially the minister, must be spiritually a good athlete (see also comment on 1Ti 6:12). The goal of an athlete is to "receive the victor’s crown" (cf. Heb 2:7, 9), the wreath given to the winner. But the winning athlete does not receive this crown unless he competes "according to the rules." Anyone who breaks the rules is disqualified.

A disciple is like a vessel. “Now in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver but also of wood and clay, some for honorable use, some for dishonorable. Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from what is dishonorable, he will be a vessel for honorable use, set apart as holy, useful to the master of the house, ready for every good work.” (2 Tim 2:20-21)

20-21 Having drawn at some length the contrast between true and false teachers (vv.14-19), Paul now points up a second contrast—that between noble and ignoble vessels. Both will be found in the church. “In a large house,” where a wealthy man lives, “there are not only articles of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay.” Those that are gold certainly receive honor by the owner. Some less eminent articles are "of silver." But others are of "wood" (e.g., wooden bowls for holding flour) or "clay" (e.g., pottery). The latter two have a more mundane use.

Like a bowl or vase in a home, some are useful to the master for noble purposes, and others serve mundane or mere ornamental purpose. A disciple also has a purpose, and her role is to be useful for the noble purpose of the master. A disciple is set apart as holy and exists to serve Christ and his kingdom.
BEING USED BY GOD
MAX LUCADO
In the shop of a blacksmith, there are three types of tools.
There are tools on the junk pile: outdated, broken, dull, rusty . . .
There are tools on the anvil: melted down, molten hot, moldable, changeable . . .
There are tools of usefulness: sharpened, primed, defined, mobile. They lie ready in the blacksmith’s tool chest, available to their master, fulfilling their calling . . .
We are all somewhere in the blacksmith’s shop. We are either on the scrap pile, on the anvil, in the Master’s hands, or in the tool chest. (Some of us have been in all three) . . .
From the shelves to the workbench, from the water to the fire . . .
I’m sure that somewhere you’ll see yourself . . .
The rubbish pile of broken tools, the anvil of recasting, the hands of the Master—it’s a simultaneously joyful and painful voyage.
And for you who make the journey—who leave the heap and enter the fire, dare to be pounded on God’s anvil, and doggedly seek to discover your own purpose—take courage, for you await the privilege of being called “God’s chosen instruments.”

A disciple is like a servant. “And the Lord’s servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, correcting his opponents with gentleness.” (2 Tim 2:24-25)

This servant is a kind teacher who endures evil and gently corrects his adversaries. Like a faithful servant, a disciple doesn’t get into meaningless disputes, doesn’t waiver in the face of evil, and speaks the truth in love.

CONCLUSION
A life lived after God and his commands yields fruit and generational spiritual blessings.

Discipling through the Psalms
1. Remind them of the legacy that comes through a life of faithfulness. The message of the Bible is that those who love God and have received his salvation pass their faith to others. This type of spiritual legacy lives on long after we are gone. God has built this type of impact into the home through family discipleship and into the church through the Great Commission. We evangelize the lost and we disciple younger believers by “teaching them to obey.” See, we must teach those we are discipling that the Christian life is not merely about their own fruit, growth, and hope in God. It is about living a life of faithfulness in view of others and in community with others in a way that produces a spiritual legacy.

2 Tim 2:2 “…and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also.”
Psalm 145:4  “One generation shall commend your works to another, and shall declare your mighty acts.”

Psalm 78:5-7  “He established a testimony in Jacob and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers to teach to their children, that the next generation might know them, the children yet unborn, and arise and tell them to their children, so that they should set their hope in God…”

2. Remind them of the peace that comes through clinging to God’s commands. Psalm 112 provides an extremely compelling and detailed description of a rock-solid disciple. It seems in our day that everyone is fearful, everyone is anxious, everyone is stressed. It doesn’t take any specific “bad news” for us to falter. We’re wavering in everyday life. Use this opportunity to put your arm around someone you are discipling and lift their eyes up above life’s circumstances and challenge them to remember who God is. It is in our challenging moments that our true theology is revealed. Do we really believe God is in control? Do we believe that God is working all things together for our good? One of the most compelling things about the Gospel in our day is when a person is not shaken by the winds of the world.

Ephesians 4:14-15  “so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ…”

Matthew 6:34  “Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.”

Colossians 3:15  “Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful.”

3. Remind them of the importance of generosity and compassion. Many of the Psalms we have studied in this series have made mention of justice, mercy, equity and the possession of a particular attitude toward the poor, hurting, or under-resourced. To be straightforward with those we disciple the message of the Bible is that God’s people give to the poor. The blessed one depicted here loans money to the poor and also gives money to the poor. Are you a distributor? Once we realize that all we have comes from God, we can see ourselves rightfully as distributors. Our time, effort, talents, and finances are to be distributed to those in need.

1 John 3:17-18  “But if anyone has the world’s goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God’s love abide in him? Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.”

James 1:27  “Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world.”

2 Cor 9:7  “Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.”
REFLECT ON THE TEXT (5-10 Minutes)

The purpose of discussion questions is to (a) allow the teacher a way to gauge the level of comprehension and (b) allow students to develop bonds around spiritual truth.

*If you were talking with a non-believer about the Gospel, imagine they asked, “Are there any other benefits to following Christ other than going to heaven when I die?” How would you answer it? How does Psalm 112 help answer this question?*

*Psalm 112 focuses on the generational blessing of following God. We know that simply because a parent follows Christ does not guarantee a child will. And we know that following Jesus doesn’t guarantee financial success. So how do the blessings of following God extend to our children?*

*Verses 6-8 suggest that a God-follower is steady. When you’re honest, what types of things in life come your way and cause you to wobble and feel insecure? Why do you think in those situations you’re not the blessed one in Psalm 112 who “is not afraid of bad news” who “will not be moved?”*

RESPOND TO THE TEXT (5 Minutes)

Take 4-5 mins and write a brief note of encouragement to a friend or someone you’re discipling.

If you’re writing to a friend, choose an element of Psalm 112 and tell your friend how you’ve seen them exemplify this life of godliness.

If you’re writing to someone you’re discipling, remind them how important it is to become the steady person who roots themselves in God and will not be shaken in this world.
GOSPEL CHALLENGE  (from the staff)

In today’s culture, sharing the Gospel can be intimidating. It can be intimidating because we fear offending others and especially being rejected by others. As we’ve seen in today’s text, the “righteous…is not afraid of bad news, his heart is firm, trusting in the Lord.” The same should be said of us especially when sharing our faith.

This week’s Gospel Challenge is to put ourselves out there a bit. Commit to taking some of your class members and maybe even your family to a local park, shopping center, neighborhood, or other place where people will be present. Spend some time engaging people with one simple question, “How can I pray for you?” Then, spend time praying for them. If you get really bold, take the time to ask them their faith story. Commit to doing this for at least one hour this week. This challenge will hopefully help us to not fear rejection or confrontation and will further affirm our trust in the Lord as the Psalmist writes.

HOME 22:6

SING: “Be Thou My Vision”
Lyrics: https://hymnary.org/text/be_thou_my_vision_o_lord_of_my_heart

READ: PSALM 112

PRAY: Parents, pray this blessing over your children this week (and maybe even in weeks to come).

May you be a man/woman who fears the Lord;
May you find great delight in the Lord’s commands.
May your children be mighty in the land.
Even to the next generation,
may you and your children be blessed.
May you find your wealth and your riches in God.
May you endure in righteousness forever.
Even in darkness may the light dawn for you.
May you be a gracious, compassionate
and righteous man/woman.
May you never be shaken. And may your name, [full name],
be remembered by the Lord forever. Amen!
SOURCES

1 Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible, Kim Walton. The British Museum.
2 Expositor’s Bible Commentary, Psalm 112:1
3 Expositor’s Bible Commentary, Psalm 112:2-3
4 Expositor’s Bible Commentary, Psalm 112:6-8
5 https://jdgreear.com/blog/responding-to-pain-see-it-coming-see-it-through/
6 NIV Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible, 1 Tim 1:2
7 Expositor’s Bible Commentary, 2 Tim 2:5
8 Expositor’s Bible Commentary, 2 Tim 2:20-21
9 Lucado Life Lessons Study Bible, 2 Tim 2:1-26
10 From A Father’s Guide to Blessing His Children by David Michael
Utilize **one** of the following tools to ignite the interest of your students. Tell a story, spark a discussion, or show a clip.

**TELL A STORY.**
The MELBOURNE VILLAGE COLLEGE, located near Cambridge, changed its motto in 2011. The motto was NISI DOMINUS FRUSTRA. This Latin phrase is roughly translated, "Without the Lord, all is frustrated." It is a restatement of Psalm 127:1 “Unless the Lord builds a house, those who build it labor in vain.” Because the school no longer taught Latin, no one knew how to translate the phrase. Those who could translate it did not know what it signified. So school officials changed the motto to the more user-friendly, “Inspiring Minds.” I assume the school changed the motto for strategic reasons, rather than to make a theological statement. But it is hard not to view this change as a parable of our times. Schools change their mottos, culture changes its values, and nations change their laws. But the word of God does not change. Isaiah 40:8 says, “The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever." Scripture is clear: Nothing you do in life matters without God. That is the message of Psalm 127.¹

¹ The idea: A lifelong commitment to God and his Word yields a confidence, a steadiness, a maturity.
SPARK A DISCUSSION.

Have you heard the term “workaholic”? In many ways, the idea of working too much, or working too hard is one of those “sins” that is acceptable in society. After all, it doesn’t involve alcohol or drugs or sexual sin.

So, here is the question. Is being a workaholic a sin? Why?

SHOW A CLIP.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bUX0zL1l7BE

READ THE TEXT (2-5 Minutes)

See Teacher Guide (p.4) for ways to creatively read the text.

Today’s Text: PSALM 127:1-5

1 Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain. Unless the Lord watches over the city, the watchman stays awake in vain.

2 It is in vain that you rise up early and go late to rest, eating the bread of anxious toil; for he gives to his beloved sleep.

3 Behold, children are a heritage from the Lord, the fruit of the womb a reward.

4 Like arrows in the hand of a warrior are the children of one’s youth.

5 Blessed is the man who fills his quiver with them! He shall not be put to shame when he speaks with his enemies in the gate.

REVIEW THE TEXT

(The DIRECT Route 15-20 Minutes or The SCENIC Route 25-30 Minutes)

CONTEXT

127:1–5 The author is Solomon (cf. Eccl. 12:10), but the occasion is unknown. The major message of God being central to and sovereign in life sounds much like portions of Solomon’s Ecclesiastes (cf. Eccl. 2:24, 25; 5:18–20; 7:13, 14; 9:1). Psalms 112 and 128 also develop a strong message on the family.
I. God's Sovereignty in Everyday Life (127:1, 2)

II. God's Sovereignty in Family Life (127:3-5)

CONTENT

(1) Solomon illustrates God's sovereignty by using three analogies

God's sovereignty is like constructing a house. A person can work and work, and yet their efforts are meaningless unless it is God who empowers and oversees the project. This picture of a house may also be used to represent a family.

127:1 house. In OT usage, the Hebrew word can be used of a physical structure or of a family. This double meaning appears in Nathan's prophecy to David regarding the future temple and David's own future dynasty (2Sa 7:5,11b – 12). The psalmist draws upon the same wordplay here, since "house" is parallel to "city" in v. 1 and is also echoed in the second half of the psalm as "children" (vv. 3,4). In either case, the Lord's help is the decisive factor in success. These are fundamental concerns for any society. Numerous Mesopotamian texts refer to the crucial role of deities in the building of a city. Prayers and incantations also recognized the necessity of divine help in procreation (see note on 113:9). The joining of these two themes is illustrated as well in the Sumerian Hymn to Nisaba. Neither houses nor cities can be built without the aid of the goddess Nisaba.

God's sovereignty is like protecting a city. Your most diligent, skilled, and alert watchman can do nothing to protect the city if it is not ultimately protected by God. His tenacity and anxiety are needless because the only true rest is found under the protection of God.

God's sovereignty is like making a living. A person works to provide for himself or a family and often carries an undue burden of pressure because he fails to recognize that it is God who is the ultimate provider. Only when someone recognizes God's sovereignty in provision can he work with joy and peace.

127:2 toiling for food to eat. Quotes almost verbatim the curse against the man in Gen 3:17.

Our occupations are important and demand much of our time. Rightly so. However, very few treasures from the office hang in our museums of memories. Solomon wisely reminds us in this psalm—just as he does in the book of Ecclesiastes—that it is "useless" to work from dawn till after dark as if it all depends on us. It doesn't. That's life on the ragged edge. That's the world's system. Overworking ourselves at the expense of our families is useless because, ultimately, it is God who provides for us. –Chuck Swindoll

2 The psalmist does not depreciate the importance of hard work. But he decries this as an inferior way of life if the hard work is only to provide daily food and clothing for oneself and the family. The higher way of life begins with trusting the Lord in one's work. With his blessing on their labor, the godly can rest without anguish.
(2) Solomon illustrates God’s sovereignty using the example of family life.

Children are a blessing from the Lord. In the Psalmist’s day, children were of great value. Of course children are always to be esteemed in this way. But in Solomon’s day, they regarded children differently than we do today. Children could help expand the family business. Children lengthened the family name. And children took care of their parents in their old age. Children come as a gift from God.

Consider the importance of this theological point. What comes of a society that does not value children? Who sees children as a burden? In short, they don’t have many children, and their civilization becomes unstable. Of course it takes a 2.1 population rate to replenish a society. Many countries in Europe have fallen below this number, and the U.S. tends to follow closely behind. When society sees children as an impediment on their personal ambition, they forget that children are a blessing.

127:3 heritage…reward. Children are a blessing from the Lord. There are overtones of God’s promise to Abraham to make his offspring like the dust of the earth and the stars of heaven (Gen. 13:16; 15:5).7

“... It is not untypical of God’s gifts that first they are liabilities, or at least responsibilities, before they become obvious assets. The greater their promise, the more likely that these sons will be a handful before they are a quiverful”8

DELIBERATE CHILDLESSNESS
ALBERT MOHLER

Christians must recognize that this rebellion against parenthood represents nothing less than an absolute revolt against God’s design. The Scripture points to barrenness as a great curse and children as a divine gift. The Psalmist declared: “Behold, children are a gift of the Lord, the fruit of the womb is a reward. Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, so are the children of one’s youth. How blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them; they will not be ashamed when they speak with their enemies in the gate.” [Psalm 127: 3-5]

Morally speaking, the epidemic in this regard has nothing to do with those married couples who desire children but are for any reason unable to have them, but in those who are fully capable of having children but reject this intrusion in their lifestyle.

The motto of this new movement of chosen childlessness could be encapsulated by the bumper sticker put out by the Zero Population Growth group in the 1970s: “MAKE LOVE, NOT BABIES.” This is the precise worldview the Scripture rejects. Marriage, sex, and children are part of one package. To deny any part of this wholeness is to reject God’s intention in creation—and His mandate revealed in the Bible.

The sexual revolution has had many manifestations, but we can now see that modern Americans are determined not only to liberate sex from marriage (and even from gender), but also from procreation.9
When you talk about children, do you esteem them the way the Bible does? Or do you tend to complain about their shortcomings and the ways in which they can complicate life?

Children offer long term protection for parents. The more the better. “Like arrows in the hand of a warrior…” The idea is that a warrior would have no protection and no way to advance without his arrows. Children are like arrows of protection for parents. Especially in this day, this meant that when God blessed a family with many children, parents could grow old in comfort and protection. Therefore, “blessed is the man who fills his quiver with them.”

Grieve not, then, if your sons seem to desert you. Remember how the Psalmist described children? He said that they were as an heritage from the Lord, and that every man should be happy who had his quiver full of them. And what is a quiver full of but arrows? And what are arrows for but to shoot? So, with the strong arms of prayer, draw the bowstring back and let the arrows fly—all of them, straight at the Enemy’s hosts.

Children honor the family name. As parents grow old, the children can speak honorably with their enemies at the city gate. (v5) This is where court was held and disputes were settled. Children could represent their aging father in an admirable way.

I listened to a Christian radio show on my way to the office some years ago. A young adult was giving her testimony. It was awesome. Things God brought me through, he kept them from. The more I listened, the more discouraged I became. By the time I pulled up to the church, I was angry with God. “Why would you do that for them and did not do it for me?” I demanded to know. When I finished yelling at God, I could hear him whisper to me, “But have I been faithful?” Tears of sorrow became tears of joy. There are many things about my personal life, family background, and work experience I wish I did not have to go through. But I am glad to report that God has been faithful through it all! Lamentations 3:22-23 says: “The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.”

“In looking back ... I have one regret, and that is that I did not feel it my duty to play with my children as much as to teach the [natives]. I worked very hard at that and was tired out at night. Now I have none to play with. So, my good friend, play while you may…”

—David Livingstone
HOW DOES PSALM 127 PARALLEL JESUS’ TEACHING ON CHILDREN?

Like arrows in the hands of a warrior are sons born in one’s youth. —Psalm 127:4

Psalm 127:3–5 speaks of a concept that many people intuitively accept today: children are a precious gift from God. However, in ancient times, this was not a common attitude. In some cultures only a certain gender was worth keeping, and other cultures condoned leaving an unwanted infant outside to die of exposure. However, Psalm 127:3–5 teaches a different, fresh message that is also echoed in Jesus’ teaching.

Jesus cared deeply and openly for little children. When his disciples tried to prohibit parents from bringing their babies to him, he rebuked them. He drew the children into his arms, touched them and blessed them (see Mark 10:13–16; Luke 18:15–17).

Jesus also used a child to teach the mystery of the kingdom of heaven. When the disciples fought over which of them would be the greatest in heaven, Jesus placed a child in their midst to signify who would be held in the highest honor. He taught that only those who humble themselves like a child will enter the kingdom of heaven (see Matthew 18:1–4).

Clearly, like Psalm 127:3–5, Jesus placed great value on the lives of children. He also lifted up the importance of childlike faith to teach a higher truth about the importance of children, specifically, “the kingdom of God belongs to such as these” (Luke 18:16).12

CONCLUSION

God is in control. It is his faithful hand which provides and protects. Specifically, he provides children as a gift to be valued.

Discipling Through the Psalms

1. Remind them that the culture’s prevailing view of children is unbiblical. We have seen the fruit of selfishness in our culture. “This life is about me,” we say. We live in a culture where people hope to have sex but not have children. They want to have the option to abort a baby should it be an inconvenient time to have a child. We even wait longer and longer to have children in our day in hopes of securing financial security or in hopes of delaying that responsibility in life as long as possible. The Bible does not tell us how many children we must have. The Bible does not tell us when we must pursue having children. But it does tell us this: children are not a burden. They are a blessing, a gift from God. Whether or not those you disciple understand the importance and value of children will affect the next generation’s homes, the church, and society as a whole.

Matthew 21:15-16 “But when the chief priests and the teachers of the law saw the wonderful things he did and the children shouting in the temple courts, “Hosanna to the Son of David,” they were indignant. “Do you hear what these children are saying?” they asked him. “Yes,” replied Jesus, “have you never read, “ ‘From the lips of children and infants you, Lord, have called forth your praise’?”

Matthew 19:14 Jesus said, “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.”
Proverbs 17:6  Children’s children are a crown to the aged, and parents are the pride of their children.

2. Remind them of the value of hard work, and the greater value of trusting that God is in control. The Bible does not pit hard work against trusting God. God does not tell us to go passive in life because God will do everything for us. But he also does not intend for us to put our heads down and work diligently, forgetting for whom we are working. As people, we take great pride in the things we accomplish. And God warns us that this mindset ignores God’s hand of provision. The most satisfying moments of life come when we have worked to the very end of our human effort, and we look back at our achievements and we recognize that God’s grace was greater still, than all of our efforts. He gave the ability. He sustained on the journey. He protected. He brought forth gains. This is ultimately satisfying because there is no personal regret that we might have worked harder or given more of ourselves to the task. But there is also a great sense of peace knowing that the most important reason the task has been accomplished is that God was with us.

Psalm 115:3  “Our God is in the heavens; he does all that he pleases.”

Proverbs 16:9  “The heart of man plans his way, but the Lord establishes his steps.”

Proverbs 19:21  “Many are the plans in the mind of a man, but it is the purpose of the Lord that will stand.”

3. Remind them of the value of family in the life of a Christian. Almost all of those you disciple will have brokenness in their families. When family is broken, the church becomes a believer’s family even more. In fact, it’s possible that the person you are discipling sees you as a spiritual father, mother, or older sibling. Since marriage is not esteemed, and children are not valued, it is quite easy in our day for young people to lack a vision for healthy family life. Help them see that marriage and children are gifts from God, useful in their own sanctification, and a means of grace in life.

1 Tim 3:5  “For if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God’s church?”

Gen. 2:24  “Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.”

Eph. 6:1-4  “Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. “Honor your father and mother” (this is the first commandment with a promise), ”that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land.” Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

As we draw the Psalms series to a close, let’s look back on the things that the Psalms have drawn out as discussion items and teaching moments.

1. Remind them of the centrality of the Word of God.
2. Remind them of the benefits of rooting oneself in the Word of God.
3. Remind them of the urgency in knowing and responding to the Word.
4. Remind them that one evidence of our salvation is our turning from idols.
5. Remind those you’re discipling that we have no good apart from God.
6. Remind them that in the presence of God there is fullness of joy.
7. Remind them of the peace of God’s presence.
8. Remind them of the hope we have in times of trial.
9. Remind them of the abundant life in Christ.
10. Remind them that God’s unconditional love and forgiveness extends even to heinous sins we have committed.
11. Remind them that unconfessed and hidden sin rots the soul.
12. Remind them of the joy in having a clean conscience.
13. Remind them that in this world, there will be troubles.
14. Remind them that following Christ is not mainly rooted in emotions.
15. Remind them to store up God’s Word in their hearts so there is something to call to mind to cling to during dark times.
16. Remind them to get perspective.
17. Remind them of God’s sovereignty.
18. Warn them of the danger of hoping in your own abilities and strength.
19. Remind them that leaders are called to a higher standard.
20. Remind them of the proper attitude for being under authority.
21. Remind them that they are responsible for how they follow.
22. Remind them that God is to be revered.
23. Remind them to be worshipful in their personal time with God.
24. Remind them of the importance of personal holiness.
25. Remind them of the legacy that comes through a life of faithfulness.
26. Remind them of the peace that comes through clinging to God’s commands.
27. Remind them of the importance of generosity and compassion.
28. Remind them that the culture’s prevailing view of children is unbiblical.
29. Remind them of the value of hard work, and the greater value of trusting that God is in control.
30. Remind them of the value of family in the life of a Christian.

**REFLECT ON THE TEXT (5-10 Minutes)**

The purpose of discussion questions is to (a) allow the teacher a way to gauge the level of comprehension and (b) allow students to develop bonds around spiritual truth.

*Which way do you lean? Do you have a tendency to not do anything, and insist that you’re not acting because you’re simply trusting the Lord? Or do you tend to work hard and act as if you have achieved things in your own strength?*
How does each of these approaches compare to the verses we studied today?

Have you been guilty of devaluing children? What are some examples of ways we (even accidentally) speak of children more as a burden than a blessing? What are some ways that we could turn back the tide in our culture and show that Christians value children?

How are kids like arrows in the hands of warriors? Even though we do not live in the ancient society in which this was written, have you found this to be true? Do children really bless their parents as they grow older?

RESPOND TO THE TEXT (5 Minutes)

Let’s brainstorm as a group all the sacrifices and benefits of family life.

First, on the dry erase board, let’s collectively come up with all the things that parents give their children in preparing them for adulthood. What do we do for our children?

Protect, teach, provide, coach, nurture, train, prepare, spend money, make memories, etc…

Now, let’s think of all the way we hope children will bless us as they mature.

Honor, esteem, respect, take care of, provide grandchildren, become friends, marry a great spouse, lengthen the family line, etc…

See how many of each of these you can come up with. End the session by helping the class see the value of a healthy family unit.

GOSPEL CHALLENGE (from the staff)

One of the most common excuses we give for not sharing the Gospel is that we do not know many lost people. We look at someone else’s life, the house they live in, the marriage they present, the kids the boast about, etc. and think that they must know Christ because how else could they have that much good. We fall into the trap of assuming. Likewise, we do this with our children. Or for those without kids, we do this with our own family. We assume that
the professionals at church are clearly communicating the Gospel to their kids. We assume that because our family went to church a few times, that they had to have clearly heard the Gospel. After all, the pastors and ministers in the church are the professionals, not us.

This week’s Gospel Challenge is to not assume…but to know. Pull out the old family photo album and start taking mental notes of all the immediate and extended family you have. As the memories swell, do you remember whether or not they have chosen to follow Jesus? Parents, look across the dinner table or around you in the car, have they responded to the goodness of Jesus? Often times the Gospel that impacts children the most is the one they see and hear from their mom and dad. Avoid the trap of assuming and pursue knowing where your family stands with the Lord. If they have not yet responded to Jesus’ free gift of love and grace, then our task of sharing the Gospel with them is still incomplete.

HOME 22:6

SING: Great is Thy Faithfulness

Lyrics: https://www.hymnal.net/en/hymn/h/19

READ: PSALM 127

PRAY: Pray over the areas of your life in which you “work.” Whether it be school, sports, activities, employment, or serving, confess to God that he is the one building the house, protecting us, and providing for us.

Also, pray over your children. Thank God for the blessing that they are and all the ways they add joy and fulfillment to your life.

SOURCES

1 http://hbcharlesjr.today/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/It-All-Depends-on-God.pdf
2 Macarthur Study Bible, Psalm 127
3 NIV Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible, Ps. 127:1
4 NIV Zondervan Study Bible, Ps. 127:2
6 Expositor’s Bible Commentary, Ps. 127:2
7 Macarthur Study Bible, Ps. 127:1-2
8 Kidner, Psalms [IVP], 2:441, 442
10 Elisabeth Elliot, Shadow of the Almighty, p. 132.
12 The Case for Christ Study Bible, Psalm 127:3-5