



PSALMS

MUSIC FOR THE SOUL

PSALMS

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Welcome to our study! It is our heartfelt prayer that you will be blessed by the variety of psalms we have selected. Each touches on timeless needs and desires, yet all of them challenge us to worship God. Worship is the act of offering to God what is due Him because of who He is. The Hebrew word translated “worship” means to bow oneself down in reverence and submission. The book of Psalms teaches us to turn every situation into an occasion for worship. If we are sad, we should worship. If we are glad, we should worship. If we are in the dark, we should worship. If we are in the light, we should worship. The Apostle Paul expressed it this way in Philippians 4:4 and 7, “Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say, Rejoice... And the peace of God, which passes all understanding, shall guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.” “Let everything that has breath praise the Lord. Praise the Lord!” (Psalm 150:6).



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The Psalms

INTRODUCTION

God's people throughout history have loved the Psalter (another name for the book of Psalms). There are a number of reasons for its popularity. First, it is a collection of songs that arise out of experiences with which we can all identify. It is very difficult to find any circumstance in life that does not find expression in some psalm or another.

Some arose out of prosperity, others out of adversity. Some psalms deal with holiness and others with sinfulness. Some are laments that bewail the worst of situations whereas others are triumphant hymns of joy and thanksgiving. Some look back to the past while others look forward to the future. The psalms are great because their writers composed them out of their most profound experiences. Great poetry arises out of great living. "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks" (Matt. 12:34). They are also great because the writers brought these profound experiences into God's presence.

They show how people behave when they are conscious of God, which is the only truly realistic way to live. The permanent value of the Psalms lies in their revelation of worship (*Thomas Constable Study Notes, The Psalms*).

The Book of Psalms is an inspired collection of spiritual songs and comprises the primary hymnbook of the Bible. The word "psalm" is a transliterated Greek word that was used in the Septuagint for the Hebrew term "mizmor" (song, melody). Many of the psalms were to be sung and recited at festive occasions. Many musical terms are cited within the text of Psalms including strings, octaves, choir, sopranos, lightly, cello/lute, stringed instrument, flute, vibrate, lyre, crescendo, pause, etc. The Book of Psalms is one book. Each of the 150 "chapters" is a Psalm: "*The Book of Psalms*" or "*Psalm 119*" (not: "*Psalms 119*"). The time of writing of the Book of Psalms probably extends from 1400-400BC.

"In any area of life one naturally praises what one appreciates; in fact, the praise is part of the enjoyment. It does not matter whether it is sports, flowers, sunsets, children, cars, great books, or anything else. To enjoy something fully one must speak of it."

C.S. Lewis, *Reflections in the Psalms*

THEOLOGICAL PRINCIPLE OF PSALMS

The Lord, who sovereignly rules the universe, will establish His just rule on the earth in and through His people whereupon the righteous will prosper and the wicked will suffer.

PURPOSES OF THE BOOK OF PSALMS

John Calvin describes the Psalter as, “An Anatomy of all the Parts of the Soul; for there is not an emotion of which any one can be conscious that is not here represented as in a mirror.”

PURPOSES:

1. To express the divine word spoken *in* rather than *to* man.
2. To reveal the character of God through the praise, complaint and exhortation of God’s people so that the reader may be willing to submit to the Lord.
3. To enable the reader to come into contact with God through the expression of the common, subjective daily experiences of others.
4. To encourage one’s confidence in God’s faithfulness by the words of others when one’s own life experiences do not seem to support that faith.
5. To affirm the certainty of God’s future rule on earth through the line of David wherein the righteous will be blessed and the wicked will be judged.
6. To provide a worship hymnal and a devotional guide for the Temple-centered Jewish faith.
7. To encourage believers to enjoy God and His benefits.

5 MAJOR SECTIONS

BOOK I: PSALMS 1-41

Introduction: Psalms 1-2

Psalms of David (3-41)

BOOK II: PSALMS 42-72

Psalms of Korah’s sons (42-49)

A Psalm of Asaph (50)

Psalms of David (51-71)

A Psalm of Solomon (72)

Doxology & Conclusion (72:18-20)

BOOK III: PSALMS 73-89

Psalms of Asaph (73-83)

- Psalms of Korah's sons (84-85; 87-88)
- A Psalm of David (86)
- A Psalm of Ethan (89)
- Doxology (89:52)
- BOOK IV: PSALMS 90-106
 - Psalms of Worship (mostly anonymous)
 - A Prayer of Moses (90)
 - Psalms of David (101, 103)
 - Doxology (106:48)
- BOOK V: PSALMS 107-150
 - Psalms of David (107-110; 138-145)
 - "Hallel" (Praise) Psalms (111-118; 135-136; 146-150)
 - A Psalm of the Law (119)
 - Songs of Ascents (120-134)
 - A Psalm of the Captivity (137)
 - Doxology (150)

THE PSALMS GROUPED BY HISTORY

- INTRODUCTION: The righteous one 1–2
- BOOK I: David's conflict with Saul 3–41
- BOOK II: David's kingship 42-72
- BOOK III: Attack by the Kingdom of Assyria 73–89
- BOOK IV: Introspection about the destruction of the temple and the Exile 90–106
- BOOK V: Praise and Reflection on the Return and the new era 107–145
- CONCLUSION: Climatic praise to God 146–150

5 MAJOR TYPES OF PSALMS

- Individual Laments/Confidences/Thanksgiving (39%)
- Hymns of Praise (21%)
- Communal Laments/Confidences/Thanksgiving (18%)
- Instructional (15%)
- Royal (7%)

IMPORTANCE OF OLD TESTAMENT HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- Psalm 3 – “A Psalm of David, when he fled from Absalom his son.” (inspired background to 2 Samuel 15).
- Psalm 51 – “...when Nathan the prophet came to him (David) after he had gone in to Bathsheba.” (inspired background into 2 Samuel 12).

IMPORTANCE OF NEW TESTAMENT

- Of the 238 OT quotes in the NT, 116 are from the Psalms.
- Jesus frequently alluded to the Psalms.
- NT “Spirit-filled” living is partially characterized by “speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord” (Eph. 5:19).
- The NT believers frequently used the Psalms as their hymnal.

THE LITERARY CHARACTER OF HEBREW POETRY/WISDOM

1. RHYTHM OF THOUGHT: PARALLELISM

- **Synonymous** - line 2 simply reiterates the idea of line 1; it restates the meaning using different words.

Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment,
Nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous. Psalm 1:5

The cords of Sheol surrounded me;
The snares of death confronted me. Psalm 18:5

- **Contrasting** - line 2 contrasts line 1. It may present the same truth but from the opposite side.

For the Lord knows the way of the righteous,
But the way of the wicked will perish. Psalm 1:6

Some boast in chariots and some in horses,
But we will boast in the name of the Lord, our God. Psalm 20:7

- **Climactic** - line 2 repeats line 1 but then adds a conclusion.

Ascribe to the Lord, O sons of the mighty,
Ascribe to the Lord glory and strength. Psalm 29:1

- **Synthetic** - line 2 expands or explains. Line 2 often but not always begins with a logical connector such as “for,” “so that,” “since,” or “because.”

Gives Reason or Result:
He established the earth upon its foundations,
So that it will not totter forever and ever. Psalm 104:5

In peace I will both lie down and sleep,
For You alone, O Lord, make me to dwell in safety. Psalm 4:8

Expands:

But know that the Lord has set apart the godly man for Himself;
The Lord hears when I call to Him. Psalm 4:3

Be gracious to me, O Lord, for I am pining away;
Heal me, O Lord, for my bones are dismayed. Psalm 6:2

- **Emblematic** - line 2 explains figurative language used in line 1.

As the deer pants for the water brooks,
So my soul pants for You, O God. Psalm 42:1

Their throat is an open grave;
They flatter with their tongue. Psalm 5:9b

2. RHYTHM OF SOUND (IN HEBREW)

- **Acrostic Poems** are written so that the initial letters of consecutive lines form an alphabet, word, or phrase (Ps. 9; 10; 25; 34; 37; 11; 112; 119; 145; Prov.31:10-31; Lam. 1; 2; 3; 4; Nahum 1:2-20). This was a mnemonic tool (memory device) conveying ideas of order, progression, and completeness.
- **Alliteration** is the consonance of sounds at the beginning of words or syllables (Ps. 122:6).
- **Assonance** is correspondence of vowels sounds, often at the end of words in order to emphasize an idea, theme, or tone (Ps. 119:29).
- **Paronomasia** is a word play through the repetition of words of similar sound, but not necessarily meaning in order to heighten the impact of the message (Gen. 32:22-24).
- **Onomatopoeia** is the use of words that sound like what they describe (Ruth 1:19).
- **Ellipsis** is the omission of a word or words that would complete a given parallel construction (Ps. 115:4-7).
- **Inclusio** is the repetition of words or phrases by which the poet returns to the point from which he began (Ps. 118:1,29).

TECHNICAL NAMES TO DESIGNATE THE TYPES OF PSALMS

- **“Psalm”** (*Heb. mizmor*): “a song accompanied by the plucking of the strings of an instrument.” Fifty-seven of the psalms are so labeled.
- **“Song”** (*Heb. shir*): “a song.” Twelve of the psalms are so labeled.
- **Maskil**: “A contemplative poem.” Thirteen of the psalms are so labeled.
- **Miktam**: root meaning is disputed. Later Hebrew (LXX and Modern Hebrew understand the word to mean “inscription poem,” or “epigram,” “a poem containing pithy sayings, etc.” Term is found in six superscriptions.
- **“Prayers”** (*Heb. Tepillah*): “Prayer.” Found in five psalms titles and Hab. 3.
- **“Praise”** (*Heb. Tehillah*): “Praise” found in Ps. 145.

MUSICAL TERMS WITH THE PSALMS

- **“To the chief musician”** (*Heb. lam-menasseah*): Disputed term. Most construe the term to mean “To the choir leader.” Found in 50 psalms.
- **“Sons of Korah”** (*Pss. 42, 44-49, 84, 87-88*): Disputed whether the term refers to authorship or to musical rendition. The evidence-- would involve dual authorship in Ps. 88, the use of the plural, the LXX confusion--suggests that the sons of Korah were the musical performers of these ten psalms.
- **“Jeduthun”** (*Pss. 39,62,77*): Disputed term. Perhaps it refers to a guild of musicians who rendered the psalms.
- **“Neginoth”** (*Pss. 4,6,54,55,67,76,61 [singular]*): “with stringed instruments.”
- **“Alamoth”** (*Ps. 46*): “Upon lyres tuned to the voice of maidens.”
- **“Sheminith”** (*Pss. 6,12*): “with an eight stringed lute.”
- **“Nehilloth”** (*Ps. 5*): Obscure term (“wind instrument?”).
- **“Gittith”** (*Pss. 8,81,84*): Disputed term (“wine song”? or “instrument from Gath?”).
- **“Selah”** (*not in superscriptions*): “Lift up”? Probably denotes places in the psalm where the worshipers were to lift up their voices.

*Adapted in part from “The Book of Psalms,” David Malick, www.bible.org.

LESSON 1

Two Paths, Two Destinies

P S A L M 1

P R A Y

Begin this time in prayer, confessing any sins you know of, thanking the Lord for the gift of His Word, and asking for His Spirit to illuminate your study.

B A C K G R O U N D

Psalm 1 serves as the instructive prologue for the entire Book of Psalms. This initial psalm describes the two paths of life open to people: the way of the righteous and the way of the wicked. Therefore, it serves as the appropriate preface for the collection of the 150 psalms. Its nature is that of a wisdom psalm, so designed to give skill and understanding to the reader. Some scholars consider Psalm 1 to be added much later by Ezra (444BC) as a preface to the entire Psalter. Others see a close affinity to Psalm 26, a psalm of David.

R E A D

Read through the psalm two or three times this week.

R E F L E C T

Do you find “delight” in the law of the Lord (here referring to all of Scripture)? Why or why not? Where else do you find “delight”?

What Do I See?

OBSERVE

Refer to Appendix pp. 100 -101

PSALM 1

Memory verse is underlined (Psalms 1:1-2)

¹How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked,

Nor stand in the path of sinners,

Nor sit in the seat of scoffers!

²But his delight is in the law of the LORD,

And in His law he meditates day and night.

³He will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water,

Which yields its fruit in its season

And its leaf does not wither;

And in whatever he does, he prospers.

⁴The wicked are not so,

But they are like chaff which the wind drives away.

⁵Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment,

Nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous.

⁶For the LORD knows the way of the righteous,

But the way of the wicked will perish.

OBSERVATIONS

v1

v2

v3

v4

v5

v6

What Does it Mean?

INTERPRET

Refer to Appendix pp. 102 - 103

Hebrew poetry is often arranged and distinguished by the use of various types of parallelisms described in the Introduction of this study. There are five types of parallelism that are important to identify as we attempt to interpret a psalm: synonymous, contrasting, climatic, synthetic and emblematic. In Psalm 1 notice the use of synonymous parallelism in 1:5a-b, then synthetic parallelism in 1:6a, then contrasting parallelism in 1:6b. See page 14 for further study.

1. What are the two kinds of paths/lives/people described in this psalm? What sections of the psalm are used to describe each path?
2. Does Psalm 1:1 use a particular technique to describe the “blessed man”? Hint: see the introduction section on “parallelism”. Explain how parallelisms add to the meaning/interpretation of 1:1.
3. What do you think is the significance of the progression in v1 (“walk-stand-sit”)?
4. Based on v1, how should we relate to sinful people? How does this harmonize with 1 Cor. 5:9-13?

5. How does each part of the tree described in v3 illustrate the life of the person who “delights” in Scripture?

6. In context, what does “prosper” or “succeed” mean in v3?

7. What motivations are given in the entire Psalm for avoiding evil?

8. What motivations are given for walking with the Lord?

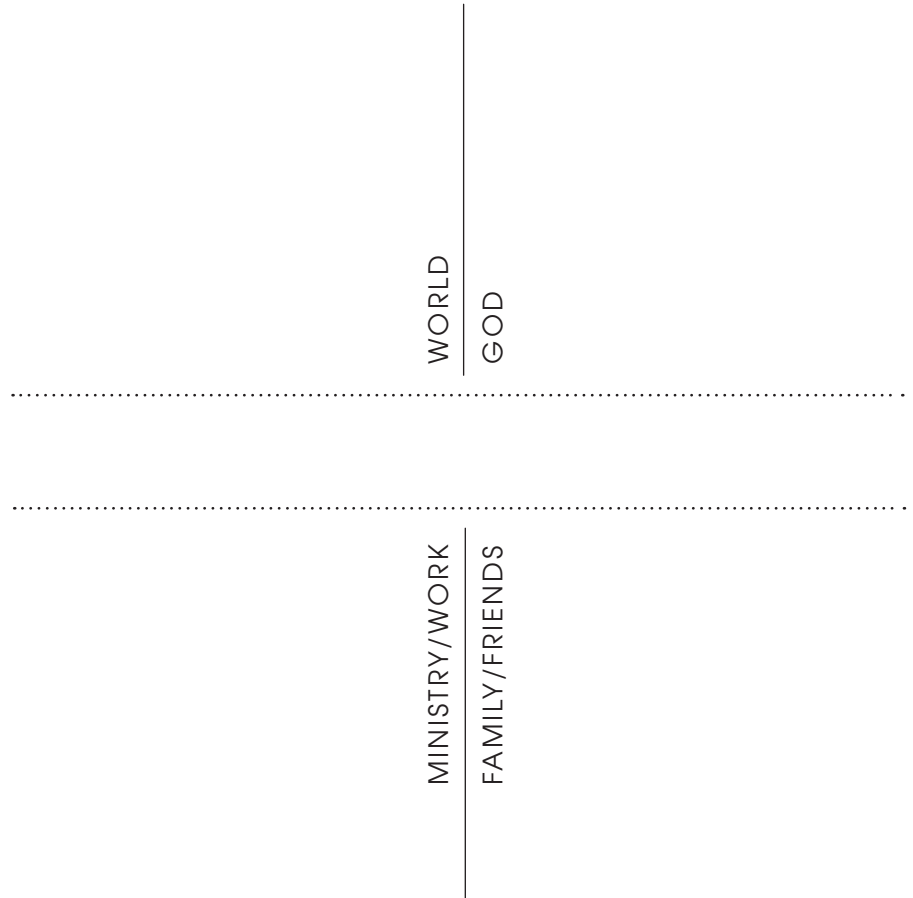
RELATIONAL APPLICATION

Refer to Appendix pp. 104 -105

Fill in the graph below by answering these questions:

- What is the most significant truth or principle you learned in this lesson?
- How does this truth impact the four relational spheres of your life?

MAIN TRUTH:



My Notes...

LESSON 2

The Lord & His Anointed

P S A L M 2

P R A Y

Begin this time in prayer, confessing any sins you know of, thanking the Lord for the gift of His Word, and asking for His Spirit to illuminate your study.

B A C K G R O U N D

Psalm 2 is the prophetic prologue for the entire Psalter as all nations are urged to submit to the authority of the Son whom God has ordained to rule over them. According to Acts 4:25 this psalm was written by David and is referred to as “the second Psalm” in Acts 13:33. The original occasions for this royal psalm may have been David’s own coronation at Hebron (2 Sam. 5:1-5) and later conquest of Jerusalem and his enthronement there (2 Sam, 5:6-12).

R E A D

Read through the psalm two or three times this week.

R E F L E C T

Spend a moment or two pondering the awesome power and wonder of God. Then ask yourself this question: Why would anyone (including me) ever want to oppose His plans and ways? In what ways am I tempted to oppose His plans? What should motivate us to align with His plans?

What Do I See?

OBSERVE

Refer to Appendix pp. 100 -101

PSALM 2

Memory verse is underlined (Psalms 2:1-2)

¹Why are the nations in an uproar

And the peoples devising a vain thing?

²The kings of the earth take their stand

And the rulers take counsel together

Against the LORD and against His Anointed, saying,

³“Let us tear their fetters apart

And cast away their cords from us!”

⁴He who sits in the heavens laughs,

The Lord scoffs at them.

⁵Then He will speak to them in His anger

And terrify them in His fury, saying,

⁶“But as for Me, I have installed My King

Upon Zion, My holy mountain.”

⁷“I will surely tell of the decree of the LORD:

He said to Me, ‘You are My Son,

Today I have begotten You.

⁸‘Ask of Me, and I will surely give the nations as Your inheritance,

And the very ends of the earth as Your possession.

⁹‘You shall break them with a rod of iron,

You shall shatter them like earthenware.”

¹⁰Now therefore, O kings, show discernment;

Take warning, O judges of the earth.

¹¹Worship the LORD with reverence

And rejoice with trembling.

¹²Do homage to the Son, that He not become angry, and you perish in the way,

For His wrath may soon be kindled.

How blessed are all who take refuge in Him!

OBSERVATIONS

w1-3

w4-6

w7-9

w10-12

What Does it Mean?

INTERPRET

Refer to Appendix pp. 102 -103

The use of questions is one of the many rhetorical devices at the disposal of a writer. In fact, there are over 3,200 questions found throughout the Bible. Psalm 2 begins with a question, but the poet is not asking this question to obtain an answer. This type of query is known as “rhetorical” and is employed to convey God’s indignation at the futile attempts of mankind to combat Him. Rhetorical questions are often more persuasive than direct statements because they force the reader to reflect on the implied answer.

1. What is the immediate mood of the psalm as seen in 2:1-3? (Note: the use of the rhetorical question in 1:1.) According to 2:2 who is described as coming against the Lord and His Anointed?

2. What does “anointed” mean in 2:2? Who is the Lord’s Anointed? (Hint: see the rest of the psalm for the identity of the Lord’s Anointed.)

3. Who is speaking in v3? What is meant by the phrase “tear their fetters apart” in v3?

4. Read 2 Samuel 7:8-17. What is the connection between this passage and Psalm 2?

5. What is the significance of vv 7-8? What is among the privileges of being a “son” in the Old Testament? See Genesis 15:3 and Proverbs 13:22.

6. What wisdom does the psalmist impart in 2:10-12?

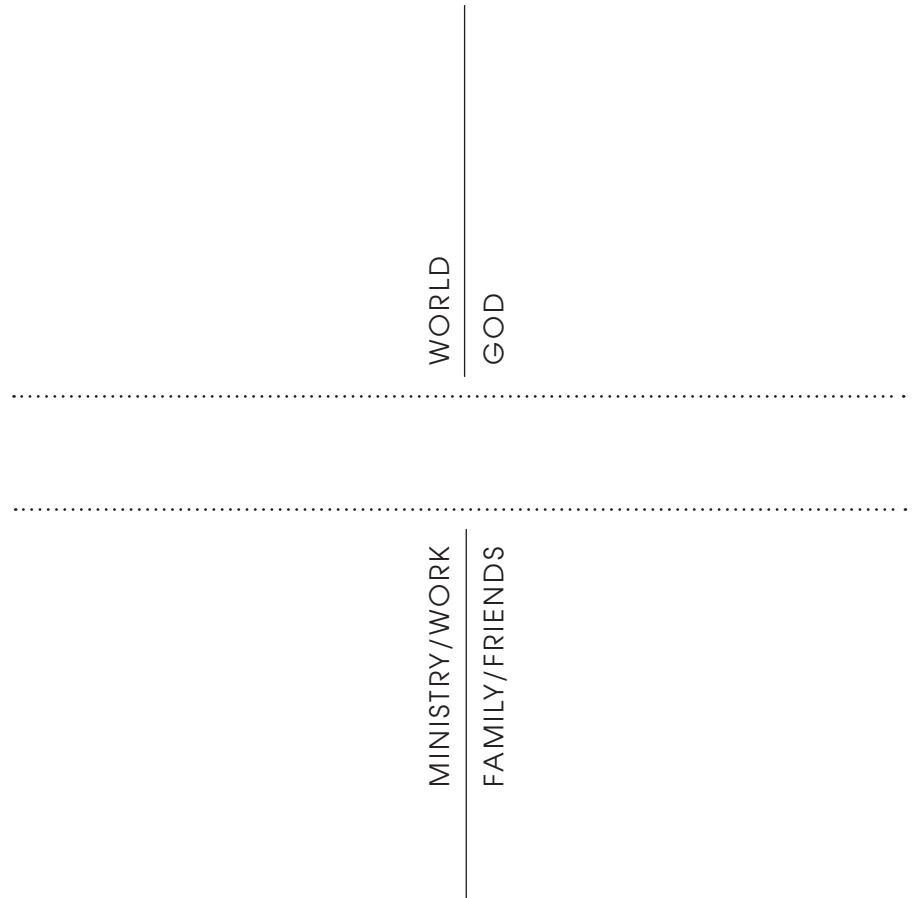
RELATIONAL APPLICATION

Refer to Appendix pp. 104 -105

Fill in the graph below by answering these questions:

- What is the most significant truth or principle you learned in this lesson?
- How does this truth impact the four relational spheres of your life?

MAIN TRUTH:



My Notes...

LESSON 3

Nighttime Grief

P S A L M 6

P R A Y

Begin this time in prayer, confessing any sins you know of, thanking the Lord for the gift of His Word, and asking for His Spirit to illuminate your study.

B A C K G R O U N D

Psalm 6 was penned by David and musically arranged by his choir director for an eight-stringed lyre or harp. This evening psalm is believed to be written during David's brief exile from Jerusalem during Absalom's attempt to overthrow David's throne (2 Samuel 14-18). The structure is that of an individual lament psalm as David, reproved by God through temporary removal from the throne by his own son, petitions the Lord for deliverance, finds assurance that his prayer has been heard, and thus warns his persecutors of their certain shame and dismay.

R E A D

Read through the psalm two or three times this week.

R E F L E C T

Have you ever cried out to the Lord in anguish like David does in Psalm 6?
Who or what do you turn to in difficult times?

What Do I See?

OBSERVE

Refer Appendix pp. 100 -101

PSALM 6

Memory verse is underlined (Psalms 6:8-9)

¹O LORD, do not rebuke me in Your anger,

Nor chasten me in Your wrath.

²Be gracious to me, O LORD, for I am pining away;

Heal me, O LORD, for my bones are dismayed.

³And my soul is greatly dismayed;

But You, O LORD --how long?

⁴Return, O LORD, rescue my soul;

Save me because of Your lovingkindness.

⁵For there is no mention of You in death;

In Sheol who will give You thanks?

⁶I am weary with my sighing;

Every night I make my bed swim, I dissolve my couch with my tears.

⁷My eye has wasted away with grief;

It has become old because of all my adversaries.

⁸Depart from me, all you who do iniquity,

For the LORD has heard the voice of my weeping.

⁹The LORD has heard my supplication,

The LORD receives my prayer.

¹⁰All my enemies will be ashamed and greatly dismayed;

They shall turn back, they will suddenly be ashamed.

OBSERVATIONS

vv1-3

vv4-5

vv6-7

vv8-10

What Does it Mean?

INTERPRET

Refer to Appendix pp. 102 -103

Look closely at the headings located just above Psalm 6:1. Many Bibles will have two headings. The first heading may be something like “Prayer for Mercy in Time of Trouble.” This is a topical heading supplied by the editors of your Bible. The second heading, however, is something quite different: “For the choir director; with stringed instruments, upon an eight-stringed lyre. A Psalm of David.” This supposed “heading” is actually verse one of Psalm 6 in the Hebrew Bible and is just as much a part of the Word of God as the verses that follow! That is why you will see some commentaries and articles cite verses as 6:5[4], which would be a reference to chapter 6, verse 5 in the Hebrew text or chapter 6, verse 4 in an English Bible. How wonderful of God to include the type of musical instrument He wanted to accompany the psalm!

1. Skim/read 2 Samuel 14-15 and pay attention to 2 Sam 15:13-14. What’s going on in David’s life that prompted this writing of this psalm?

2. Collectively, what do verses 1-3 teach us about addressing the Lord during times of grief and great loss? (Note David’s specific requests.)

3. In 6:4-5, what reasons does David use to invoke God’s intervention? In other words, according to David, why should God deliver David?

4. Is David being literal or using a figure of speech in 6:6-7 (see page 44 for help)? Support your reasoning.

5. Verse 8 seems to mark a change in the psalm. To whom is David speaking in this verse? Describe David's mood in 6:8-10. What is the significance of this new outlook?

How Does it Work?

APPLY

JOHN 17:17

“Sanctify them in the truth, Your word is truth.”

REFLECT ON YOUR LIFE:

1. What are some ways in which you have dealt with grief/loss in the past?

2. What has this psalm taught you about how you can deal with grief/loss in the future?

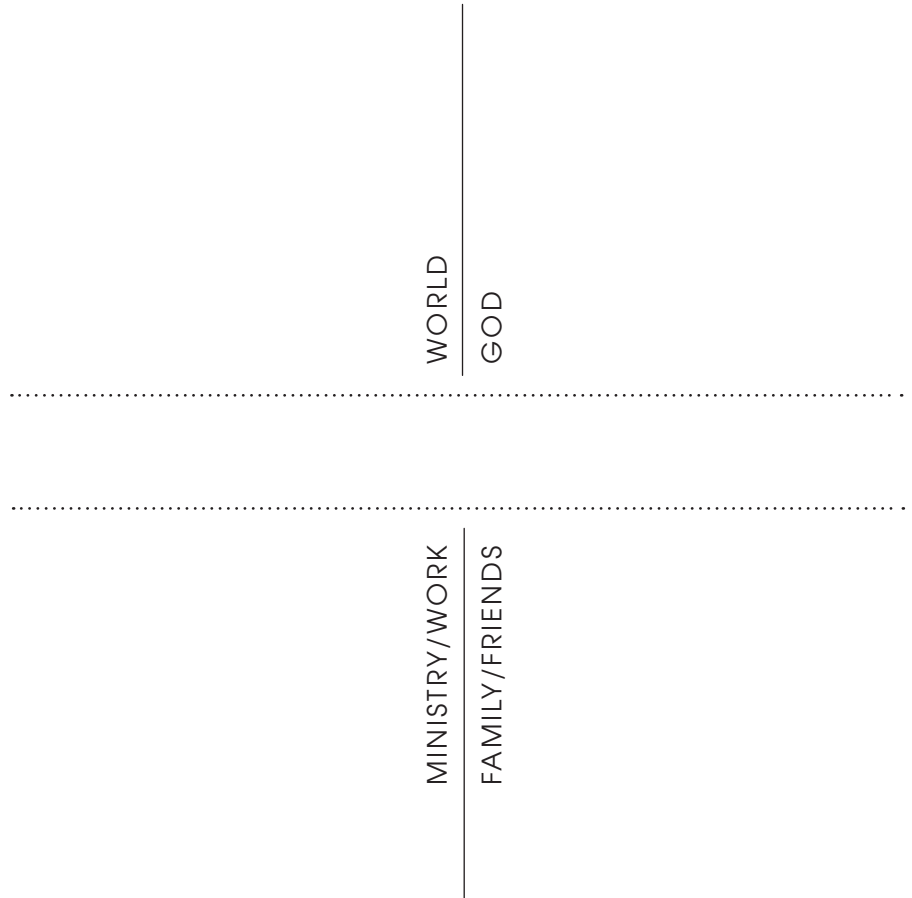
RELATIONAL APPLICATION

Refer to Appendix pp. 104 -105

Fill in the graph below by answering these questions:

- What is the most significant truth or principle you learned in this lesson?
- How does this truth impact the four relational spheres of your life?

MAIN TRUTH:



My Notes...

LESSON 4

God Revealed

P S A L M 19

P R A Y

Begin this time in prayer, confessing any sins you know of, thanking the Lord for the gift of His Word, and asking for His Spirit to illuminate your study.

B A C K G R O U N D

The lyrics of Psalm 19 were written by David and turned over to the choir director for the musical setting. The psalm, most likely, is a product of David's experiences as a shepherd (1 Samuel 16:11) as he certainly saw many stars, sunrises, and sunsets. Natural revelation (19:1-6) and written revelation (19:7-14) are beautifully featured in Psalm 19.

R E A D

Read through the psalm two or three times this week.

R E F L E C T

When was the last time you sat outside and watched a sunset or drove into the country at night to look at the stars? What do you learn about God from such experiences?

What Do I See?

OBSERVE

Refer to Appendix pp. 100 -101

PSALM 19

Memory verse is underlined (Psalms 19:1-2)

¹The heavens are telling of the glory of God;
And their expanse is declaring the work of His hands.
²Day to day pours forth speech,
And night to night reveals knowledge.
³There is no speech, nor are there words;
Their voice is not heard.
⁴Their line has gone out through all the earth,
And their utterances to the end of the world.
In them He has placed a tent for the sun,
⁵Which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber;
It rejoices as a strong man to run his course.
⁶Its rising is from one end of the heavens,
And its circuit to the other end of them;
And there is nothing hidden from its heat.
⁷The law of the LORD is perfect, restoring the soul;
The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple.
⁸The precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart;
The commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes.
⁹The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever;
The judgments of the LORD are true; they are righteous altogether.
¹⁰They are more desirable than gold, yes, than much fine gold;
Sweeter also than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb.
¹¹Moreover, by them Your servant is warned;
In keeping them there is great reward.
¹²Who can discern his errors? Acquit me of hidden faults.
¹³Also keep back Your servant from presumptuous sins; Let them
not rule over me;
Then I will be blameless,
And I shall be acquitted of great transgression.
¹⁴Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart
Be acceptable in Your sight,
O LORD, my rock and my Redeemer.

OBSERVATIONS

w1-2

vv3-4

vv5-6

vv7-8

vv9-10

vv11-12

vv13-14

What Does it Mean?

INTERPRET

Refer to Appendix pp. 102 -103

One of the most powerful ways to emotionally engage an audience with your words is to use figurative language. Figurative language uses words and phrases in an unexpected way to create a vivid image in the mind of a listener. This image adds color to the author's message, holds the listener's attention, forces the listener to slow down and reflect on the idea being communicated, makes the abstract more concrete, and aids in retention of the author's point. While there are many types of figurative language, here are the eight major types you should be looking for as you study the book of Psalms:

- 1) **SIMILE:** Compares two things by using the explicit formula "like" or "as".

He will be like a tree firmly planted. Psalm 1:3
As the deer pants for the water brooks, So my soul pants for You, O God.
Psalm 42:1

- 2) **METAPHOR:** Compares two things but omits "like" or "as" and instead simply equates them (A is B).

The Lord is my shepherd. Psalm 23:1
Their throat is an open grave. Psalm 5:9

- 3) **METONYMY:** One word is substituted for another word closely associated with it. In Ps. 51:8 below, "joy and gladness" which cannot literally be heard, are substituted for "your forgiveness" which would cause joy & gladness.

Make me to hear joy and gladness, Psalm 51:8
Will the dust praise You? Psalm 30:9

- 4) **HYPERBOLE:** Conscious exaggeration for the sake of effect or emphasis.

I dissolve my couch with my tears. Psalm 6:6
Then I beat them fine as the dust before the wind; Psalm 18:42

- 5) **PERSONIFICATION:** Treating something non-human (often inanimate) as though it were a human.

Let the rivers clap their hands,
Let the mountains sing together for joy Psalm 98:8
And their tongue struts through the earth. Psalm 73:9

- 6) **ANTHROPOMORPHISM:** The portrayal of God in human terms.

And their expanse is declaring the work of His hands. Psalm 19:1
Smoke went up out of His nostrils, Psalm 18:8

- 7) **APOSTROPHE:** A direct address to a person or thing as though the person or thing were present and capable of listening.

Lift up your heads, O gates, Psalm 24:7
Depart from me, all you who do iniquity, Psalm 6:8

- 8) **SYMBOL:** A concrete image that points to or embodies other meanings. Examples include "light" used to represent God, goodness, truth, or blessing (such as in Ps 27:1) and "throne" to represent power and authority (such as in Ps 89:4 and 14).

What Does it Mean?

INTERPRET

1. Create a basic outline of this psalm. (Hint: look for two main sections.)
2. List at least 5 figures of speech in the psalm and explain what each figure is describing. (See p. 39)
3. How do the heavens tell of God's glory (cf. Rom. 1:18-23)? To whom are these things revealed (Acts 14:15-17)?
4. What is 19:3-4 saying? Rewrite this verse in your own words clarifying your understanding of the meaning.
5. What is being described in 19:5-6? Why do you think the author uses this figure?
6. What is the relationship between verses 1-6 and 7-11?

7. In 19:7-9, the author identifies 6 attributes of God’s Word and their corresponding benefits. Complete the table below with those attributes, benefits and their significance.

Attributes	Benefits	Significance

8. From 19:10-13, what are the two primary functions of God’s Word in our lives?

9. What is the significance of 19:14?

How Does it Work?

APPLY

2 TIMOTHY 2:15

“Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth.”

REFLECT ON YOUR LIFE:

Reflect on your current personal experience with God’s world and His Word. How would you like to see improvement in your appreciation of these great gifts?

RELATIONAL APPLICATION

Refer to Appendix pp. 104 -105

Fill in the graph below by answering these questions:

- What is the most significant truth or principle you learned in this lesson?
- How does this truth impact the four relational spheres of your life?

WORLD
GOD

.....

MAIN TRUTH:

.....

MINISTRY / WORK
FAMILY / FRIENDS

My Notes...

LESSON 5

The Lord, My Shepherd

P S A L M 23

P R A Y

Begin this time in prayer, confessing any sins you know of, thanking the Lord for the gift of His Word, and asking for His Spirit to illuminate your study.

B A C K G R O U N D

Known as the “The Pearl of the Psalms,” the Twenty-Third Psalm is the simplest and sweetest song ever sung. David wrote this psalm, an individual expression of confidence in God. The original setting is believed to be the forest of Hereth as King Saul and his army sought to kill David (1 Samuel 22:5). Against the background of a pasture and a banquet hall, David meditates on the Lord’s many provisions and concludes that His persistent loyal love will draw him into communion in the house of the Lord.

R E A D

Read through the psalm two or three times this week.

R E F L E C T

Spend a few moments considering the characteristics of sheep. What are they like? What do they need?

What Do I See?

OBSERVE

Refer to Appendix pp. 100 -101

PSALM 23

Memory verse is underlined (Psalms 23:1-3)

¹The LORD is my shepherd,

I shall not want.

²He makes me lie down in green pastures;

He leads me beside quiet waters.

³He restores my soul;

He guides me in the paths of righteousness

For His name's sake.

⁴Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,

I fear no evil, for You are with me;

Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.

⁵You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies;

You have anointed my head with oil;

My cup overflows.

⁶Surely goodness and lovingkindness will follow me all the days of my life,

And I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

OBSERVATIONS

v1

v2

v3

v4

v5

v6

What Does it Mean?

INTERPRET

Refer to Appendix pp. 102 -103

Ever notice that the same key words keep showing up throughout the Bible? Words such as *faith, sin, righteousness, forgiveness, grace, glory, holy, compassion, lovingkindness and praise* occur time after time. Understanding God's written revelation to us hinges on understanding these key words. Word study is the art and science of unlocking the full range of meaning of terms like these. There are several tools that can be used to do this but the key to perform a successful word study is to see how the word is USED throughout the Bible. Remember this maxim when it comes to word studies: the meaning of a word is determined by how it is used. Find a word to study, look it up every time it appears and discover its range of meaning by seeing how various authors use the word. Once fully studied, words tell beautiful stories! (*A helpful word study tool can be found at www.biblestudytools.net*).

1. In this psalm, God is described as a shepherd. To better understand the historical role of shepherds, please read John 10:11-18 and the article entitled "An Overview of the Shepherd in Hebrew Culture" in the Appendix.

2. What needs of the sheep are met by the shepherd in 23:1-3?

3. According to verse 3, why does God act as our Shepherd? What does this tell us about His character?

4. How does the imagery in verses 4-5 add to the spectrum of God's care for us?

5. What pronoun for God did David use in 23:1-3? What pronoun for God does he now use in 23:4? What is the significance?

6. Does the setting change in 23:5? To what? Why? What is the significance of the imagery in v5?

7. How does David conclude this psalm in verse 6? What aspects of God's character does this author highlight? What does "lovingkindness" (or mercy) mean?

How Does it Work?

APPLY

2 PETER 1:10

“Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble.”

REFLECT ON YOUR LIFE:

How has God cared for you in the past as His sheep? Can you think of a time when you were in the “valley of the shadow of death”? How did you respond? What difference would it have made if you had known and believed that God is your Shepherd?

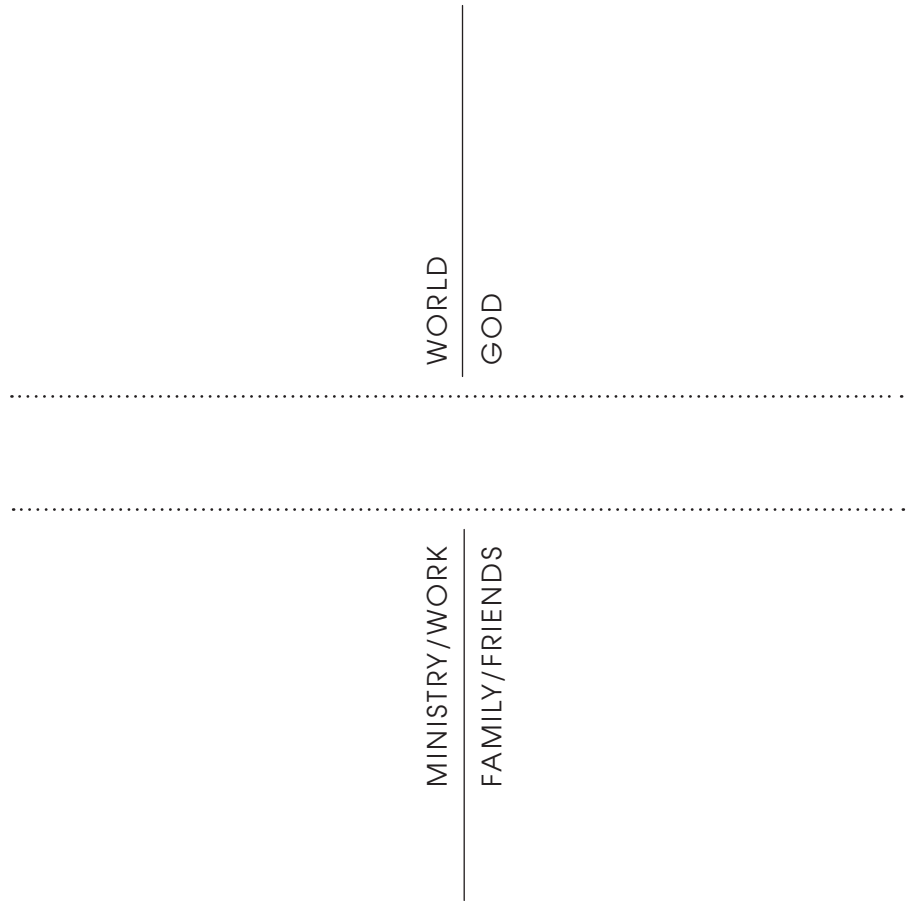
RELATIONAL APPLICATION

Refer to Appendix pp. 104 -105

Fill in the graph below by answering these questions:

- What is the most significant truth or principle you learned in this lesson?
- How does this truth impact the four relational spheres of your life?

MAIN TRUTH:



My Notes...

LESSON 6

Thanksgiving

P S A L M 3 0

P R A Y

Begin this time in prayer, confessing any sins you know of, thanking the Lord for the gift of His Word, and asking for His Spirit to illuminate your study.

B A C K G R O U N D

Psalm 30 was written by David most likely upon the occasion of his securing the construction site for Solomon's temple (1 Chronicles 22), following the great deliverance from the pestilence described in 1 Chronicles 21:14-27. The song follows the structure of an individual thanksgiving declarative praise psalm.

R E A D

Read through the psalm two or three times this week.

R E F L E C T

Think back to a time when God delivered you from or helped you through a difficult trial. Did you respond in praise? Why or why not?

What Do I See?

OBSERVE

Refer to Appendix pp. 100 -101

PSALM 30

Memory verse is underlined (Psalms 30:4-5)

¹I will extol You, O LORD, for You have lifted me up,

And have not let my enemies rejoice over me.

²O LORD my God, I cried to You for help, and You healed me.

³O LORD, You have brought up my soul from Sheol;

You have kept me alive, that I would not go down to the pit.

⁴Sing praise to the LORD, you His godly ones,

And give thanks to His holy name.

⁵For His anger is but for a moment, His favor is for a lifetime;

Weeping may last for the night,

But a shout of joy comes in the morning.

⁶Now as for me, I said in my prosperity, “I will never be moved.”

⁷O LORD, by Your favor You have made my mountain to stand strong;

You hid Your face, I was dismayed.

⁸To You, O LORD, I called,

And to the Lord I made supplication:

⁹“What profit is there in my blood, if I go down to the pit?

Will the dust praise You? Will it declare Your faithfulness?

¹⁰“Hear, O LORD, and be gracious to me;

O LORD, be my helper.”

¹¹You have turned for me my mourning into dancing;

You have loosed my sackcloth and girded me with gladness,

¹²That my soul may sing praise to You and not be silent.

O LORD my God, I will give thanks to You forever.

OBSERVATIONS

vv1-5

vv6-9

vv10-12

What Does it Mean?

INTERPRET

Refer to Appendix pp. 102 -103

It is often said that the three most important words in real estate are “location, location, location.” In the interpretation of biblical literature the three most important terms are “context, context, context.” Train your eye to look for important clues in and around the text you are studying. Try to follow the psalmist’s flow of thought throughout the passage. Keep in mind the type of psalm you are dealing with and review the key elements found in that type of psalm. Psalm 30, for example, has a key contextual clue found in the superscription: “A Psalm; a Song at the Dedication of the House. A Psalm of David.” God supplies the context for us, namely, “the dedication of the house” (temple). A little cross-referencing and you will find yourself in 1 Chronicles 22, the most likely contextual setting for the original use of this particular psalm. Read 1 Chronicles 21 as well for greater contextual insight.

1. A declarative praise psalm such as Psalm 30 has a particular structure as follows:

Superscription	<i>v.1 in Hebrew Bible = heading above v.1 in English Bible</i>
Proclamation of Intent to Praise	
Report of Deliverance (introductory summary)	
Call to Praise and Descriptive Praise	
Rehearsal Prayer for Deliverance	
Report of Deliverance	
Vow of Praise	

After each sub-section above, list the verse(s) from Psalm 30 that fulfill the purpose of each sub-section.

2. Note the verbs “sing” and “give thanks” in verse 4 and do a word study from other Psalms on these two words. Refer back to page 103 for details on word studies.

3. Verse 5 contains several examples of contrasts which the author uses to highlight his point. Refer back to page 9 for details on the use of contrasts in Hebrew poetry. List as many contrasts as you can find in verse 5. What is the author's main point in concentrating these contrasting themes in just one verse?

4. What specific sin did David confess in verse 6? What has David now realized in verse 7?

5. Restate David's petition in 30:8-9 in your own words. What's the point he is trying to make?

6. What's the purpose(s) of the final stanza (30:10-12) of this psalm?

How Does it Work?

APPLY

COLOSSIANS 3:16

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

REFLECT ON YOUR LIFE:

Look back at your completed chart from question #1. In your “praise life”, which of these components do you tend to ignore? Over emphasize?

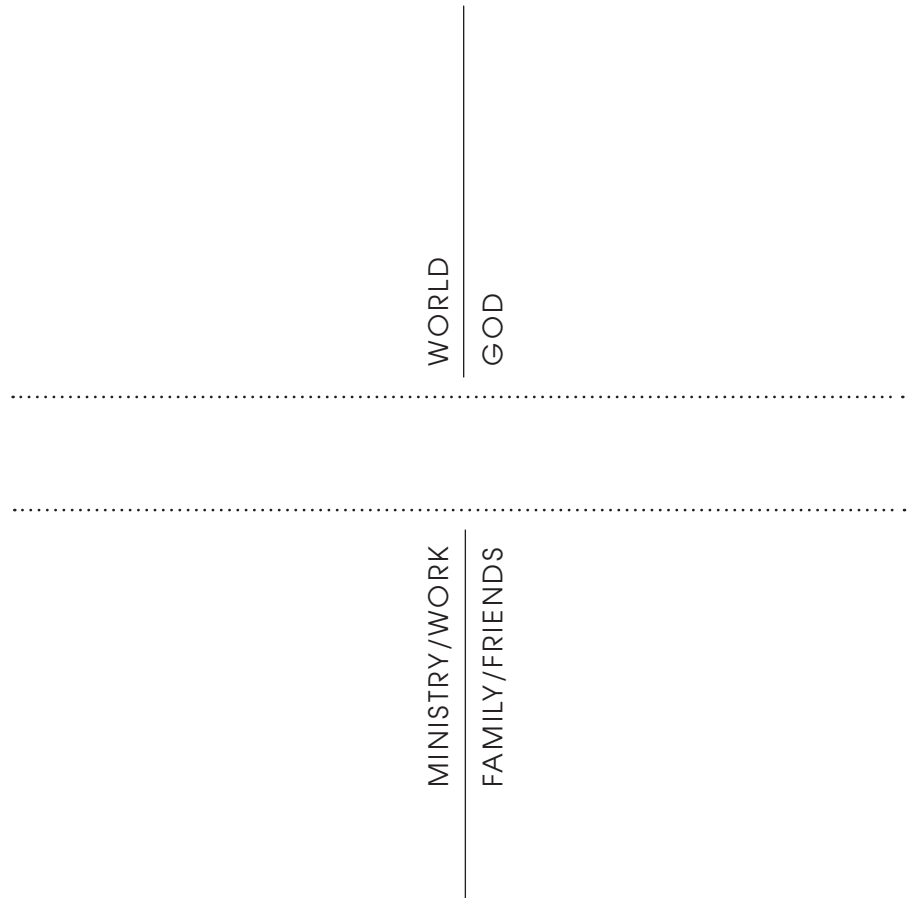
RELATIONAL APPLICATION

Refer to Appendix pp. 104 -105

Fill in the graph below by answering these questions:

- What is the most significant truth or principle you learned in this lesson?
- How does this truth impact the four relational spheres of your life?

MAIN TRUTH:



My Notes...

LESSON 7

Confession & Cleansing

P S A L M 5 1

P R A Y

Begin this time in prayer, confessing any sins you know of, thanking the Lord for the gift of His Word, and asking for His Spirit to illuminate your study.

B A C K G R O U N D

Psalm 51 was written by David as a result of the prophet Nathan confronting him about his relationship with Bathsheba (2 Samuel 11-12). The psalm is a prayer of confession given to David's choir director for musical arrangement.

R E A D

Read through the psalm two or three times this week.

R E F L E C T

Is there any sin in your life right now that you need to confess to the Lord? Is there any sin you have confessed that you need to trust has been forgiven?

What Do I See?

OBSERVE

Refer to *Appendix pp. 100-101*

PSALM 51

Memory verse is underlined (Psalms 51:17)

¹Be gracious to me, O God, according to Your lovingkindness;
According to the greatness of Your compassion blot out my transgressions.

²Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity
And cleanse me from my sin.

³For I know my transgressions,
And my sin is ever before me.

⁴Against You, You only, I have sinned
And done what is evil in Your sight,
So that You are justified when You speak
And blameless when You judge.

⁵Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity,
And in sin my mother conceived me.

⁶Behold, You desire truth in the innermost being,
And in the hidden part You will make me know wisdom.

⁷Purify me with hyssop, and I shall be clean;
Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.

⁸Make me to hear joy and gladness,
Let the bones which You have broken rejoice.

⁹Hide Your face from my sins
And blot out all my iniquities.

¹⁰Create in me a clean heart, O God,
And renew a steadfast spirit within me.

¹¹Do not cast me away from Your presence
And do not take Your Holy Spirit from me.

¹²Restore to me the joy of Your salvation
And sustain me with a willing spirit.

¹³Then I will teach transgressors Your ways,
And sinners will be converted to You.

¹⁴Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, the God of my salvation;
my tongue will joyfully sing of Your righteousness.

¹⁵O Lord, open my lips,

That my mouth may declare Your praise.

¹⁶For You do not delight in sacrifice, otherwise I would give it;

You are not pleased with burnt offering.

¹⁷The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit;

A broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise.

¹⁸By Your favor do good to Zion;

Build the walls of Jerusalem.

¹⁹Then You will delight in righteous sacrifices,

In burnt offering and whole burnt offering;

Then young bulls will be offered on Your altar.

OBSERVATIONS

vv 1-2

vv 3-6

vv 7-12

vv 13-19

What Does it Mean?

INTERPRET

Refer to Appendix pp. 102 -103

The Bible assumes that you know the Bible. That little maxim will serve well all those that heed it. Said another way: it is crucial to know and understand the interrelationships of the stories found within the Bible. Therefore, the background of a certain biblical text can shed great interpretive light on the passage under scrutiny. There is no better example of this than that of Psalm 51. The key to understanding David's confession in this psalm is to understand the many events surrounding his sin with Bathsheba recorded in 2 Samuel 11 and 12. **Spend some time in these two powerful chapters before you begin your study of Psalm 51.**

1. What does David seem to be doing in verses 1-2? In verses 3-6?

2. In verses 1-2, David appeals to two attributes of God. What does each of these words (the attributes) mean? Use the cross-references below from other Psalms to help determine the meaning of the two attributes.

Lovingkindness: Psalm 69:16, 89:2-3; 106:45

Compassion: Psalm 69:16; 103:13-14; 106:46

3. Explain David's point in v4. How can he say this after committing adultery and then arranging Uriah's death?

4. In your own words state what David means in verses 5-6. What do these two verses reveal about the nature of people and the nature of God?

5. What verbs does David employ to describe his request in verses 7-12? Attempt to group these verbs into different categories.

6. What would it have meant for God to cast David from His presence or take the Holy Spirit from David (v11)? Read Numbers 11:17; Deuteronomy 34:9; Judges 14:5-6; 1 Samuel 16:14-23 to see the temporary nature of the Holy Spirit's presence with people in the Old Testament.

7. Summarize the final requests and promises in David's appeal to God in verse 13-19.

How Does it Work?

APPLY

PSALM 119:11

“Your word I have treasured in my heart, That I may not sin against You.”

REFLECT ON YOUR LIFE:

Do you have a trusted community of believers who can intervene for you during times when you are struggling with sin and forgiveness? If not, what are some steps you can take to cultivate such a community?

RELATIONAL APPLICATION

Refer to Appendix pp. 104 -105

Fill in the graph below by answering these questions:

- What is the most significant truth or principle you learned in this lesson?
- How does this truth impact the four relational spheres of your life?

MAIN TRUTH:

	WORLD	
	GOD	
	MINISTRY/WORK	
	FAMILY/FRIENDS	

My Notes...

LESSON 8

Destiny

P S A L M 73

P R A Y

Begin this time in prayer, confessing any sins you know of, thanking the Lord for the gift of His Word, and asking for His Spirit to illuminate your study.

B A C K G R O U N D

In Psalm 73 we are introduced to a new psalmist: Asaph. Bible dictionaries can be a powerful aid as they can quickly summarize what the Bible says about any particular topic or person. Note the following excerpt from the Tyndale Bible Dictionary on Asaph:

Asaph is Berechiah's son, an important tabernacle musician during King David's reign (1 Chr. 6:31–32, 39). Along with Heman, the head singer, and Ethan, Asaph was appointed to sound bronze cymbals during the ceremony when the ark was brought to the new tabernacle (1 Chr. 15:1–19). David appointed Asaph to serve “by giving constant praise and thanks to the Lord God of Israel” (1 Chr. 16:4–5) and to lead Israel in a special psalm of praise (1 Chr. 16:7–36). Along with his relatives he ministered daily before the ark (1 Chr. 16:37; 25:6, 9;). He was also described as David's private prophet (1 Chr. 25:1–2). Asaph's name appears in the superscriptions of Psalms 50 and 73–83 and in the guild he established, “the sons of Asaph” (1 Chr. 25:1; 2 Chr. 35:15; Ezra 2:41; Neh. 7:44; 11:22).

R E A D

Read through the psalm two or three times this week.

R E F L E C T

Do you ever find yourself struggling with envy as you compare your life with others?
How do you measure success in this life?

What Do I See?

OBSERVE

Refer to Appendix pp. 100 -101

PSALM 73

Memory verse is underlined (Psalms 73:28)

¹Surely God is good to Israel,
To those who are pure in heart!
²But as for me, my feet came close to stumbling,
My steps had almost slipped.
³For I was envious of the arrogant
As I saw the prosperity of the wicked.
⁴For there are no pains in their death,
And their body is fat.
⁵They are not in trouble as other men,
Nor are they plagued like mankind.
⁶Therefore pride is their necklace;
The garment of violence covers them.
⁷Their eye bulges from fatness;
The imaginations of their heart run riot.
⁸They mock and wickedly speak of oppression;
They speak from on high.
⁹They have set their mouth against the heavens,
And their tongue parades through the earth.
¹⁰Therefore his people return to this place,
And waters of abundance are drunk by them.
¹¹They say, "How does God know?
And is there knowledge with the Most High?"
¹²Behold, these are the wicked;
And always at ease, they have increased in wealth.
¹³Surely in vain I have kept my heart pure
And washed my hands in innocence;
¹⁴For I have been stricken all day long
And chastened every morning.
¹⁵If I had said, "I will speak thus,"
Behold, I would have betrayed the generation of Your children.
¹⁶When I pondered to understand this,
It was troublesome in my sight
¹⁷Until I came into the sanctuary of God;
Then I perceived their end.
¹⁸Surely You set them in slippery places;
You cast them down to destruction.
¹⁹How they are destroyed in a moment!
They are utterly swept away by sudden terrors!
²⁰Like a dream when one awakes,
O Lord, when aroused, You will despise their form.
²¹When my heart was embittered
And I was pierced within,

²²Then I was senseless and ignorant;
I was like a beast before You.
²³Nevertheless I am continually with You;
You have taken hold of my right hand.
²⁴With Your counsel You will guide me,
And afterward receive me to glory.
²⁵Whom have I in heaven but You?
And besides You, I desire nothing on earth.
²⁶My flesh and my heart may fail,
But God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.
²⁷For, behold, those who are far from You will perish;
You have destroyed all those who are unfaithful to You.
²⁸But as for me, the nearness of God is my good;
I have made the Lord GOD my refuge,
That I may tell of all Your works.

OBSERVATIONS

vv 1-9

vv 10-14

vv 15-20

vv 21-24

vv 25-28

What Does it Mean?

INTERPRET

Refer to Appendix pp. 102 -103

1. According to vv 1-2 what did Asaph recognize about God? What did he recognize about himself?

2. Asaph identifies his primary struggle as being envious (vs. 3) of the prosperity of the wicked. According to Asaph, what seem to be the pleasures of the wicked in verses 4-9? What do these pleasures have in common?

3. Review the background of Asaph at the beginning of this lesson and state in your own words the struggle this leader is describing in verses 13-16.

4. What information does God reveal to Asaph that changes his perspective on the wicked (73: 17-20)? Why does Asaph's envy evaporate?

5. Meditate on verses 21-24 and list the key insights learned by Asaph.

6. What kind of question is used in 73:25a? What's the purpose of the question? In verses 25-28 Asaph reaches the final resolution to the struggle he first cited in verse 3. What aspects of God's character does Asaph recognize in verses 25-28 that changes his perspective and solidifies his faith?

How Does it Work?

APPLY

PHILLIPIANS 4:9

“The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.”

REFLECT ON YOUR LIFE:

1. What has this psalm taught you about God’s goodness and sufficiency?

2. Are there any specific areas of your life that need this perspective?

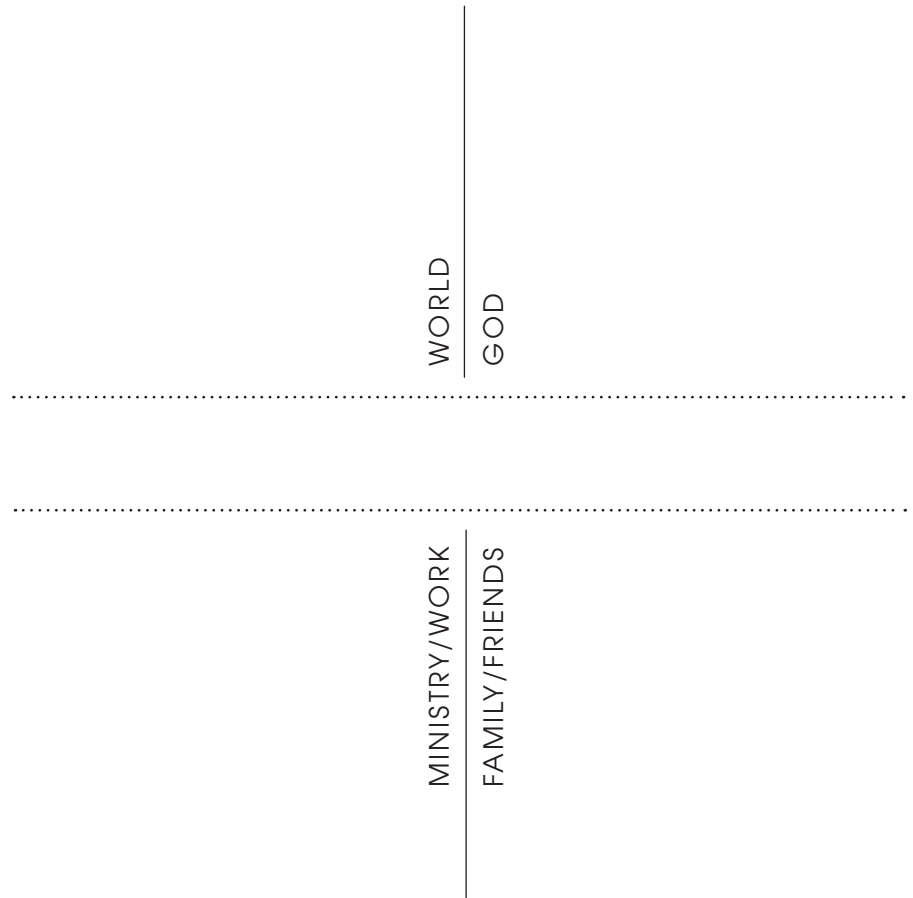
RELATIONAL APPLICATION

Refer to Appendix pp. 105 -104

Fill in the graph below by answering these questions:

- What is the most significant truth or principle you learned in this lesson?
- How does this truth impact the four relational spheres of your life?

MAIN TRUTH:



My Notes...

LESSON 9

Hymn of Praise

P S A L M 1 1 3

P R A Y

Begin this time in prayer, confessing any sins you know of, thanking the Lord for the gift of His Word, and asking for His Spirit to illuminate your study.

B A C K G R O U N D

Psalms 113-118 form the Hallel, the Hymns of Praise, which were to be sung at the Festivals of Passover, Pentecost, & Tabernacles as well as the Festival of the Dedication and New Moons. When Jews celebrate Passover in their homes, Psalms 113 and 114 would be sung before the meal, and Psalms 115-118 after it. Psalm 118 was probably the hymn sung by Jesus and His disciples in the upper room at their Passover supper (Matt. 26:30; Mark 14:26).

Psalm 113, a descriptive praise psalm, is the first of the Hallel Psalms and forms an interesting connection with Psalm 112, which deals with the subject of wealth, while Psalm 113 focuses upon poverty. Many scholars believe that the reference to “the barren woman” (113:9) is a reference to Hannah’s Song in 1 Samuel 2:1-10.

R E A D

Read through the psalm two or three times this week.

R E F L E C T

How often do you thank God for answering prayer or blessing you? Spend a few minutes writing out 5 things you can praise God for right now.

What Do I See?

OBSERVE

Refer to Appendix pp. 100-101

PSALM 113

Memory verse is underlined (Psalms 113:3-4)

¹Praise the LORD! Praise, O servants of the LORD,

Praise the name of the LORD.

²Blessed be the name of the LORD

From this time forth and forever.

³From the rising of the sun to its setting

The name of the LORD is to be praised.

⁴The LORD is high above all nations;

His glory is above the heavens.

⁵Who is like the LORD our God,

Who is enthroned on high,

⁶Who humbles Himself to behold

The things that are in heaven and in the earth?

⁷He raises the poor from the dust

And lifts the needy from the ash heap,

⁸To make them sit with princes,

With the princes of His people.

⁹He makes the barren woman abide in the house

As a joyful mother of children.

Praise the LORD!

OBSERVATIONS

v1

v2

v3

v4

v5

v6

v7

v8

v9

What Does it Mean?

INTERPRET

Refer to Appendix pp. 102 -103

Additional resources for background:

“The New Bible Dictionary” edited by Wood and Marshall (*the best, if you must choose*)

“The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament” by Craig Keener

“The New Manners and Customs of Bible Times” by Ralph Gower

“Harper’s Bible Dictionary” edited by Paul Achtemeier

1. What are two major sections in this psalm? Give support from the psalm for your outline.

2. What is the focus of the praise in verses 1-3? (Hint: look for repeated phrases). What is the significance of this focus?

3. What reasons does the psalmist give us for praising God in Psalm 113? List the reasons followed by a verse reference for each.

4. In vv 6-9 the psalmist praises God for His grace in action. Can you think of any biblical examples when God performed gracious actions like those described here?

How Does it Work?

APPLY

2 TIMOTHY 3:16-17

“All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.”

REFLECT ON YOUR LIFE:

How has this psalm expanded your view of praise?

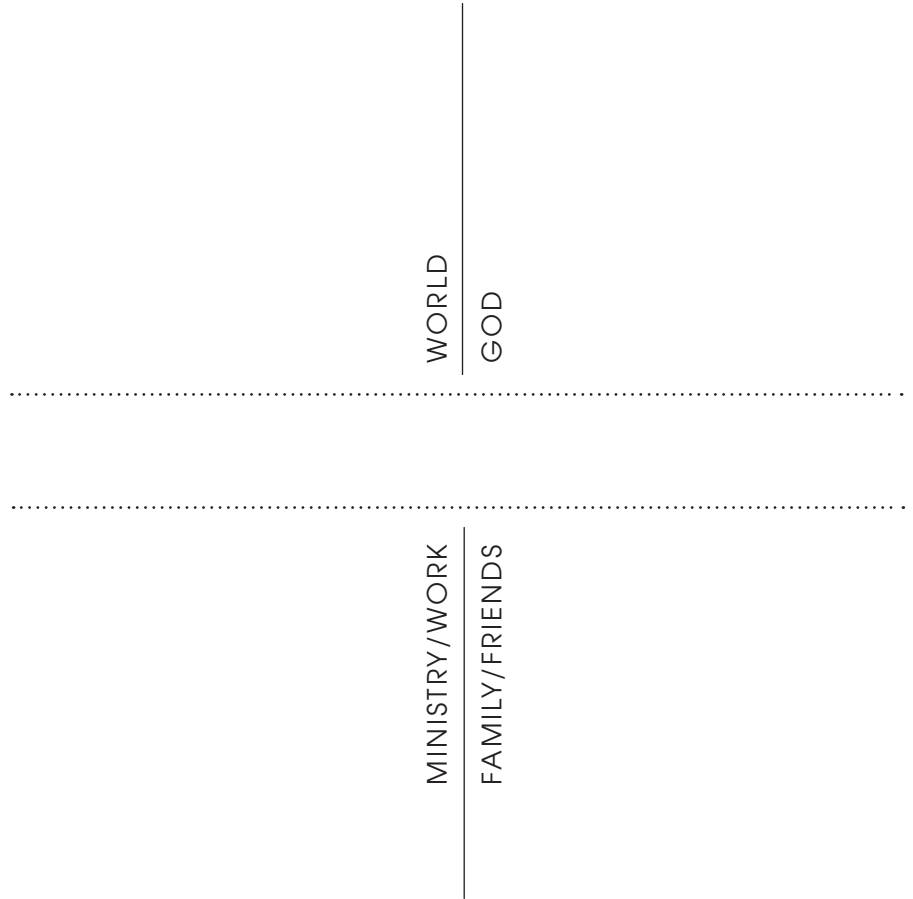
RELATIONAL APPLICATION

Refer to Appendix pp. 104 -105

Fill in the graph below by answering these questions:

- What is the most significant truth or principle you learned in this lesson?
- How does this truth impact the four relational spheres of your life?

MAIN TRUTH:



My Notes...

LESSON 10

Fearfully, Wonderfully Made

P S A L M 1 3 9

P R A Y

Begin this time in prayer, confessing any sins you know of, thanking the Lord for the gift of His Word, and asking for His Spirit to illuminate your study.

B A C K G R O U N D

Psalm 139 is a Davidic meditation turned over to his orchestral director for musical accompaniment. Perhaps David's flight from Saul (1 Samuel 19:10, 12, 18) inspired this psalm as seen in David's questions (seen in synonymous parallelism) in 139:7 – "Where can I go from Thy Spirit? Or where can I flee from Thy presence?"

R E A D

Read through the psalm two or three times this week.

R E F L E C T

How does it make you feel to know that God is intimately acquainted with every part of your life?

What Do I See?

OBSERVE

Refer to Appendix pp. 100-101

PSALM 139

Memory verse is underlined (Psalms 139:14)

¹O LORD, You have searched me and known me.

²You know when I sit down and when I rise up;
You understand my thought from afar.

³You scrutinize my path and my lying down,
And are intimately acquainted with all my ways.

⁴Even before there is a word on my tongue,
Behold, O LORD, You know it all.

⁵You have enclosed me behind and before,
And laid Your hand upon me.

⁶Such knowledge is too wonderful for me;
It is too high, I cannot attain to it.

⁷Where can I go from Your Spirit?
Or where can I flee from Your presence?

⁸If I ascend to heaven, You are there;
If I make my bed in Sheol, behold, You are there.

⁹If I take the wings of the dawn,
If I dwell in the remotest part of the sea,

¹⁰Even there Your hand will lead me,
And Your right hand will lay hold of me.

¹¹If I say, "Surely the darkness will overwhelm me,
And the light around me will be night,"

¹²Even the darkness is not dark to You,
And the night is as bright as the day.

Darkness and light are alike to You.

¹³For You formed my inward parts;
You wove me in my mother's womb.

¹⁴I will give thanks to You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made;
Wonderful are Your works,

And my soul knows it very well.

¹⁵My frame was not hidden from You,
When I was made in secret,
And skillfully wrought in the depths of the earth;

¹⁶Your eyes have seen my unformed substance;
And in Your book were all written
The days that were ordained for me,

When as yet there was not one of them.

¹⁷How precious also are Your thoughts to me, O God!

How vast is the sum of them!

¹⁸If I should count them, they would outnumber the sand.

When I awake, I am still with You.

¹⁹O that You would slay the wicked, O God;

Depart from me, therefore, men of bloodshed.

²⁰For they speak against You wickedly,

And Your enemies take Your name in vain.

²¹Do I not hate those who hate You, O LORD?

And do I not loathe those who rise up against You?

²²I hate them with the utmost hatred;

They have become my enemies.

²³Search me, O God, and know my heart;

Try me and know my anxious thoughts;

²⁴And see if there be any hurtful way in me,

And lead me in the everlasting way.

OBSERVATIONS

vv 1-6

vv 7-12

vv 13-18

vv 19-24

What Does it Mean?

INTERPRET

Refer to Appendix pp. 102 -103

The structure of Psalm 139 is one of the keys to proper interpretation of this wisdom psalm. This psalm consists of:

- 4 main sections
- Each section contains 6 verses
- The pattern of each section is...
 - » Summary statement of the theme
 - » Development of the theme
 - » Conclusion

1. List the major theme of each section of Psalm 139 (verses 1-6; 7-12; 13-18; 19-24)

2. What is the extent of God's scrutiny of the psalmist as described in verses 1-6. What categories of normal human activity are cited in this section?

3. What conclusion does the author reach in the 1st major section (139:1-6)?

4. In the 2nd major section (139:7-12), what is the significance of the repeated phrase “If I”?

5. Describe the extent of God’s creative genius as seen in 139:7-12. What is the significance of the author’s conclusion in this section?

6. In light of the loyalty expressed by the author in verses 19-22, what is the significance of verses 23-24 to this final section? To the entire psalm?

7. Putting it all together:

1). How do sections 1 and 2 relate to sections 3 and 4?

2). How do 139:23-24 relate to 139:1-22?

How Does it Work?

APPLY

JOHN 1:13

“But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come.”

REFLECT ON YOUR LIFE:

As you ask God to search your heart, which of particular themes found in this psalm need special attention/scrutiny in your own life?

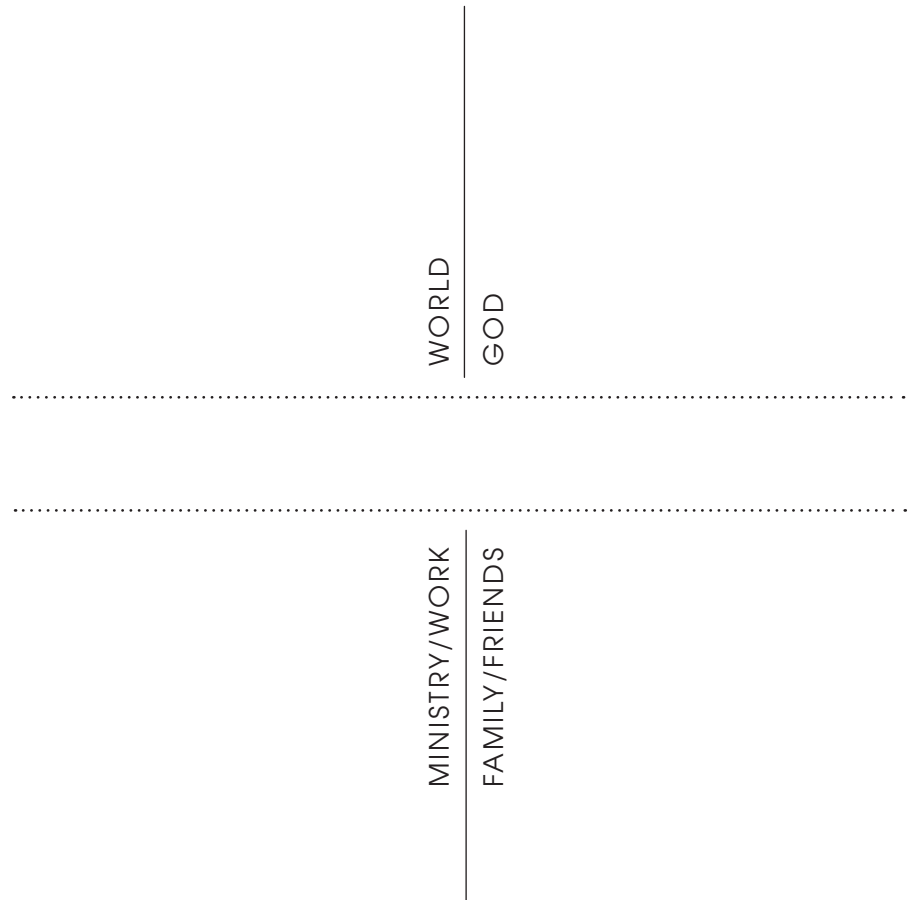
RELATIONAL APPLICATION

Refer to Appendix pp. 104 -105

Fill in the graph below by answering these questions:

- What is the most significant truth or principle you learned in this lesson?
- How does this truth impact the four relational spheres of your life?

MAIN TRUTH:



My Notes...

LESSON 11

Halleluyah

P S A L M 1 5 0

P R A Y

Begin this time in prayer, confessing any sins you know of, thanking the Lord for the gift of His Word, and asking for His Spirit to illuminate your study.

B A C K G R O U N D

Many hold that David wrote Psalm 150 as he experienced an uninhibited exuberance in worship on the occasion of the bringing up of the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem (2 Samuel 6; 1 Chronicles 15). Notice the linkage between 150:4 and 149:3. Psalm 150 serves as the psalter's universal doxological finale. Whereas Psalm 149 is addressed to Israel, Psalm 150 is addressed to everything with breath!

R E A D

Read through the psalm two or three times this week.

R E F L E C T

“Praise the Lord” can become a phrase thoughtlessly spoken. What does it really mean? Are you a true praiser of the Lord?

What Do I See?

OBSERVE

Refer to *Appendix pp. 100 - 101*

PSALM 150

Memory verse is underlined (Psalms 150:1-2)

¹Praise the LORD!

Praise God in His sanctuary;

Praise Him in His mighty expanse.

²Praise Him for His mighty deeds;

Praise Him according to His excellent greatness.

³Praise Him with trumpet sound;

Praise Him with harp and lyre.

⁴Praise Him with timbrel and dancing;

Praise Him with stringed instruments and pipe.

⁵Praise Him with loud cymbals;

Praise Him with resounding cymbals.

⁶Let everything that has breath praise the LORD.

Praise the LORD!

OBSERVATIONS

v1

v2

v3

v4

v5

v6

What Does it Mean?

INTERPRET

Refer to Appendix pp. 102 -103

True biblical praise is the deep acknowledgment and appreciation of superiority and/or greatness. Praise involves the citation of the REASON(s) why praise is being given. In contexts where the word “praise” (Hebrew = halal, from which the compound word “Halleluyah” is formed) is found, train your eye to look for terms like “because” or “for” to note the reasons given for the praise. Even in the finale of the 150 psalms, “His mighty deeds” and “His excellent greatness” (150:2) comprise the reasons cited for the praise of the Lord. Halleluyah.

1. Sometimes biblical words are so common they can lose their “punch” if we are not careful to unlock their true meaning. An excellent example of this is seen in the word “halleluyah.” This term usually is spelled “hallelujah” but let’s look at it a little closer before we decide which rendering best reflects the original Hebrew behind the term. Actually, the term is a compound word, consisting of three components:

- a. Halal – a common word in Hebrew most often translated “to praise”
- b. U – the symbol for a plural command (“all of you praise!”)
- c. Yah – shortened form of the name of God (YHWH or Yahweh). In English texts, often the “Y” in “Yah” is changed to a “J” or simply dropped (as in Mic-ah, Isai-ah, etc.). However, the Hebrew text clearly shows that the **object of praise** in this construction is “Yah”.

Thus the phrase we often utter without giving it too much thought is actually a command for all of us to praise Yah (or Yahweh)! Write down some of your thoughts and questions about this compound term, “Halleluyah.”

2. How many occurrences of the word “praise” are found in this psalm?

3. Where is God to be praised according to verse 1? What is the significance of this?

4. What are the two specific reasons for the praise cited in v2? What is the significance of this?

5. What is the significance of the various kinds of musical instruments cited in verse 3?

6. Why do you think that Psalm 150 is the final one in the psalter? What purpose is this psalm serving in light of what the rest of the psalms has taught us about God and man?

How Does it Work?

APPLY

ROMANS 15:4

“For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.”

REFLECT ON YOUR LIFE:

How's your praise life? What are the kinds of things/situation for which you can easily praise God? What kinds of things/situations do you find difficult for which to praise God?

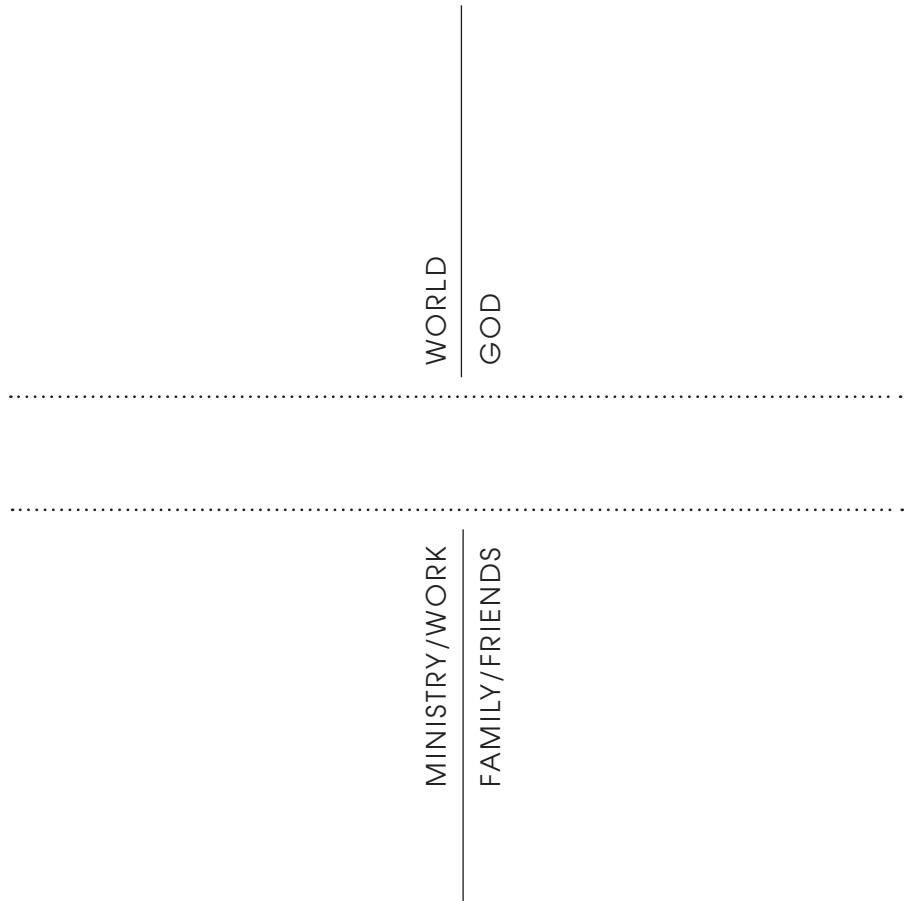
RELATIONAL APPLICATION

Refer to Appendix pp. 104 -105

Fill in the graph below by answering these questions:

- What is the most significant truth or principle you learned in this lesson?
- How does this truth impact the four relational spheres of your life?

MAIN TRUTH:



My Notes...

APPENDIX

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What Do I See?

OBSERVE

Every time we study the Bible, the first thing to ask is, “What do I see?” This is the crucial skill of observation, which lays the groundwork for the rest of our study. Here are four tasks involved in observation which should be performed in the order below:

Observation Task 1: Mark up the passage by visually identifying the following specific elements:

- **Underline** all verbs. A verb is a word or group of words used to indicate either that an action is taking place (“we will reign with Him”) or that a state or condition exists (“we are faithless”). Verbs are often the most significant indicators of the author’s flow of thought.
- **Circle** key words or phrases. These are words or short phrases that are important theologically (like “word of truth” in 2:15) or thematically (they set the theme or main idea for the passage, such as “approved” and “worldly and empty chatter” in 2:15,16).
- **Highlight** repeated words or phrases. Also, include words and phrases that are closely related even if not exact duplicates (such as “suffer hardship” and “endure suffering”). You’ll also want to highlight things that are repeated from previous passages (such as “son” in 4:23 and 4:30)
- **Box** connecting words. These important words indicate the logical connection between words, phrases, and clauses. Here are eight types of common connecting words to look for:
 1. **Comparison** either points out similarities between two or more related ideas or simply joins like ideas. Comparison words include: and, like, as, just as, also, so also, even so (e.g., “like a Gentiles” in 2:14).
 2. **Contrast** points out dissimilarities between ideas. Contrast words include: but, rather, yet, however (e.g., “No longer I... but Christ” in 2:20).
 3. **Purpose** indicates the intended goal of an idea or action, whether or not it was realized. Purpose words include: that, so that, in order that (e.g., “Christ redeemed us... in order that in Christ Jesus...” in 3:13-14).
 4. **Result** is similar to “purpose,” but indicates the actual consequence, whether or not it was intended. Result words include: that, so that, as a result, with the result that (e.g., “The rest of the Jews joined him in hypocrisy, with the result that even Barnabas was carried away by their hypocrisy.” in 2:13).
 5. **Cause** expresses the basis or cause of an action. Cause words include: because, since, and sometimes for. (e.g., “Why the Law then? It was added because of transgressions” in 3:19)
 6. **Explanation** is what follows further explains the previous idea, giving reasons why it is true, why it occurred, or simply adding additional information. Look for the key word “for.” (e.g., “For prior to the coming of certain men from James” in 2:12).
 7. **Inference** provides a logical consequence, conclusion, or summary to the previous discussion. Inference words include: therefore, for this reason. (e.g., “Therefore, be sure that it is those who are of faith who are sons of Abraham.” in 3:7)
 8. **Condition** presents a condition that must occur before a certain action or conclusion can occur. The statement may or may not reflect reality (i.e., it could be hypothetical). Key word is “if.” (e.g., “For if the inheritance is based on law, it is no longer based on a promise...” in 3:18)

Observation Task 2: List 2-3 primary themes you see in the passage each week

A primary theme is the big idea, the central truth, or command that the passage focuses on, such as “humility” in 2:1-11. After reading the passage, write your themes as single words or short phrases. Identifying these themes at the beginning of your study will help you develop a good overall grasp of the passage.

Observation Task 3: Write two or more observations per verse

Our observations might identify people, places, or events, point out repeated words or key terms, record important connections between words and sentences, or even point out something missing that we expected to see.

Observation Task 4: Record your own interpretive questions

Here are a few examples:

WHO IS	WHAT IS THE	WHY DID PAUL	HOW
....Paul talking about?accomplishing the action?benefiting from the action?meaning of this word?significance of this phrase?implication of this statement?relationship between these phrases?choose this word?include this phrase, statement or command?not say _____?was this action accomplished?will this situation occur?



What Does it Mean?

INTERPRET

Our observation of a passage should stir interesting yet challenging questions, leading us to the second stage of our Bible study: interpretation. Fortunately, we do not have to run to a commentary or study Bible for answers (though these are helpful tools to check our conclusions). Use the following six methods, as needed, to tackle a variety of questions. Also, make sure to familiarize yourself with the three “Principles of Interpretation” that appear in the Appendix at the end of this study.

Interpretation Method 1: Use the context.

Look for important clues in the sentences and paragraphs that come before and after the verse in question. Try to follow the author’s flow of thought through the whole chapter. This may take you to the previous lesson, so have it handy as a review. You may need to read ahead in Philippians for clues.

Interpretation Method 2: Study cross-references (XRefs).

XRefs are simply other passages in any book of the Bible that are somehow related to the verses you are studying. They often prove incredibly helpful as you seek to understand your passage. A few such XRefs can be found in the margins of most English Bibles, but more can be found by visiting the online reference www.biblestudytools.com. Simply type in “Philippians 1” in the box to the left of the “Search” button and then click “Search.” All of Philippians 1 will appear on the screen. Be sure that “New American Standard” is your selected Bible in the drop down box, and then click the box next to “Cross References” so that numbers appear throughout the passage. Clicking any of these will move your screen to the bottom of the page where you will find a series of XRefs for specific verses within the passage. This is a great tool for answering tough questions!

Interpretation Method 3: Look up key words.

While looking up a key word in English is helpful, doing so in Greek is far better and is surprisingly easy, thanks to the internet. Simply log onto www.biblestudytools.com, and as an example, type in “Philippians 2” in the box to the left of the “Search” button and then click “Search.” All of Philippians 2 will appear on the screen. Be sure that “New American Standard” is your selected Bible in the drop down box, and then click the box next to “Strong Numbers” so that most of the words will be highlighted in blue. Clicking on any of these will bring up a new screen that will tell you the Greek word used here, its possible definitions, and the total number of times it is used in each book of the New Testament (NT). Click on any of the other NT books (under the title “NAS Verse Count”), and get a list of every verse in that book that uses this Greek word. What used to take hours now takes seconds!

Interpretation Method 4: Look up background information

You can find helpful insights by looking up confusing names or words in a Bible dictionary or by looking up the particular verses you are studying in a background commentary. One of the best dictionaries is The New Bible Dictionary by Wood & Marshall. The IVP Bible Background Commentary by Craig Keener is another excellent example of a verse-by-verse background commentary.

Interpretation Method 5: Tackle tough questions step-by-step

When trying to answer the most challenging questions, follow this four-step process:

1. List all the options. Always start by brainstorming every possible answer to your question.
2. List pros and cons for each option. See all the evidence you can find that either argues for or against a particular option. This evidence comes from your study of key words, the grammar of the sentence, the context of surrounding verses and the book as a whole, cross references to other books, and comparison with your overall understanding of Christian theology.
3. Choose the most likely option. Look at your evidence for each option. Typically, evidence from the immediate context is most important, followed closely by evidence from the book as a whole. Evidence from other books of the Bible, or from Christian theology as a whole, does not carry quite as much weight unless the solution contradicts a clear passage elsewhere or a major tenant of Christian doctrine. In that case, since Scripture never lies and God cannot contradict Himself, you must eliminate that option.
4. Decide on your certainty level. Once you have chosen the best solution, step back for a second and humbly gauge how certain you are of its accuracy (90% = I am very sure this is correct ... 60% = This solution is just a bit more likely than the others!). Finally, talk with others and check commentaries or reference books to see what solutions they have chosen and why.

Interpretation Method 6: Compare multiple translations

This packet uses the New American Standard (NASB) translation. You can often find helpful interpretive clues by comparing this translation with other translations. The New King James Version (NKJV), like the NASB, is a fairly word-for-word translation of the Greek text. The New International Version (NIV) and the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) are excellent phrase-to-phrase translations of the Greek and thus often easier to read. Another excellent phrase-to-phrase Bible, which includes extensive translation notes, is the New English Translation (NET) available online for free at net.bible.org. You can find and compare numerous translations of any Bible passage at www.biblestudytools.com.



How Does it Work?

APPLY

Our Bible Study is not over until we practically apply what we have learned to our everyday lives. And, we know that because we are relational by nature, our learning and growth can and should impact other people in our lives.

The Relational Application section in this study provides an opportunity to **connect the personal application** of God's word **with the relational spheres** we live in.

Application Task 1:

1. Prayerfully determine the **main biblical truth or principle** that God revealed to you during your study. A principle is a fact stated or implied in a passage that is relevant to our lives and not specific to a particular person or time. A few questions to ask are:

- Is there a promise for me to claim?
- Is there a truth for me to believe?
- Is there a command for me to obey?

Application Task 2:

2. Determine how this truth impacts the **four main relational areas** in your life.

God

- How does this truth stretch me in my relationship with God?
- Is there something I need to confess and repent from?
- Is there some characteristics of God I am reminded to praise or worship Him for?

Family/Friends

- How does this truth impact my relationship with my family or friends?
- How could I share this truth with these loved ones?
- Is there something or someone specific I can pray for?

Ministry/Work

- Is there an opportunity to integrate this truth in my work environment?
- Is there a next step of ministry I can take based on this truth?
- How does this truth impact my attitude, decision-making and conversations in work or ministry?

World

- How does this truth change my view of the people in the world around me?
- Is there a way to care for, serve or reach out to the world around me based on this truth?

(Example on next page)

Here is an example from Psalm 1:

- Pray that Bible translation ministries will make significant progress in unreached areas of the world.

WORLD
|
GOD

- Praise God each morning this week for the gift of His Word.
- Meditate on each lesson's memory verse during each week of this study.

MAIN TRUTH: A healthy, righteous life is rooted in God's word

- Look for ways to win-
somerely speak truth into
the conversation I have
at work.

MINISTRY/WORK
|
FAMILY/FRIENDS

- Ask my spouse what
God is showing him/her
through the Word this
week.

My Notes...

Write any helpful Bible study method tips or techniques you learn throughout this study. Also, remember that advanced skills are included in the Appendix section.

1) PRINCIPLES OF INTERPRETATION

Principle #1 - Your goal is to discern the author's intended meaning to the original

audience. Unfortunately, most people begin their Bible study by asking, "What does this passage mean to me?" While there may be multiple possible applications to my life, there is only one meaning, the author's intended meaning; and we must first seek this out. This involves three important steps.

1. Always **start your study with prayer**, asking the same God who composed Scripture through these ancient authors to give you insight to understand His intended meaning.
2. Be very careful to avoid reading your 21st century circumstances and theological issues into the text as they will skew your understanding.
3. Work diligently to see the text from the point of view of the original readers. To do this: [a] dig into the historical and cultural background using Bible dictionaries and commentaries, and [b] spend a few moments thinking about the original audience's religious understanding by asking - What books of the Bible did they have access to? What did they know about God? About Jesus? About salvation? etc.

Principle #2 - Assume a "normal" use of language. The Bible was given to us because God desired to communicate with us, not to hide Himself from us. Therefore, we should not be looking for "hidden" meanings as we study. Instead, we should use the "normal" techniques we would use to understand any piece of literature:

1. **Study the grammar.** Yes, most of us hated grammar in junior high, but it really is helpful for understanding Scripture! So pay attention to nouns, verbs, adjectives, and prepositions. Think through any figures of speech. Observe how phrases and clauses are connected into sentences and how sentences are linked together into paragraphs.
2. **Remember that chapters came later.** When Paul wrote Corinthians or Luke wrote the book of Acts, they wrote single, unified stories without verse or chapter divisions. These books were meant to be read just like you would read a letter or a novel. So always keep the overall story in mind as you study each passage.

Principle #3 - Let Scripture interpret Scripture. Since God is unchangingly truthful and always consistent (John 17:17; Hebrews 3:6; James 1:17), we can, and should, expect the same of His Word. This has two practical applications:

1. **Check your conclusions.** Always compare your conclusions with the teachings of Scripture as a whole. If you find that your interpretation of a passage contradicts the clear teaching of Scripture elsewhere, you probably need to revise your conclusions.
2. **Allow clear passages to illuminate ambiguous passages.** Whenever you encounter a passage that is confusing or open to multiple possible interpretations, use clearer passages of Scripture to guide you to the correct interpretation.

One last caution - remember that God revealed Scripture progressively, not all at once. Therefore, we should not be surprised by differences between how people related to and understood God at different times in the history of Scripture. For example, while Abraham needed only believe that God was faithful in order to be justified (Genesis 15:6), in the NT era, we must believe in Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection to be saved (1 Corinthians 15:1-7).

2) BONUS SKILL: CREATING LISTS

This skill involves identifying a key word, subject, person, place, or event in the passage and then listing every fact given about that word. For example, if you made a list on “God” from 2 Timothy 1, it might look like this:

God...

1. made Paul an apostle by His will (v1)
2. gives grace, mercy and peace (v2)
3. is the Father (v2)
4. is thanked and served (v3)
5. gives gifts (v6)
6. doesn't give spirit of timidity (v7)
7. gives spirit of power, love, and sound mind (v7)
8. gives power for suffering (v9)
9. saved us (v9)
10. called us (v9)

As you read this list, what jumps out at you? Perhaps you see that “God gives” is mentioned five times in this list. What a gracious and loving God we serve! You have discovered one of the characteristics of God: His generous grace toward men. By creating these lists, you will begin to see patterns of truth that you will want to study further. For example, this list on God may lead you to do a word study on “give” or find all the other references in Paul’s epistles to God’s giving nature. Furthermore, this list can now be used for meditation, to praise and worship God, to encourage others and to proclaim the character of God to the lost.

One word of caution about lists, however. Just because you are able to create a list centered on a key word, such as “God” in 2 Timothy 1, does not mean that Paul’s main point in the passage is to talk about that key word. Paul’s emphasis in 2 Timothy 1, in fact, is not to discuss attributes about God; it is to encourage Timothy to press on in the ministry of the gospel. So make sure that before you create any lists you complete the initial processes of observation: list themes, mark up the text, and record your most significant observations. However, after these initial tasks, creating lists is a great way to deepen your study of a passage!

3) DISCIPLESHIP RESOURCES

One of the predominant themes throughout the book of Titus is the relationship between sound doctrine and sound living. It is important that we know the truth of the Bible and that our lives would more and more begin to reflect Jesus Christ. Spiritual growth clearly involves study of God's word, but it also involves transformation of our character and life. This process is often called "discipleship" and refers to an intentional relationship between a mature believer and a younger believer where the former trains the latter towards the goal of spiritual maturity. Paul's discipleship of Timothy (and Titus as well) is one the greatest examples we have of this process in all of Scripture. And like Paul, we too can make a lasting impact for God's kingdom by spiritually reproducing ourselves in the lives of others.

Going through this Bible study was one of the best steps you could take to prepare you to disciple someone else because now you know how to explain and defend key biblical truths like the gospel, spiritual leadership, grace, and salvation. Just as important, you have now learned and practiced the basic method of Bible study - survey, observe, interpret, apply, synthesize. These are key steps towards spiritual maturity that you can now pass on to others!

But where can you go from here to learn more about spiritual multiplication? Here are a few helpful resources:

- ***The Master Plan of Evangelism* by Robert Coleman**
This is a highly motivational analysis of Jesus' own principles of evangelism and discipleship.
- ***The Lost Art of Disciple Making* by Leroy Eims**
This very practical resource will give you a detailed structure to follow and great content to cover as you begin to disciple a new believer.
- ***A Survey of Bible Doctrine* by Charles Ryrie**
This is not a book about discipleship. It is, instead, an easy to read, relatively short systematic theology primer that you can walk a new believer through to ground them in the faith.
- ***Essentials of the Faith* by Grace Bible Church, CS TX**
This small group Bible study packet walks a new believer through the fundamental truths and practices of the Christian faith in ten self-paced lessons.

4) AN OVERVIEW OF THE SHEPHERD IN HEBREW CULTURE

Throughout Israel's history tending flocks has been a critical aspect of Jewish life. The country's dry grounds made it necessary for the flocks of sheep and cattle to move about during the rainless summer and to stay for months at a time in isolated areas far from the dwelling of the owner. This made shepherding a necessary part of agricultural life in Israel. It was an independent and responsible job. Shepherds often had small flocks of 20-30 sheep but flocks of 100 were not unheard of (cf. Luke 15:4). Not only was it profitable but the threat of wild beasts and robbers often made it dangerous. Sometimes the owner himself (Lk. 15:6; Jn. 10:12) or his sons did the job, but usually it was done by hired shepherds who often did not care for the sheep in the same way the owner would (Jn. 10:12 ff.).¹ The hired shepherds were often lower-class citizens or poorer relatives who generally were looked down upon by the majority of Jewish society. The profession was proscribed as being "unclean" by rabbinic law and was thus avoided by all except the lowest in the Jewish community or foreigners. In fact, Abba Gurjan of Zadjan once said, "Let not a man bring up his son to be a donkey-driver, nor a camel-driver, nor a barber, nor a sailor, nor a shepherd, nor a peddler; for their occupations are those of thieves."² Thus it is very interesting that the Old Testament describes Yahweh as a shepherd (Psalm 23; 79:13-80:1; 95:7; Isa 40:11; Jer 31:10) as well as the leaders of Israel as shepherds (Num 27:16-17; 1 Kgs 22:17; Jer 23:1-4; Ezekiel 34). In the New Testament, Jesus is spoken of as the good shepherd (Jn 10:14); chief shepherd (1 Pet 5:4); great shepherd (Heb 13:20); the one shepherd (Jn 10:16). This analysis will review the function of the shepherd within the Hebrew economy, the daily responsibilities of the shepherd, and how that imagery reflects the portrayal of spiritual shepherds in the Old and New Testament.

The importance of shepherding vis a vis the economy and worship among the Hebrews cannot be overstated. Sheep are first mentioned in Genesis 4:2-4 when the first example of a sacrificial offering is given. Generally, both the adult animal (Ex. 20:24) and the lamb were sacrificed. In 1 Samuel 25:18, Abigail provided David's men with sheep as food. The wool of the sheep was used as clothing (Leviticus 13:47). "Rams skins dyed red" were used as a covering for the tabernacle (Exodus 25:5). Sheep and lambs were sometimes paid as tribute (2 Kings 3:4). Shepherds in Palestine and the East generally go before their flocks, which they induce to follow by calling to them, comp. (John 10:4; Psalms 77:20; 80:1) though they also drive them. (Gen. 33:13).

According to the International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, the main job of the shepherd is to see that the sheep find plenty to eat and drink. The flocks are not fed in pens or folds, but, summer and winter, must depend upon foraging for their sustenance (Ps. 23:2). Goats hunt out the best feeding-grounds, but sheep are more helpless and have to be led to their food (cf. Numbers 27:16,17); nor do they possess the instinct of many other animals for finding their way home (compare Ezek 34:6-8). Flocks should be watered at least once a day. Where there are springs or

¹ *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. Vols. 5-9 edited by Gerhard Friedrich. Vol. 10 compiled by Ronald Pitkin. Edited by Kittel, Gerhard, Geoffrey William Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich, Vol. 6, Page 485. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964-c1976.

² Alfred Edersheim, *Sketches of Jewish Social Life*, (Garland, Texas: Electronic edition by Galaxie Software) 2000.

streams this is an easy matter. Frequently the nearest water is hours away. One needs to travel in the dry places in Syria or Palestine, and then enter the watered valleys like those in Edom where the flocks are constantly being led for water. This lends additional light to the Psalmist's words, "He leadeth me beside still waters." Sometimes water can be obtained by digging shallow wells (Gen 26:18-22,25,32). The shepherd frequently carries with him a pail from which the sheep can drink when the water is not accessible to them. On the mountaintops the melting snows supply the needed water. In other districts it is drawn from deep wells (Gen 29:2; Jn 4:6). The usual time for watering is at noon, at which time the flocks are led to the watering places (Gen 29:2,3). After drinking, the animals lie down or huddle together in the shade of a rock while the shepherd sleeps. At the first sound of his call, which is usually a peculiar guttural sound, hard to imitate, the flock follow off to new feeding-grounds. Even should two shepherds call their flocks at the same time and the sheep be intermingled, they never mistake their own master's voice (Jn 10:3-5).

The Bible describes a daily routine that the shepherd usually followed. In the morning he led forth his flock from the fold (John 10:4), which he did by going before them and calling to them. When he arrived at the pasturage he watched the flock with the assistance of dogs (Job 30:1). If any sheep happened to stray, he had to search for it until he found it (Ezekiel 34:12; Luke 15:4). This is because the shepherd was responsible and hence liable for the disappearance of any animal and would have to make repayment or restitution if it were hurt or he could not find it again. This would not be an easy thing to do for a relatively poor herdsman. He supplied them with water, either at a running stream or at troughs attached to wells (Genesis 29:7; 30:38; Exodus 2:16; Psalm 23:2). At evening he brought them back to the fold, and reckoned them to see that none were missing, by passing them "under the rod" as they entered the door of the enclosure (Leviticus 27:32; Ezekiel 20:37). The sheep and goats would feed together during the day, but the shepherd would separate them at night (Mt. 25:32) because goats are more susceptible to cold and have to be kept warmer than sheep, which like fresh air at night. The shepherd checked each sheep, as it passed, by a motion of the hand (Jeremiah 33:13). At the end of this process, he watched the entrance of the fold throughout the night, acting as porter (John 10:3). The shepherd's office thus required great watchfulness, particularly by night (Luke 2:8). It also required tenderness toward the young and feeble (Isaiah 40:11) particularly in driving them to and from the pasturage (Gen. 33:13). In large establishments there are various grades of shepherds, the highest being styled "rulers," (Gen. 47:6) or "chief shepherds," (1 Pet. 5:4). In a royal household the title of abbir "mighty," was bestowed on the person who held the post. (1 Sam. 21:7).

As previously mentioned, the nature of the work and care of the shepherd led many biblical authors to describe God the Father, God the Son and leaders as shepherds. This was because of the type of care God gives to his otherwise helpless people and that the leaders are expected to give. Isa 40:11 is a picture drawn from pastoral life of Yahweh's care over His children. It says, "He will feed his flock like a shepherd, he will gather the lambs in his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and will gently lead those that have their young." A strong sympathy for helpless animals is a marked characteristic of the shepherds in Bible lands. The birth of offspring in a flock often occurs far off on the mountainside. The shepherd solicitously guards the mother during her helpless moments and picks up the lamb and carries it to the fold. For the few days, until it is able to walk, he may carry it in his arms or in the loose folds of his coat above his girdle. Psalm 23 describes God as a Shepherd who provides for His sheep (vv.1-3a), guides his sheep (v. 3b), and protects His sheep (v. 4). As a result His sheep are called to rejoice in His abundant provision (verse 5) and enjoy intimate fellowship with Him (v. 6).

Spiritual leaders are asked to give the same care over God's sheep. However the Old Testament often describes individuals or nations as "sheep without a shepherd" because they had forgotten Yahweh (Nu 27:17; 1 Ki 22:17; 2 Ch 18:16; Ezek 34:5,8; Zec 10:2; Mt 9:36; Mk 6:34). The shepherds are described as worthless (Zec 11:17) and warned that God will replace them (Ezek 34). Kittel makes an interesting observation about this fact, "In view of the fact that in, e.g., the threats of Jeremiah "shepherds" is also a common term for political and military leaders, it is surprising that there is no single instance in the OT of 'shepherd' ever being used in Israel as a title for the ruling king. The distinction from the courtly style of the ancient Orient is even more palpable if we add that in the time of impending disaster 'shepherd' still occurs as a title for the ruler, but only for the future Messianic son of David. Because the shepherds have refused and become unfaithful, Yahweh will visit them; He Himself will take over the office of shepherd and gather and feed the scattered flock; He will appoint better shepherds (Jer. 3:15; 23:4) and proclaim: 'I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, even my servant David; he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd. And I Yahweh will be their God, and my servant David prince among them; I, Yahweh, promise it,' Ez. 34:23 f. Israel and Judah will become one people (37:22) under one shepherd (37:24). With the title 'shepherd' Ez. seeks to guard against a one-sidedly political understanding of the figure of the future ruler, and also to leave the manner of the fulfillment of the promise to God."³

Thus Jesus is the only one who can adequately fulfill this role. Kittel writes of John 10, "The interpretative saying is repeated, and by means of the marks mentioned in vv. 3–5 and 11b–13 it is shown that the reference truly is to Jesus; he is the pastor bonus, as is proved both by the inward fellowship which unites Him to His own (vv. 14b–15a) and also by the laying down of His life...for the flock (v. 15b, 17f.). The address reaches its climax in v. 16. Jesus' office as Shepherd is not restricted to Israel; it is universal...when He brings the other sheep, the promise will be fulfilled...The conclusion (v. 17f.) looks on from the sacrifice of life...to the receiving of life."⁴

Consequently, 1 Peter 5:1-4 says, "Therefore, I exhort the elders among you, as your fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed, shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness; nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory." This indicates that like the Chief Shepherd, elders are to demonstrate the same care and consideration over the flocks they have been given. This care is demonstrated by selflessness, a good example, and a willingness to serve.

In conclusion, a biblical analysis of the shepherd reveals that it was an essential job for the economy and livelihood of Hebrew society. Even though many leaders did not respect shepherds, the Bible consistently portrays God the Father, God the Son and other Christian leaders as shepherds. This portrayal emphasizes the selfless nature of the shepherd who cares for His otherwise helpless sheep by feeding them, guiding them and protecting them. Shepherds who do not do this are not pleasing to God and in some cases replaced.

³ *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. Vols. 5-9 edited by Gerhard Friedrich. Vol. 10 compiled by Ronald Pitkin. Edited by Kittel, Gerhard, Geoffrey William Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich, Vol. 6, Page 485. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964-c1976.

⁴ *Ibid.*

God's people throughout history have loved the book of Psalms. There are a number of reasons for its popularity. First, it is a collection of songs that arise out of experiences with which we can all identify. It is very difficult to find any circumstance in life that does not find expression in some psalm or another. Some arose out of prosperity, others out of adversity. Some psalms deal with holiness, and others with sinfulness. Some are laments that bewail the worst of situations whereas others are triumphant hymns of joy and thanksgiving. Some look back to the past while others look forward to the future.

The psalms are great because their writers composed them out of their most profound experiences. Great poetry arises out of great living. "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks" (Matt. 12:34). They are also great because the writers brought these profound experiences into God's presence. They show how people behave when they are conscious of God, the only truly realistic way to live. Therefore the permanent value of the Psalms lies in their revelation of worship (*Thomas Constable Study Notes, The Psalms*).

