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DAILY DEVOTIONAL GUIDE

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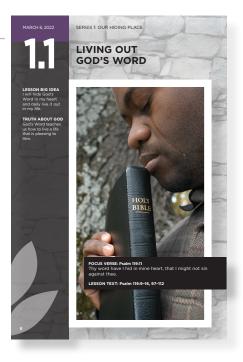
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^{*}PS indicates Pentecost Sunday.

GETTING STARTED

The first page of each week's material will help you to become familiar with the Lesson Big Idea, Truth about God, Focus Verse, and Lesson Text to be used in your Sunday school class or small group setting.



BIBLICAL OVERVIEW

Lesson Text: Psalm 119:9-16. 97-112

Palam 19, the longest of the palams, is one of several acrostics found in the Palater or the Book of Palams. (See also Palams 9-10, 25, 43, 71, 11, 112.) The form of the acrostic here is that the palam is shaped into verse with the saccount of the palams of the palams

By one piece of literature being attached to another, the pieces served to provide meaning to one another. The Hebrew word for this was *samula*, or of literature leaned against another or supported another. This structure is seen in three significant places in the Psalmer Psalms 1-2, Psalms 19-21, and Psalms 19-13.4. In each case, the first psalm in the group extols the Word of God, and the attached psalms extol the Messiah. This emphasis teaches that meditation on the Word leads to faith in the Messiah.

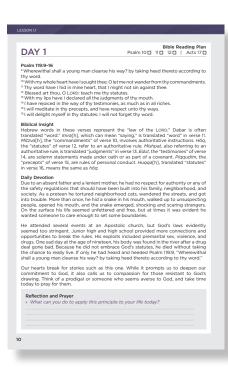
In Psalm 119.1, 3, the phrase "in the way" connects thematically with the first of the Torah psalms and the first psalm in the Psalter, (See Psalm 11.6, 1) The phrase "the law of the Lobo" is also found in Psalm 12, and it should not be taken as a reference only to the law of Moses. The essential idea of Torah is "instruction." In its context in the Book of Psalms, Torah refers to the Psalter itself unless the immediate context defines the word in connection with Sinal.

In Psalm 119:9-16, each verse begins with the second letter in the Hebrew alphabet, beth. In Psalm 119:97-104, each verse begins with the thirteenth letter, mem. Psalm 119:105-112 has the fourteenth letter, num, as the leading letter in each verse.

PSALM 119, THE LONGEST OF THE PSALMS, IS ONE OF SEVERAL ACROSTICS FOUND IN THE PSALTER OR THE BOOK OF PSALMS.

BIBLICAL OVERVIEW

The second page of each lesson will give you a "high level" Biblical Overview of the Lesson Text. The content will explore the text, its background, and any other pertinent information to help you better understand the setting, purpose, and message of the text.

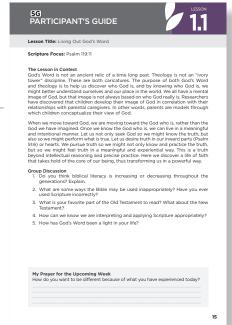


DAILY DEVOTION

The next five pages will guide you through your week of personal devotion and study. You are encouraged to complete the Bible Reading plan for each day and explore a portion of the text with the help of a section of Biblical Insight on that part of the text. Next is a Daily Devotion to read and a prompt to reflect and pray about the principles presented.

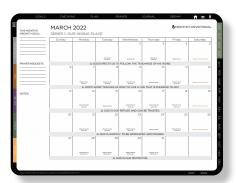
SMALL GROUP PARTICIPANT'S GUIDE

The eighth page of each lesson provides a Small Group (SG)
Participant's Guide that is designed to be used for those who meet in small groups. The SG Participant's Guide corresponds to the SG Teaching Outline forms in the Adult Lesson Guide.



DIGITAL PLANNER

Make plans, set goals, develop spiritual habits, and evaluate your daily, monthly, and yearly progress, all in the context of God's Word for Life. This annual digital planner helps adults organize their lives around God's Word, engage with specific portions of the God's Word for Life materials, and pursue the goals, dreams, and desires God has placed in their hearts.



PODCAST



The God's Word for Life Podcast presents portions of Scripture with fresh insight and urges adults to think deeply about how the Bible impacts their lives. Each weekly episode will encourage listeners to engage with God's Word through reflection and prayer, further develop their personal relationship with Jesus Christ, and live out God's Word in their lives.

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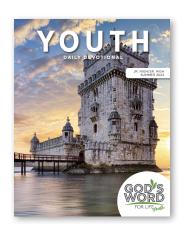


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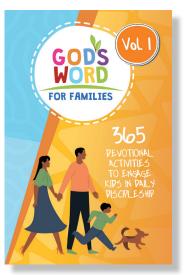
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YOUTH DAILY DEVOTIONAL

God's Word for Life equips every age level of the church to study Scripture daily. This resource for youth (ages 12-18) provides a daily Bible passage connected to the week's lesson and a corresponding devotion. Each day ends with a final challenge to apply the message of God's Word with both junior high and senior high options.



GOD'S WORD FOR FAMILIES



God's Word for Families is not your average devotional. With 365 ten-minute devotional activities designed around a variety of learning styles, each week's devotions will reinforce what your family is learning at church. This wholly Apostolic discipleship tool will help you engage your family members in God's Word every day of the week



SERIES 1: LOVING THE UNLOVED

This series, "Loving the Unloved," will show the great love Jesus has for all people, whether they are overlooked and deemed unimportant, seen as outcasts in society, or even hated and marginalized by others. Just as Jesus loved those whom others refused to love, we are called to show and share His love without discrimination. This series helps to highlight the command of Jesus to love your neighbor as yourself.



SERIES 2: GOD IS OUR REFUGE

This series, "God Is Our Refuge," will show how the Lord will be our refuge and bring strength and healing when we are hurting and overtaken with burdens. We will explore four different psalms in this series: Psalm 22, Psalm 34, Psalm 46, and Psalm 55. No matter what we may face in this life, we can be confident God will be near and will help us carry the burdens we have been tasked to bear.



SERIES 3: THE IMPORTANCE OF GOD'S WORD

This series, "The Importance of God's Word," will emphasize the necessity of hearing and obeying the Scriptures and will accentuate the promises and power that inherently accompany His written Word. From Jehoiakim's blatant disregard for God's Word to Josiah's humble submission to the Book of the Law, this series will show how important it is for individuals to heed God's Word and put it into practice in their lives.

BIBLE READING PLAN FOR THIS QUARTER

Week 40	Week 45	Week 49
Day 1 - Is 5-8; Galatians 3	Day 1 - Jer 33-37; Philemon	Day 1 - Daniel 7–10; I John 5
Day 2 - Is 9-11; Galatians 4	Day 2 - Jer 38-42; Hebrews 1-2	Day 2 - Dan 11–12; II John; III John
Day 3 - Is 12-14; Galatians 5	Day 3 - Jer 43-46; Hebrews 3-4	Day 3 - Hosea 1-4; Jude
Day 4 - Is 15-18; Galatians 6	Day 4 - Jer 47-50	Day 4 - Hosea 5–9; Rev 1
Day 5 - Is 19-22; Ephesians 1-2	Day 5 - Jer 51-52; Hebrews 5-6	Day 5 - Hosea 10–14; Rev 2
Week 41	Week 46	Week 50
Day 1 - Is 23-26; Ephesians 3-4	Day 1 - Lam 1-5; Hebrews 7	Day 1 - Joel 1-3; Rev 3-4
Day 2 - Is 27-30; Ephesians 5	Day 2 – Eze 1-4; Hebrews 8-9	Day 2 - Amos 1–4; Rev 5
Day 3 - Is 31-34; Ephesians 6	Day 3 - Eze 5-9; Hebrews 10	Day 3 - Amos 5–9; Rev 6
Day 4 - Is 35-37; Philippians 1-2	Day 4 - Eze 10-15; Hebrews 11	Day 4 - Obadiah; Rev 7–8
Day 5 - Is 38-40; Philippians 3-4	Day 5 - Eze 16-19; Hebrews 12	Day 5 - Jonah 1-4; Rev 9-10
Week 42	Week 47	Week 51
Day 1 - Is 41-44; Colossians 1-2	Day 1 - Ezekiel 20-23; Hebrews 13	Day 1 - Micah 1-5
Day 2 - Is 45-49; Colossians 3-4	Day 2 – Ezekiel 24-28; James 1-2	Day 2 - Micah 6-7; Rev 11-12
Day 3 - Is 50-52; 1 Thes 1-2	Day 3 - Ezekiel 29-31; James 3-5	Day 3 - Nahum 1-3; Rev 13-14
Day 4 - Is 53-58	Day 4 - Ezekiel 32-35; 1 Peter 1-2	Day 4 - Habakkuk 1–3; Zeph 1–3
Day 5 - Is 59-61; 1 Thes 3-4	Day 5 - Ezekiel 36-39; 1 Peter 3	Day 5 - Haggai 1-2; Rev 15-16
Week 43	Week 48	Week 52
Day 1 - Is 62-64; 1 Thes 5	Day 1 - Ezekiel 40-41; 1 Peter 4-5	Day 1 - Zechariah 1-4; Rev 17-18
Day 2 - Is 65-66; 2 Thes 1	Day 2 - Ezekiel 42-44; 2 Peter 1-2	Day 2 - Zechariah 5–8; Rev 19
Day 3 - Jer 1-4; 2 Thes 2-3	Day 3 - Ezekiel 45-48; 2 Peter 3	Day 3 - Zechariah 9–12; Rev 20
Day 4 - Jer 5-8; 1 Timothy 1-2	Day 4 – Daniel 1-3; 1 John 1-2	Day 4 - Zechariah 13–14; Rev 21
Day 5 - Jer 9-12; 1 Timothy 3	Day 5 - Daniel 4-6; 1 John 3-4	Day 5 - Malachi 1-4; Rev 22
Week 44		
Day 1 - Jer 13-16; 1 Timothy 4		
Day 2 - Jer 17-19; 1 Timothy 5-6		
Day 3 - Jer 20-24; 2 Timothy 1-2	This Bible Reading Plan, if fo	llowed, will walk you through
Day 4 - Jer 25-28; 2 Timothy 3-4		
Day 5 - Jer 29-32; Titus 1-3		

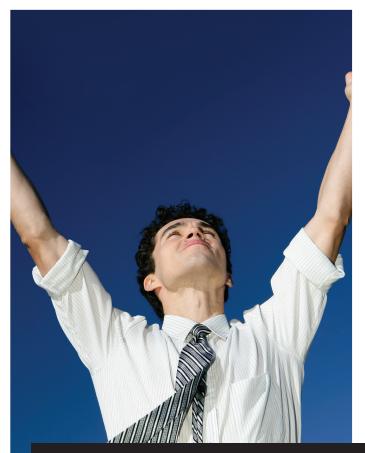
HANDWRITING ON THE HEART

LESSON BIG IDEA

I will allow the Holy Ghost to empower me to live the way God wants me to live.

TRUTH ABOUT GOD

God writes His law on our hearts through the Holy Spirit.



FOCUS VERSE: Jeremiah 31:33

But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.

LESSON TEXT: Jeremiah 31:31-34; Acts 2:1-18, 37-41



BIBLICAL OVERVIEW

Lesson Text: Jeremiah 31:31-34; Acts 2:1-18, 37-41

Jeremiah 30–33 has long been recognized as a unified unit in the Book of Jeremiah, containing a series of extended oracles of hope (chapters 30–31; 33) and a symbolic action report (chapter 32). In a book that is otherwise focused on the looming disaster of the destruction of Jerusalem along with the Temple and coming Exile, this section proclaims that Judah will one day return to the land, and her relationship with God will be restored and even transformed. Chapter 29 follows the report of Jeremiah's letter to the exiles where, much to his audience's consternation, Jeremiah commands them to "seek the peace" of their archnemesis Babylon. (See Jeremiah 29:7; Psalm 122:6.) Jeremiah also informs them that the Exile will last for seventy years. This most likely points to the time from the Temple's destruction (586 BC) to the completion of its rebuilding (516 BC).

Acts 2 is the account of the outpouring of the Spirit on Jesus' disciples on the Day of Pentecost. This outpouring fulfilled Jesus' last promise before His ascension that the disciples would receive power to be witnesses unto Him throughout the world. The reiteration of this promise and the account of the Ascension serve to link the ending of Luke to the beginning of Acts (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:8), demonstrating that the outpouring of the Spirit reported here is the pivotal event in Luke's two-part history of the life of Jesus Christ and the story of the early Church.

Three phenomena accompany this initial outpouring of the Spirit that are never repeated in the other accounts of Spirit-infilling in the Book of Acts: the sound as of a "rushing mighty wind" (Acts 2:2), the "cloven tongues like as of fire" that appeared above each individual's head (Acts 2:3), and the crowd's testimony that the Spirit-filled were speaking in foreign languages they had never learned but the crowd understood (Acts 2:7–8). Each of these echo foundational stories from the Pentateuch: the Creation, where the Spirit moved or "blew" across the waters (Genesis 1:2); the Sinai theophany (Exodus 19:17–20); and the story of many languages at the Tower of Babel (Genesis 11:1–9).

THIS SECTION OF JEREMIAH PROCLAIMS
THAT JUDAH WILL ONE DAY RETURN
TO THE LAND, AND HER RELATIONSHIP
WITH GOD WILL BE RESTORED AND EVEN
TRANSFORMED.

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Isaiah 5 □ 6 □ 7 □ 8 □ | Galatians 3 □

Jeremiah 31:31-34

- ³¹ Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah:
- ³² Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the Lord:
- ³³ But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.
- ³⁴ And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.

Biblical Insight

This verse holds the distinction of being the longest Old Testament passage quoted in the New Testament, serving as the crucial point in the argument of the letter to the Hebrews in 8:8-12 and 9:16-17 (*Apostolic Study Bible*). The promise is not that God would *renew* the old covenant but that He would establish a *new* covenant. The newness of this covenant is not in its content (as divine expectations for righteousness do not alter) but in its location—written "in their hearts" (See Jeremiah 31:33.) This is a promise of transformation not just reformation.

Daily Devotion

Nearly every bride has heard this saying during her season of engagement and wedding planning: something old, something new, something borrowed, something blue. This points to an age-old tradition where the bride has a sentimental article dating back to her past or the past of a family member. Many times, these will be precious mementos like a grandmother's handkerchief or a mother's veil. The saying originates from an Old English rhyme dating back to the nineteenth century. Something old refers to the ties from the past that brought the woman to where she now is, ready to embark on a new journey with her groom.

Here "something new" is introduced. On the wedding day, a new covenant is established. It takes a past to build a future. Although no one should stay stuck in their past, it is good to remember where they came from. The same can be said of the Church—the bride of Christ. We build upon the "something old," or the Old Testament, and enter into a "something new" covenant with our Bridegroom. The Old Testament is a crucial building block to the New Testament.

Reflection and Prayer » What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?	

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		Bibl	е	Reading Pl	an
Isaiah 9 □	10 🗆	11 🗆		Galatians 4	1 🗆

Acts 2:1-4

- ¹ And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.
- ² And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting.
- $^{\scriptscriptstyle 3}$ And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them.
- ⁴ And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

Biblical Insight

The Feast of Pentecost was a celebration of the giving of the Torah on Mount Sinai. As you may recall, the Sinai theophany was accompanied by thunder, lightning, earthquakes, and most astonishingly, by fire: "Mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire" (Exodus 19:18). On the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2, God again used "tongues (flames) of fire" to indicate the descent of God's presence into individual hearts. Rather than just tables of stone, God's Torah would now reside in people's hearts as Jeremiah prophesied!

Daily Devotion

It is impossible to be close to a fire and not feel something from it. Obviously, the closer you get, the more intense its power. When you are very close, you will inevitably feel the heat or smell the smoke. You will feel the fire's impact. On the Day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit sat upon each person gathered in the same area. It filled the room. Like smoke that fills an area, it is difficult to dodge without exiting the vicinity. Smoke and fire are all consuming. Fire does not have a path; it is often uncontrollable and wild. If you are in its path, you will feel it. The foretold and long-awaited outpouring of the Spirit of God had completely consumed them and overtaken them from the inside out. Also of note, wind carries fire. The rushing, mighty wind on the Day of Pentecost blew in a beautiful, cleansing, and uncontainable passion that set the world ablaze.

Reflection and Prayer	
What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?	

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Bible	Reading	Plan
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Isaiah 12 \square 13 \square 14 \square | Galatians 5 \square

Acts 2:5-13

- ⁵ And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven.
- ⁶ Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language.
- 7 And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galilaeans?
- ⁸ And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born?
- ⁹ Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judaea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia,
- ¹⁰ Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes,
- ¹¹ Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God.
- ¹² And they were all amazed, and were in doubt, saying one to another, What meaneth this?
- ¹³ Others mocking said, These men are full of new wine.

Biblical Insight

Pentecost was one of the three ancient Israelite festivals where all Jewish men were required to present themselves before the Lord. (See Exodus 23:14-17.) During the Diaspora, faithful Jews, like the crowd of witnesses here, would travel from around the world to gather at the Jerusalem Temple. This gathering of the scattered remnant of Israel was a harbinger (or foreshadowing) of the future ingathering of all the nations that Isaiah foresaw as the culmination of God's plan of salvation: "And it shall come to pass in the last days that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established...and all nations shall flow unto it" (Isaiah 2:2).

Daily Devotion

Many church people really seem to enjoy gathering. Whether it is coming together for a church service, a potluck, a birthday party, baby shower, or harvest festival, something about fellowship just cannot be replaced. Followers of Jesus were all gathered in the upper room when the Holy Ghost fell. When the body of Christ meets, there is strength, joy, and healing. Questions are answered, issues are resolved, and needs are addressed. During the infamous COVID-19 pandemic, that very togetherness was challenged. However, the people of God always find a way to join with each other in some way. During biblical times in the Diaspora period, Jewish men would gather from all around to present themselves at the Temple in Jerusalem. Much like the tradition that started years ago, and the devotedness of coming together still seen today in many church members, one day we will all gather for the most holy and eternal of fellowships. This gathering will be at the end of all our suffering and wandering. We will all be together when we gather around the throne of God.

Reflection and Pr	rayer do to apply this principle to your life today?	

Rible Peading Plan

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Isaiah 15 🗆	16 □	17 □	18 □	l Galatians 6 □

Acts 2:14-18

¹⁴ But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and said unto them, Ye men of Judaea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words:

¹⁵ For these are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day.

¹⁶ But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel;

¹⁷ And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams:

¹⁸ And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy:

Biblical Insight

When the other eleven apostles stood up with Peter, they indicated their agreement with his message and instructions to the crowd. Jesus' apostles were united in their understanding of the significance of this event and its implications for those who wish to become part of the Church of Jesus Christ. (See Acts 2:38.)

The prophet Joel foresaw the outpouring of the Spirit as part of an act of divine judgment at the end of time. (See Joel 3:13-15.) Apparently, the outpouring of the Spirit and the outpouring of judgment are two separate phases of a single event, one marking the beginning of the "last days" and the other marking their end.

Daily Devotion

If you have ever run a marathon, I have two questions: Why? Were you aware you did not have to? That may be funny, but running is tough and takes a lot of endurance. The end times should not strike fear into our hearts; it is a celebration of crossing the finish line. It is something to look forward to, even a "family reunion" of sorts. On that glorious, homegoing day, we will see Jesus face to face, along with those who have finished their race before us.

The outpouring that happened on the Day of Pentecost and throughout Scripture was only the beginning. It signified the starting point. Eventually, when the Lord chooses, those to whom the batons have been passed will step from streets of pavement to the street of gold. This is the blessed hope and future for those who run with patience and never give up. Heaven and eternity with the Savior are rewards in store for the faithful. We are living for a day and a home beyond anything our minds can fathom. The crowd is cheering, and the crown is waiting. Keep running. Home is just ahead!

Prayer				
do to appi	ly this prin	ciple to you	r life today?	
	-	•		do to apply this principle to your life today?

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Bible Reading Pla	aı	n
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Isaiah 19 \square 20 \square 21 \square 22 \square | Ephesians 1 \square 2 \square

Acts 2:37-41

³⁷Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?

³⁸ Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. ³⁹ For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.

⁴⁰ And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.

⁴¹Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.

Biblical Insight

The phrase "and with many other words did he testify and exhort" (Acts 2:40) indicates we are presented with only a summation of the main points of Peter's sermon on the Day of Pentecost. As we read the Book of Acts, we must remember there were no "recordings" of the earliest Apostolic preaching. However, Luke informs his reader Theophilus, that he has constructed his history from interviews with those who were eyewitnesses to the events, most likely including the apostle Peter himself!

Daily Devotion

A summary in Language Arts and Literature can be defined as a brief overview or synopsis of a work. It is not the full story, just enough to allow readers to understand the main ideas and often spark their curiosity of the full renderings. In many cases Bible events can be viewed the same. The biblical record is but a condensed version of God's work throughout the history of humanity.

Concerning the works Jesus preformed, it has been said, "Now there are also many other things that Jesus did. Were every one of them to be written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written" (John 21:25). An old chorus reminds the listeners that "the half has never yet been told." How true. We only know in part, but someday, we shall know the full glory. (See I Corinthians 13:9–12.)

Reflection and Prayer » What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?	

SG PARTICIPANT'S GUIDE



Lesson Title: Handwriting on the Heart

Scripture Focus: Jeremiah 31:33

The Lesson in Context

God's idea was to make a New Covenant with individual believers, which allows God to live inside believers and give them the ability—divinely inspired passion and wisdom—to live as the Bible instructs. He wants to make His people "more than conquerors" (Romans 8:37), for which we, as His people, should be extremely thankful. However, this power does not come automatically. We must take action by seeking the Lord with all our hearts and receiving all He has for us.

God chose the Day of Pentecost, following Jesus' ascension, as the chosen time to fulfill His promise to come and dwell within believers. It was a fulfillment of many prophecies, including the one from Jeremiah we recently referenced. The second chapter of Acts records this incredible spiritual breakthrough that altered the course of humanity and launched the church on its mission to take the gospel to the whole world. On the Day of Pentecost, Jesus fulfilled the promise to come to live in the hearts of believers.

Group Discussion

- 1. Do you see attending church or small group as an opportunity to celebrate God's provisions and laws? Why or why not?
- 2. What does it mean to have God's law written on our hearts? What changes when godly principles take root deep in our hearts?
- 3. What was the difference for you between learning about the baptism of the Holy Spirit and actually receiving the baptism of the Holy Spirit?
- 4. How does praying in tongues encourage and edify you?
- 5. How would you encourage someone who is seeking the Holy Spirit but has not yet received it by the initial evidence of speaking in tongues?

My Prayer for the Upcoming Week How do you want to be different because of what you have experienced today?

LOOKING FOR THE OVERLOOKED

LESSON BIG IDEA

I will bless and serve those others overlook.

TRUTH ABOUT GOD

God loves to bless those others overlook, especially children.



FOCUS VERSE: Mark 10:14

But when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God.

LESSON TEXT: Psalm 146:5-9; Isaiah 61:1-3; Mark 10:13-16



BIBLICAL OVERVIEW

Lesson Text: Psalm 146:5-9; Isaiah 61:1-3; Mark 10:13-16

Psalms 146-150 form a kind of *coda* (ending of a musical piece) to the Book of Psalms. Each of these psalms begins and ends with the command, "Praise ye the Lord," translated from Hallelu Yah. Yah is an abbreviation for the covenant name of God, Yahweh, or Jehovah. (See Psalm 68:4.) Known as the "Great Doxology," it forms a fitting crescendo to a book known as "Praises" (*Apostolic Study Bible*). These psalms worship God as the King of Creation (Psalm 146; 148), the King of Jerusalem (Psalm 147), the King of His chosen people Israel (Psalm 149), and the King of everyone and everything that has breath (Psalm 150). As King, God alone is the source of sustenance and protection for all His people, and He is responsible to see that justice is maintained throughout the whole earth.

Isaiah 60-62 contain Isaiah's final statements regarding God's intention to restore Jerusalem. These chapters lead into a stunning vision of the restoration of the whole earth, which will be realized at the end of time. Isaiah 60:1-5 opens as the glory of God shines from Jerusalem, drawing all nations to it. This hearkens to Isaiah's first vision of the nations gathering to Zion to serve the Lord and find peace under His righteous rule. (See Isaiah 2:3-4.)

Mark 8-10 is an important transitional section within the Book of Mark. The previous sections were largely concerned with Jesus' Galilean ministry, but Mark 8:31 marks the moment when Jesus commences His final journey to Jerusalem where He will be crucified. The section is marked by the recurrence of intertwining themes: Jesus' own predictions of His coming death (Mark 8:31-33; 9:30-32; 10:32-34) and a growing competition among the disciples to be the greatest (Mark 9:33-37, 10:35-45). By Jesus' teaching and ultimately by the example of His own death, He attempts to show His disciples that the true way to be great is to be the "servant of all."

BY JESUS' TEACHING AND ULTIMATELY BY THE EXAMPLE OF HIS OWN DEATH, HE ATTEMPTS TO SHOW HIS DISCIPLES THAT THE TRUE WAY TO BE GREAT IS TO BE THE "SERVANT OF ALL."

Bible	Reading	Plan
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Isaiah 23 \square 24 \square 25 \square 26 \square | Ephesians 3 \square 4 \square

Psalm 146:5-7a

- ⁵ Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the LORD his God:
- ⁶ Which made heaven, and earth, the sea, and all that therein is: which keepeth truth for ever:
- ⁷ Which executeth judgment for the oppressed: which giveth food to the hungry.

Biblical Insight

Psalm 146:5–9 form the heart of this psalm that opens the concluding "Great Doxology." It begins by pronouncing as happy, or blessed, the one who has the Lord for his help and his hope. (See also Psalm 1:1.) This contrasts those whose only help comes from earthly rulers. The psalmist then provides a brief description of God's attributes: He is omnipotent—the Lord made heaven, earth, the sea, and all that therein is. God is faithful—He keeps truth forever. God is righteous—He executes justice. And God is merciful—He gives food to the hungry. The sea is often depicted as a force of chaos in the ancient Near East, but here it is simply another part of God's good creation.

Daily Devotion

We all reach our destination by walking the same narrow path but often on different routes. Matthew 8:23–27 recalls the account of the disciples trembling in fear as they were caught dead center in the eye of a violent tempest at sea. Jesus was snoozing without a care in the world while the boat filled with water and waves crashed against them. The disciples were not happy. They woke Jesus up and questioned Him. They implored Him to make it stop. Little did they know He was growing their faith and teaching them to rely on Him. Sometimes Jesus calms the sea and leads us beside the still waters. Other times He teaches us to endure and realize He is still in control, and He teaches us that the storm serves a purpose. Maybe instead of taking us out of the valley, Jesus wants to take us through it. Many destinations can only be reached by walking through rough terrain, not by avoiding it. God is our help and our hope, and He offers a special joy that can only be experienced after the mourning.

Reflection a	and Prayer				
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Isaiah 27 □ 28 □ 29 □ 30 □ | Ephesians 5 □

Psalm 146:7b-9

- ⁷ The LORD looseth the prisoners:
- ⁸ The LORD openeth the eyes of the blind: the LORD raiseth them that are bowed down: the LORD loveth the righteous:
- ⁹ The LORD preserveth the strangers; he relieveth the fatherless and widow: but the way of the wicked he turneth upside down.

Biblical Insight

Following the list of divine attributes, the psalmist now provides a description of divine actions. Thus, divine power is matched by divine condescension (Broyles, *New International Biblical Commentary*). Notice how divine power is exercised on behalf of those without power: the blind, the bowed down, the strangers, fatherless, and widows. The rights of strangers (e.g., resident aliens), orphans, and widows are of particular concern to God. Interestingly, these three groups almost always appear together in Deuteronomy. (See Deuteronomy 10:18; 14:29; 24:19). The strangers, orphans, and widows represent the three most vulnerable groups in ancient Israel who lack someone to advocate for them. Therefore, God Himself advocates for them.

Daily Devotion

Sometimes people feel weak and inadequate by asking for help. The Scriptures are filled with stories of individuals and groups who felt unworthy, but they were met with grace and miraculous healings only the Lord can provide. God thinks so highly of His creation that He reaches down into the messiest and most unfathomable situations to bring beauty out of the broken. He has never changed from the time He performed miracles in the Bible, and He never will. He healed blind eyes. He still does. He healed crippled limbs. He still does. He mended broken hearts. He still does. He reconciled relationships. He still does. He healed many types of diseases. He still does. If we listen, we will hear Him say, I AM your peace. I AM your joy. I AM your healer. I AM your heavenly Father. I AM a comfort to those who mourn. I AM everything you need and your soul searches for. Whatever you need, God still does, and God still is.

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Isaiah 31 □ 32 □ 33 □ 34 □ | Ephesians 6 □

Isaiah 61:1-2

¹ The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound:

 2 To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn;

Biblical Insight

It is unclear from the text precisely who is speaking in verse 1, but the statement, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me" seems to link this voice with Isaiah's earlier presentation of the Servant of whom the Lord said, "Behold my servant...I have put my spirit upon him" (Isaiah 42:1). This identification becomes even more compelling when we read where Jesus identified Himself with these words at the inauguration of His earthly ministry in the Gospel of Luke (Luke 4:16–21).

Daily Devotion

Isaiah chapter 61 is a pointed and comforting passage. Because of the Spirit of the Lord, the prophet Isaiah was able to have his God-called ministry. Without the help of the Lord, any works we attempt to perform are lacking. Jesus was the suffering servant of Isaiah 53. He knew how to serve with great love and sacrifice. Because of His sacrificial love, God in Christ became humanity's eternal example. Isaiah understood that the works he did for God were only possible because of God working through him. Great pain births great ministry. It may not be easy to make those sacrifices to help others, but you will be glad you did. You have the same capacity to reach the lost and help the hurting as the prophets did. The Spirit of the Lord is upon you. Greater works shall ye do in Jesus' name.

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What can you d	o to apply this p	orinciple to you	ur life today?	

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Isaiah 35 □	36 □	37 □	Phi	qili	pians 1 🗆]	2 [

Isaiah 61:3

³ To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he might be glorified.

Biblical Insight

The future work of the Servant here is depicted as a final Jubilee, indicated by the phrase "proclaim liberty" (Isaiah 61:1; Leviticus 25:10). In Leviticus, the liberty applied to those Israelites in debt-slavery; in Isaiah, it is applied to imprisoned captives in deep mourning, signified by their ashes and tattered garments. Notice that those who are set free are likewise anointed with the "oil of joy" and become "trees of righteousness," an image of stability and fruitfulness that seems to echo Psalm 1's description of the godly. (See Psalm 1:3.)

Daily Devotion

The Spirit of the Lord empowered Isaiah to write, "The Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound..." (Isaiah 61:1–2). Anyone who has walked through shadowy valleys can appreciate the sunshine and light of a mountaintop in a deep way. It may take time, but just as the prophet Isaiah was sent to help bind the brokenhearted and proclaim a future liberty to the captives, men and women of God will come alongside us during our trials and help us walk toward redemption and hope. Beauty can still rise from the ashes. Freedom from bondage is still available. Hold on, friend. There will still be glory after this.

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Isaiah 38 □ 39 □ 40 □ | Philippians 3 □ 4 □

Mark 10:13-16

¹³ And they brought young children to him, that he should touch them: and his disciples rebuked those that brought them.

¹⁴ But when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God.

¹⁵ Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein.

¹⁶ And he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them.

Biblical Insight

Given children's overall lack of status in Greco-Roman culture, Jesus' proclamation that entrance into the kingdom of God required a childlike demeanor would have been surprising to His audience. The emphasis here is on the "littleness and helplessness of the child" as a call to the humility required of those wishing to follow Jesus faithfully (Lane, New International Commentary on the New Testament). Only Mark's account mentions the anger of the disciples, though we are not given a reason for it. The broader context of the disciples' vying for "greatness" in this section may shed some helpful light on their reaction.

Daily Devotion

Robert Fulghum, the author of *Everything I Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten*, reminds his readers of some of the most important rules of the classroom and life.

Share everything. Play fair. Don't hit people. Put things back where you found them. Clean up your mess. Don't take things that aren't yours. Say you're sorry when you hurt somebody. Warm cookies and cold milk are good for you. Live a balanced life. Take a nap every afternoon. When you go out into the world, watch out for traffic, hold hands, and stick together. Always be aware of wonder.

Children are special for many reasons. They still have an innocence and dependability that adults just do not have. They are joyful and adventurous. They are not able to supply all their own needs, yet they know their needs will somehow be met. They ask many questions, but their queries stem from curiosity, not mistrust. Jesus commands His followers to come to Him as little children. God expects questions, but He also expects trust. No matter how dark the night or how scary the path, childlike faith lets believers rely fully on the Lord, no matter the situation. Some walk, some crawl, some are carried, but no matter the method, they always get there. With childlike faith, they progress toward their mark, unsure of the next step but sure that those steps will lead them to Him.

Reflection and Prayer » What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?	

SG PARTICIPANT'S GUIDE



Lesson Title: Looking for the Overlooked

Scripture Focus: Mark 10:14

The Lesson in Context

Jesus went out of His way to reach those who had been overlooked. He changed His itinerary to visit a well, where He ministered to a Samaritan woman who had been married five times. The result was she later became an effective witness. Jesus risked His reputation by eating with Zacchaeus, the tax collector. Jesus touched and healed unclean lepers and made a special trip to deliver a man so mentally unstable that he lived in a graveyard.

Our job is to see people through the eyes of Jesus. When Jesus began His ministry, He picked what some scholars believe to be a group of teenage boys from fishing villages to help Him change the world. Therefore, we should not discount the possibility of Him using the young, uncultured, or inexperienced to do His work. Jesus did not build His ministry by headhunting; He did not go to Jerusalem or Rome in search of talent. He did not scout the great schools or exclusive families of His day to ensure His team would succeed. Rather, He chose good hearts and sincere people, and He trained them to be world changers. Then, as He left this earth, He encouraged His followers to continue in the same manner.

Group Discussion

- 1. What does it feel like to be dismissed or ignored?
- 2. Why do we sometimes tend to treat people differently when they appear to be homeless, poor, physically challenged, or face some other life difficulty?
- 3. Tell about a time when someone saw potential in you or took time to encourage you to pursue God's will for your life.
- 4. What are some accusations the enemy might use to convince believers they are unworthy of God's love? How can those accusations be countered?
- 5. Who are some overlooked people God is stirring you to reach out to? What has come to mind during this lesson? What can we do to fulfill Jesus' mission?

My Prayer for the Upcoming Week How do you want to be different because of what you have experienced today?	

JUNE 19, 2022

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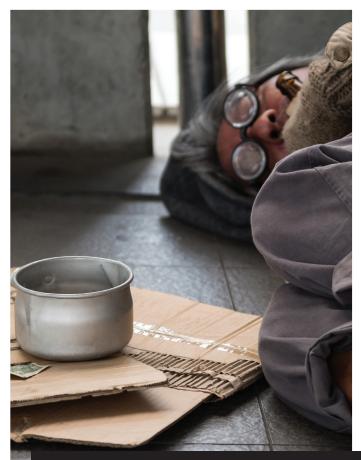
LESSON BIG IDEA I will be the hands of Jesus to people society casts aside.

TRUTH ABOUT GOD

God is willing to touch and heal people society casts aside.

SERIES 1: LOVING THE UNLOVED

THE HANDS OF JESUS



FOCUS VERSE: Mark 1:41

And Jesus, moved with compassion, put forth his hand, and touched him, and saith unto him, I will; be thou clean.

LESSON TEXT: Leviticus 13:42-46; Mark 1:40-45; Luke 17:11-16

BIBLICAL OVERVIEW

Lesson Text: Leviticus 13:42-46; Mark 1:40-45; Luke 17:11-16

Given the seemingly obscure (and perhaps gory) nature of much of its content, it is easy for contemporary readers to miss the importance of the Book of Leviticus to the Pentateuch—the foundation stone upon which the whole of the Old and New Testaments are built. Given the Pentateuch's five-fold structure, Leviticus is placed as the central book, linking the building of the Tabernacle (Exodus 25-40) to the preparation for entering the Promised Land (Numbers 1-10). In Exodus, the people of Israel and the glory of God come ever closer until "the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle" (Exodus 40:34). In Leviticus 1:1, the Lord again calls to Moses as He had on Mt. Sinai, but this time He speaks from the Tabernacle. The Book of Leviticus is occupied with securing the presence of God among His people by means of ritual purity and righteous living.

Matthew, Mark, and Luke are known as the synoptic Gospels in recognition of their remarkable similarities in content among them. The so-called "Markan priority" places the Gospel of Mark as the earliest of the three. It was likely used as a source by Matthew and Luke in the composition of their own Gospels. One unfortunate side effect of this synoptic view is a lack of attention to the distinctive messages of these first three Gospels. For example, when comparing the Gospel of Mark to the Gospel of Luke, we notice Mark includes no birth narrative of Jesus but begins the story with the preaching of John the Baptist. Luke's Gospel not only includes Jesus' birth narrative but actually begins with the birth of John the Baptist. We must remember that these and other differences in content and structure point to differences in the intended audience. Traditionally, Mark is understood as speaking to a broadly Roman audience, portraying Jesus as the miracle-working Son of God—a title Emperor Caesar Augustus appropriated for himself. On the other hand, Luke writes to a specific individual, Theophilus, perhaps a high-ranking Roman official (Apostolic Study Bible), and portrays Jesus as the "Son of Man," the ideal human being who undoes the effects of Adam's Fall.

THE BOOK OF LEVITICUS IS OCCUPIED WITH SECURING THE PRESENCE OF GOD AMONG HIS PEOPLE BY MEANS OF RITUAL PURITY AND RIGHTEOUS LIVING.

DAY 1

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Isaiah $41 \square 42 \square 43 \square 44 \square | Colossians <math>1 \square 2 \square$

Leviticus 13:42-46

- ⁴² And if there be in the bald head, or bald forehead, a white reddish sore; it is a leprosy sprung up in his bald head, or his bald forehead.
- ⁴³ Then the priest shall look upon it: and, behold, if the rising of the sore be white reddish in his bald head, or in his bald forehead, as the leprosy appeareth in the skin of the flesh:
- ⁴⁴ He is a leprous man, he is unclean: the priest shall pronounce him utterly unclean; his plague is in his head.
- ⁴⁵ And the leper in whom the plague is, his clothes shall be rent, and his head bare, and he shall put a covering upon his upper lip, and shall cry, Unclean, unclean.
- ⁴⁶ All the days wherein the plague shall be in him he shall be defiled; he is unclean: he shall dwell alone; without the camp shall his habitation be.

Biblical Insight

In the purity codes of Leviticus, three distinct categories relate to Tabernacle worship: clean, unclean, and holy. Vessels and people deemed holy are those set apart for use in the Tabernacle. Use for everyday tasks was prohibited. Instead, one was required to use clean vessels for ordinary responsibilities. Unclean vessels were ritually impure, but they could be purified for clean or holy uses. To declare something or someone unclean was not the same as declaring it sinful. Vessels and people regularly became ritually unclean through ordinary use, but such uncleanness did not have a moral connotation.

Daily Devotion

Do you know someone who only pulled their fine China out of the cabinet for very special occasions? Perhaps the pieces were finely decorated and intricately painted. These are the dishes fit for tea with the Queen or dinner with dignitaries. Once dinner or tea was over, the owner of these treasures likely did not discard them and declare them unclean based on their use. There may have been some gravy or green beans left behind, but that did not diminish their overall worth. Similarly, you are a finely designed vessel by God for specific use. You are an intricately designed, ornately fashioned treasure. You are made to be holy as He is. Many times, you may feel you have leftover sin or uncleanness that makes you unworthy, but God washes you clean and gives you another chance to be made new. You belong to Him, and you always have a place at His table.

Reflection and Prayer » What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?	

						Bible Reading	Plan
DAY 2	Isaiah 45 □	46 □	47 🗆	48 □	49 □	Colossians 3 🗆	4 🗆

Mark 1:40-42

- ⁴⁰ And there came a leper to him, beseeching him, and kneeling down to him, and saying unto him, If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.
- ⁴¹ And Jesus, moved with compassion, put forth his hand, and touched him, and saith unto him, I will; be thou clean.
- $^{\rm 42}$ And as soon as he had spoken, immediately the leprosy departed from him, and he was cleansed.

Biblical Insight

The Greek word for immediately, *euthys*, is a key word in Mark's presentation of Jesus' life, especially His miracles. In this context, it includes the sense that the miracle was complete, instantaneous, and visible to any astonished onlookers. The term aids Mark's portrayal of Jesus' supernatural power and authority. Jesus' power is also emphasized when He touched the leper, something strictly forbidden in the Mosaic law in order to avoid contamination or spread of the disease. (See Leviticus 13:45–46.) When Jesus touched the leper, Jesus' healing virtue flowed to the leper—the leper's uncleanness did not affect Jesus!

Daily Devotion

In the Bible days, leprosy was an extremely contagious, lonely, and life-altering illness. An infected person was not welcomed close to others who were well. Lepers had to shout "unclean!" to announce their presence and give others the opportunity to flee. Leprosy was one of the cruelest of diseases and made lepers the loneliest of all people. Although COVID-19 was a completely different category of illness, families were encouraged to keep their distance from anyone who tested positive for the virus. This virus introduced a unique type of recovery process for those who were sick. Isolation became a part of recuperating. Social distancing was part of a leper's vocabulary long before COVID-19 came into being. So many had been searching for a cure, pleading for healing, and even losing loved ones at arm's length. Jesus, however, was never and will never be afraid of what the world defines as unclean or contagious. When He healed the lepers, He got close to their hurts and touched them. Take heart. Jesus is not afraid of your mess or the things you hide away.

eflection and	Prayer					
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DAY	3
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Isaiah 50 □ 51 □ 52 □ | I Thessalonians 1 □ 2 □

Mark 1:43-45

⁴³ And he straitly charged him, and forthwith sent him away;

⁴⁴ And saith unto him, See thou say nothing to any man: but go thy way, shew thyself to the priest, and offer for thy cleansing those things which Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them.

⁴⁵ But he went out, and began to publish it much, and to blaze abroad the matter, insomuch that Jesus could no more openly enter into the city, but was without in desert places; and they came to him from every quarter.

Biblical Insight

In addition to its focus on Jesus' power and authority, Mark's Gospel is also distinctive in its emphasis on Jesus' desire to keep His Messianic identity hidden. This is known by some as the "Messianic secret" of Mark 1:44-45. Within the Gospel of Mark, Jesus' secrecy served a reimagined understanding of the coming Messiah, not as a conquering hero but as a suffering Servant come to bear the sins of the people by His death (Mark 10:45). Jesus' identity as the Son of God was only fully revealed at His crucifixion (Mark 10:39).

Daily Devotion

Jesus often did things differently than many other kings would have. The Savior of the entire world introduced Himself in a manger set in a stable filled with animals, hay, and probably a lot of unpleasant smells. Mary learned about Jesus and grew along with Him. Every day we can walk with Jesus, learn from Him, and understand Him better. Once you know Him, you cannot help but want to know Him more. God chose that stable, that manger, that scene with purpose. He is what you need when and where you need Him, even if His ways do not line up with what is expected or even if they seem a little messy. Jesus was the same from the manger to the grave, but some people take longer than others to comprehend Him. "When the centurion and those who were with him, keeping watch over Jesus, saw the earthquake and what took place, they were filled with awe and said, 'Truly this was the Son of God!" (Matthew 27:54, ESV).

Reflection and Pray	er		
What can you do	to apply this princ	iple to your life today?	

DAY 4	4
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Bible	Reading	Plan
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Isaiah 53 □ 54 □ 55 □ 56 □ 57 □ 58 □

Luke 17:11-14

- ¹¹ And it came to pass, as he went to Jerusalem, that he passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee.
- ¹² And as he entered into a certain village, there met him ten men that were lepers, which stood afar off:
- ¹³ And they lifted up their voices, and said, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us.
- ¹⁴ And when he saw them, he said unto them, Go shew yourselves unto the priests. And it came to pass, that, as they went, they were cleansed.

Biblical Insight

As we have learned from Mark's Gospel, Jesus can heal diseases like leprosy instantaneously and without aid. The command, "Go shew yourselves unto the priests" seems like an odd instruction, especially since these lepers were healed before they arrived. The laws governing leprosy in ancient Israel made the leper a total social outcast. Showing themselves to the priests was not about the lepers' return to health but about their return to society. Without the priest's confirmation, these men would not be allowed to rejoin the community.

Daily Devotion

Miracles seem to be defined as blessings and healings that take place instantaneously. While many miracles can be instant, a great deal stretch over long periods of time. When the lepers were healed and made whole, they still had to take all the necessary steps to reintegrate themselves into society. If you are cured from cancer, have your sight restored, or are raised from a wheelchair, you may have to regain strength and learn to walk again. That is all a process. Healing is often progressive and happens with the help of many godly men and women coming alongside you. Maybe your miracle happened in a moment, but perhaps it was or will happen over time. God often appoints people to help walk with you through whatever you are facing. These people may be doctors, counselors, pastors, or any number of essential aids. Step by step, moment by moment, the miracle is in the making. Do not lose hope. Good things truly come to those who wait on the Lord.

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Reflection and Prayer		
What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?		

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Isaiah 59 □ 60 □ 61 □ | I Thessalonians 3 □ 4 □

Luke 17:15-16

¹⁵ And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God,

¹⁶ And fell down on his face at his feet, giving him thanks: and he was a Samaritan.

Biblical Insight

In Luke's report of the healing of the ten lepers, Luke reserved an important detail about this group—one of them was a Samaritan. The Samaritans were the despised half-Jewish descendants of the remnant of the northern kingdom of Israel, which was conquered by the Assyrians in 722 BC. Unlike the Babylonians who later conquered the southern Kingdom of Judah in 586 BC, the Assyrians did not use mass deportation. Instead, they would intermix conquered populations to force intermarriage, hoping to destroy any remaining ethnic or national loyalties that could be a source of unification and rebellion later. (See II Kings 17:24.)

Daily Devotion

Luke 17 recounts the story of a leprous Samaritan man. He was a diseased, lonely, desperate outcast begging to be healed. He was a castaway, not only because of his ailment, but also because of his origin. He begged God for mercy and healing. Jesus did not shun him or tell him to stay away. He did not run in the other direction or shout slandering words at him either. This must have been new for the Samaritan for many reasons. Jesus reached out His hand, touched the leper, and he was changed. Clean hands touched a sick body and made him whole. Surely the former leper did not hide his face any longer after that. Despite his origin, skin tone, or ethnicity, Jesus chose to heal the man because Jesus loves all His creation equally. He chose to heal him this side of Heaven because He loved him, and it was part of His plan. Never let anyone discredit you because of where you come from or because of your present circumstances. Jesus loves you right where you are and will do what He needs to do to reach you.

reflection and Prayer	
What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?	

SG PARTICIPANT'S GUIDE



Lesson Title: The Hands of Jesus

Scripture Focus: Mark 1:41

The Lesson in Context

People are often defined by things that publicly manifest in their lives. Someone who is painfully shy may be viewed as socially challenged. There may even be legitimate issues at play in the lives of people who have addictions or who make bad lifestyle choices. It is not wrong to be aware of the challenges some people have; it is not wrong to set boundaries when it comes to unhealthy relationships. It is wrong, however, to discard people who have such issues or to regard these people as irredeemable.

Mark 1:41 reveals that Jesus was so moved with compassion that He did the unthinkable; He touched the unclean leper. Jesus did not do so carelessly; He touched the man for the purpose of healing him. The story is told of a missionary to Ethiopia several decades ago. When the missionary first arrived in the country, she and her family were not readily received by the general population, so they began to minister to a leper community. The missionary explained what a challenge it was to go to the leper colony with her children. But God used those efforts to begin a great work in Ethiopia. Today there may be more Jesus name, Holy Ghost filled believers in Ethiopia than there are in America. But someone had to be willing to go and touch the unclean.

Group Discussion

- 1. What are some things we can do to reach out to lonely people without making them feel embarrassed?
- 2. Since love believes the best of people, how can we love people without worrying they will take advantage of our love?
- 3. Tell about a time when you faced a difficult situation in your life and began to pray in faith. What happened?
- 4. What would the compassion of Jesus look like if He lived in our world and our society?
- 5. Who are some people we as a church need to become more aware of and compassionate toward? How would this compassion impact our church?

My Prayer for the Upcoming Week How do you want to be different because of what you have experienced today	21/2
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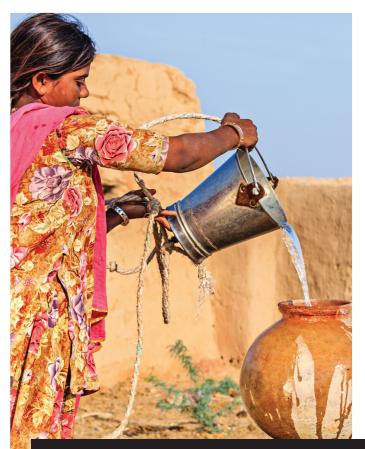
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LESSON BIG IDEA

I will show mercy and share God's love with those who have made life-altering mistakes.

TRUTH ABOUT GODGod will share living water with anyone who comes to the well.

WATER FROM THE WELL



FOCUS VERSE: John 4:13-14

¹³ Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again:

¹⁴ But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.

LESSON TEXT: John 4:5-42

BIBLICAL OVERVIEW

Lesson Text: John 4:5-42

It has been widely noted that the Gospel of John presents a portrayal of Jesus very distinct from the other three Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke). These differences are not just in minor matters like variation in details but in significant matters like structure and presentation. Briefly, the most obvious elements are:

- An introduction likely based in an ancient Christian hymn celebrating the incarnation of the Word of God
- A chronological rearrangement of some of the key events of Jesus' life and ministry, such as the cleansing of the Temple in John 2, in order to fit John's theological purpose
- Instead of short sayings and parables, Jesus spoke in lengthy dialogues. (See John 6:22-39.)
- The use of the famous "I AM" sayings to punctuate the discourses and reveal the meaning of Jesus' miracles (John 6:35; 8:12; 10:7, 11; 11:25; 14:6; 15:1)

This radical "rearrangement" of the story of Jesus' ministry tells us two important things. First, it is apparent that John's Gospel assumes the reader is familiar with the story of Jesus as told in the other Gospels. Since John is almost assuredly the last Gospel written by the last living eyewitness, such an assumption makes perfect sense. In a way, this liberated John to arrange his Gospel more thematically than chronologically. Second, although John used simple language and images—light, shepherd, bread—these words and metaphors are loaded with rich symbolism drawn especially from Old Testament associations. Though simple, John's presentation is not simplistic.

Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman at the well in John 4 is meant to be contrasted with Jesus' encounter in John 3 with Nicodemus, a member of the Sanhedrin. While the woman at the well seemed to have little social standing, Nicodemus was a respected member of the court that ruled Palestinian Jewish religious life in Jesus' day. The "social distance" between the two could not have been any greater. Nicodemus was a highly respected, influential religious leader. Jesus even called him a "master (teacher) of Israel" in John 3:10. But the woman at the well was a despised member of a despised community. Her name is not even given. But in an ironic reversal, the Samaritan woman's spiritual insight far exceeded that of Nicodemus. Near the end of their exchange, the woman recognized Jesus as the Messiah, but Nicodemus completely misunderstood Jesus' command to be "born again," assuming He was speaking of being physically reborn.

JESUS' ENCOUNTER WITH THE SAMARITAN WOMAN AT THE WELL IN JOHN 4 IS MEANT TO BE CONTRASTED WITH JESUS' ENCOUNTER IN JOHN 3 WITH NICODEMUS, A MEMBER OF THE SANHEDRIN.

Bible Reading Plan

Isaiah 62 □ 63 □ 64 □ | I Thessalonians 5 □

John 4:5-12

- ⁵ Then cometh he to a city of Samaria, which is called Sychar, near to the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph.
- ⁶ Now Jacob's well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied with his journey, sat thus on the well: and it was about the sixth hour.
- 7 There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water: Jesus saith unto her, Give me to drink.
- ⁸ (For his disciples were gone away unto the city to buy meat.)
- ⁹ Then saith the woman of Samaria unto him, How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans.
- ¹⁰ Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water.
- ¹¹ The woman saith unto him, Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep: from whence then hast thou that living water?
- ¹² Art thou greater than our father Jacob, which gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his children, and his cattle?

Biblical Insight

Though the direness of the woman's life-situation was only revealed much later in their exchange, John gave us an important clue here when he noted the time the woman came daily to draw water. The "sixth hour" was approximately noon, the hottest time of the day. In a semi-arid climate like Palestine, it would have been customary for the village women to draw the water they needed early in the morning while the temperature was still relatively cool. This woman came alone at noon to draw her own water. These are all signs to her day and ours that she had been ostracized by the village.

Daily Devotion

Kitchens are strange places. It seems as soon as you have scrubbed the last of the forks and returned the plates to their proper places, you turn around to find something else where it does not belong. In the busyness of life, ignoring the disarray can feel simpler. However, avoidance does not make your problems go away; it only gives them time to pile up. The failproof way to avoid the "overwhelming kitchen mess" is not to let it pile up. That is a step by step, moment by moment, decision by decision process. Place that dish in the dishwasher as soon as you are finished. Wipe down the counters as you go throughout your dinner routine. Make a conscious choice to address the issues as they come.

Reflection and Prayer » What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?	

Bible Reading	g Plan
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Isaiah 65 □ 66 □ | II Thessalonians 1 □

John 4:13-18

- ¹⁵ Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again:
- ¹⁴ But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.
- ¹⁵ The woman saith unto him, Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw.
- ¹⁶ Jesus saith unto her, Go, call thy husband, and come hither.
- ¹⁷ The woman answered and said, I have no husband. Jesus said unto her, Thou hast well said, I have no husband:
- ¹⁸ For thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband: in that saidst thou truly.

Biblical Insight

As in His dialogue with Nicodemus, Jesus began speaking with the woman by the well using a kind of "double-speak" that both confused and intrigued His hearers. Jesus told Nicodemus that he must be born, *anōthen*, in order to see the kingdom of God. This Greek term could be translated "born again" or "born from above." In John 4, Jesus offered the Samaritan woman living (running, life-giving) water. This was different from the standing water she would draw from the well. Her next questions revealed that she thought Jesus was speaking of "running water," but she soon realized He meant something much, much more.

Daily Devotion

The way God answers often feels unusual. For three long days, the guiltless Christ rested in a tomb. Can you imagine the agony this put His followers and family through? The Savior—the One for whom they had waited and followed—was dead. Three days. Waiting. But when He walked out of the grave, all the suffering made sense. Nicodemus wanted to be close to the Savior, so he inquired of Him what he should do. Jesus' answer? Unordinary. The Samaritan woman was searching for something more but had exhausted all her resources. She was longing to be found but was hiding because she felt unworthy. Visualize the shame that gripped her heart. She asked Jesus what He meant by living water. His answer? Unordinary. Yet she gave Him a chance to mend her brokenness. Times of change, healing, and waiting can be painful but indescribably beautiful if you depend on the resurrected King. The tomb was timely, the new birth opportune, the way He reached the woman at the well was divinely orchestrated. The way in which our Redeemer works can teach us what unordinary wonders He can work.

Reflection and Prayer	
What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?	

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Bible	Reading	Plan
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Jeremiah 1 \square 2 \square 3 \square 4 \square | II Thessalonians 2 \square 3 \square

John 4:19-26

- ¹⁹ The woman saith unto him, Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet.
- ²⁰ Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship.
- ²¹ Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father.
- 22 Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews.
- ²³ But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him.
- ²⁴ God is a Spirit; and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.
- ²⁵The woman saith unto him, I know that Messias cometh, which is called Christ: when he is come, he will tell us all things.
- ²⁶ Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am he.

Biblical Insight

The Samaritans maintained a distinctive religious identity from the Jews. This included their own version of the Pentateuch, which for them was the only authoritative Scripture. They rejected the inspiration of the Prophets and the Writings, which comprise the rest of the Jewish Bible. They also insisted on worshiping on their own sacred mountain, Mt. Gerizim, rather than Mt. Zion in Jerusalem. This may reflect their roots among the northern tribes or territories of the Promised Land. This second belief has issued in a third religious difference. A few hundred Samaritans still live in Israel today and practice sacrificial offerings.

Daily Devotion

Sacrificial offerings were considered the only way to have your sins removed in biblical times. Even then, the protocol was extensive, selective, and bloody. That was the only way until the Way came. In our day, we tend to avoid asking for help, even when help is necessary, because we do not want to be viewed as weak. However, asking for help is human and exhibits great strength. The world often chooses to look for help in all the wrong places: drugs, alcohol, unhealthy relationships, and other avenues that prove to be unfulfilling and frivolous. For those who know the Lord, our help is found in the greatest of means. The Lord Himself is referred to in Psalm 46 as an ever-present help. His attributes tell of His abilities to supply whatever we need. He is merciful, righteous, faithful, and forgiving to all, no matter what mountain we are on or valley we are in. Whatever your need is, He has already supplied. Lay down your burdens at His feet. We no longer have to practice sacrificial offerings on an altar we did not build. We are blessed our ever-present, almighty God is our help in times of trouble. He died to give us life, so run to Him. He has already made a way.

Reflection and Prayer » What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?	

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Jeremiah 5 🗆	6 □	7 🗆	8 🗆	I Timothy 1□ 2	

John 4:27-38

- ²⁷ And upon this came his disciples, and marvelled that he talked with the woman: yet no man said, What seekest thou? or, Why talkest thou with her?
- ²⁸ The woman then left her waterpot, and went her way into the city, and saith to the men,
- ²⁹ Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?
- ³⁰ Then they went out of the city, and came unto him.
- ³¹ In the mean while his disciples prayed him, saying, Master, eat.
- ³² But he said unto them, I have meat to eat that ye know not of.
- 33 Therefore said the disciples one to another, Hath any man brought him ought to eat?
- ³⁴ Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work.
- ³⁵ Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest.
- ³⁶ And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal: that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together.
- ³⁷ And herein is that saying true, One soweth, and another reapeth.
- ³⁸I sent you to reap that whereon ye bestowed no labour: other men laboured, and ye are entered into their labours.

Biblical Insight

John used simple language and everyday objects to make his point. In an almost comical manner, John narrated how the excited woman abandoned her waterpot to return to the village and invite everyone to hear this Man "which told me all things that I ever did" (John 4:29). Meanwhile, Jesus' disciples returned with food only to find Jesus was no longer hungry. John turned water and food, the two absolute necessities of human life, into symbols of the necessities of spiritual life—receiving eternal life offered in Jesus Christ and walking in obedience to His will.

Daily Devotion

Sometimes the Bible can be difficult to understand. All of the thous, shalts, and begats of the King James Version can make reading difficult. However, there are stories where the Scripture seems simpler. Nearly anyone can relate to these. In the story of the Samaritan woman drawing water from the well, there is an almost frightening reveal of a woman's sins she had tried to keep covered. Once Jesus stepped onto the scene, there was freedom; she did not have to hide anymore. She wanted everyone to know her story of redemption and what Jesus could do. In John 4, Jesus saw a perfect opportunity to reiterate the importance of the bread of life and living water. When you encounter Jesus, everything changes. Maybe it is time to tell someone what Jesus has done for you and allow them to experience this same bread of life and living water available to all who hunger and thirst.

Reflection and Prayer What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?	
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Jeremiah 9 □ 10 □ 11 □ 12 □ | I Timothy 3 □

John 4:39-42

- ³⁹ And many of the Samaritans of that city believed on him for the saying of the woman, which testified. He told me all that ever I did.
- 40 So when the Samaritans were come unto him, they besought him that he would tarry with them: and he abode there two days.
- ⁴¹ And many more believed because of his own word:
- ⁴² And said unto the woman, Now we believe, not because of thy saying: for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world.

Biblical Insight

The contrast with the Samaritan woman and Nicodemus reaches its climax. While the members of the woman's village became ardent believers in Jesus as the promised Messiah, Nicodemus' fellow members of the Sanhedrin soundly rejected Jesus' claims. They eventually became His mortal enemies, engineering His crucifixion by the Roman governor Pontius Pilate.

But the Samaritan woman herself was transformed. She entered Scripture's scene weighed down by shame and rejection, cleverly hiding behind the half-truth: "I have no husband." However, her encounter with Jesus transformed her shame into a testimony, and her transparency about her past became a mighty witness John recognized as a key for her city's revival.

Daily Devotion

The unnamed woman from Samaria attempted to conceal the truth about her life likely because she was embarrassed. The world says you should hide your mistakes, failures, and shortcomings. But the Bible says that the children of God are made "overcomers by the blood of the lamb and the word of our testimony" (Revelation 12:11). Within the correct context, exposing wounds can actually help them heal. Covering the painful parts and pretending like they do not exist only make them worse over time—for everyone involved. It may feel safer to wrap some gauze around your heart or keep your injuries and mistakes buried. But restoration begins when you stop trying to pretend like everything is okay, realize we are all humans, and admit humans hurt and mess up. We must all be willing to be open about those hurt places in order to recover. Stop putting bandages on the areas of your life you are too afraid to address. Your life will be so much better when you no longer hide but let yourself be made whole. Your scars can tell a story to help others on their journey. Come out of hiding. Your trial can be your testimony.

Reflection and Prayer	
» What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?	

SG PARTICIPANT'S GUIDE



Lesson Title: Water from the well

Scripture Focus: Psalm 27:4-5

The Lesson in Context

Sometimes we as Christians act a bit like the security guards at the Sistine Chapel. As hundreds of visitors crane their necks to look up for the first time at the majesty and beauty painted on the walls and ceiling, these guards seem oblivious to it. They keep their eyes on the crowd and any time they think they see a camera, they bark, "No photo! No photo!" They have become so accustomed to the beauty that they do not even notice it anymore. They ignore the glory in favor of simply enforcing the rules. God help us not to take His beauty for granted. Think of all the people in the world who do not know God. They do not know what it is like to stand, raise their hands, worship, and feel the beautiful Spirit of God flood through them. They do not know the peace Jesus can pour into their souls.

Besides that, the awareness of God's beauty is a source of protection in and of itself. Most of the trouble in our lives comes from sin, and most sin is a result of thinking what the devil and the world have to offer is more attractive than what God has to offer. But if we truly stay close to God and aware of His beauty, everything else will fade into the background. As the old hymn says, "The things of this world will grow strangely dim in the light of His glory and grace." Nothing else can turn our heads as long as we are focused on Jesus' beauty.

Group Discussion

- 1. How can we recapture our passion for the presence and beauty of God?
- 2. Why do we often focus on the struggles around us more than we focus on God?
- 3. What are some of the struggles in your life that have caused you fear? How did you respond to that fear?
- 4. Describe a time when you focused on God rather than your struggles.
- 5. What does it look like when the things of this world grow "strangely dim" in the light of God's glory and grace?

My Prayer for the Upcoming Week How do you want to be different because of what you have experienced today?

1.4

LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR

LESSON BIG IDEAI will love my
neighbor.

TRUTH ABOUT GODGod requires us to love our neighbors as ourselves.



FOCUS VERSES: Luke 10:36-37

Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves?
 And he said, He that shewed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise.

LESSON TEXT: Leviticus 19:18; Matthew 22:34-40; Luke 10:25-37; Galatians 5:13-15



BIBLICAL OVERVIEW

Lesson Text: Leviticus 19:18; Matthew 22:34-40; Luke 10:25-37; Galatians 5:13-15

The Book of Leviticus is one of the more unfortunately-named books of the Old Testament. Its name is derived from the ancient Latin version, the *Vulgate*, and means (as one could guess) "belonging or pertaining to the Levites." While sections of the book certainly match that description, most of the material in Leviticus applies to the entire nation of Israel, not just the tribe of Levi.

The final section, Leviticus 17-27, has long been designated the "Holiness Code." This section is punctuated by the repeated reminder "I am the LORD" or "I am your God" (Leviticus 18:4; 19:3; 20:7, 24; 23:22). One of the most significant underlying principles of this section is the concept of corporate responsibility. The regulations of the Holiness Code are to be observed for the protection and preservation of the community rather than the individual. As we see in Joshua 7 concerning the sin of Achan, an individual's transgression of these boundaries can have national implications.

The raging debates in Jesus' day to identify the greatest commandment is best understood against the bigger backdrop of the Pharisees' and Sadducees' opposed approaches to interpreting and applying the Torah. In a sense, the Sadducees were literalists of Torah interpretation, focusing on what the text explicitly said. This was the basis of their rejection of the concept of resurrection from the dead-it was never mentioned in the Torah. In contrast, the Pharisees followed a different method, developing an elaborate oral tradition of specific Torah regulations, such as a "Sabbath day's journey," to ensure the Torah could be lived out in every detail of life. Oddly, the Sadducees' relatively conservative hermeneutic (way of interpreting the text) led them to a very liberal lifestyle: whatever was not explicitly condemned in Torah was automatically allowed! The Pharisees' approach of adding their traditional interpretations to the Torah resulted in a notably more conservative lifestyle but was condemned by Jesus for ultimately twisting Torah's true meaning. (See Mark 7:7-8.)

In Paul's letter to the Galatian churches, he was battling a Pharisaical spirit among the Judaizers, who were demanding that Gentiles who would be Christians must first become proselytes (fully observant Jews). This meant they must submit to circumcision, follow *kosher* food practices, and observe the Jewish feasts and rituals. In perhaps the sternest language of any of his letters, Paul condemned these false teachers for adding to the simplicity of the gospel of Jesus Christ (Galatians 2:16).

THE REGULATIONS OF THE HOLINESS CODE ARE TO BE OBSERVED FOR THE PROTECTION AND PRESERVATION OF THE COMMUNITY RATHER THAN THE INDIVIDUAL.

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Jeremiah 13 □ 14 □ 15 □ 16 □ | I Timothy 4 □

Leviticus 19:18

Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I am the Lord.

Biblical Insight

In the Holiness Code, and more specifically in Leviticus 19, we notice an intermingling of different types of regulations. Leviticus 19:3–4 list rules governing the observation of the Ten Commandments, and the next three verses concern the consumption of peace offerings. These precede regulations governing harvest and vineyard gleanings, which are followed by rules regarding the prompt payment of wages and then prohibitions to gossip. To many contemporary readers, these appear to be hopelessly jumbled. By contrasting these rules, the text is reinforcing the idea that the principle of holiness as stated in Leviticus 19:1 is meant to affect every imaginable sphere of human activity.

Daily Devotion

God called His people to be holy as He is holy. This includes every part of daily life. Holiness goes deeper than simply adhering to standards and general guidelines of the local church. Following guidelines about our outward adornment is in vain if we have hateful, hurtful hearts. Holiness begins on the inside and displays on the outside. It is constant and all-encompassing. For instance, in addition to avoiding places that would damage our testimony, we are not to look online at photos or videos that step over the beautiful boundary of holiness and into sin. Let us take an inventory of all areas of our life—our speech, conduct, actions, and thoughts. Is there any wicked way in us? Every human is born with a sinful nature, so living holy does not come naturally. However, the Spirit empowers us to pursue righteousness. You might not get it right every time, but when you stumble, repent, get back up, and keep going. Holiness is a lifestyle we pursue one decision at a time.

eflection and	d Prayer				
What can ye	ou do to app	oly this prii	nciple to yo	ur life today?	

DAY	2
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Bible	Reading	Plan
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Jeremiah 17 \square 18 \square 19 \square | I Timothy 5 \square I Timothy 6 \square

Matthew 22:34-40

- ³³ And when the multitude heard this, they were astonished at his doctrine.
- ³⁴ But when the Pharisees had heard that he had put the Sadducees to silence, they were gathered together.
- ³⁵ Then one of them, which was a lawyer, asked him a question, tempting him, and saving.
- ³⁶ Master, which is the great commandment in the law?
- ³⁷ Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.
- ³⁸ This is the first and great commandment.
- ³⁹ And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.
- ⁴⁰ On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

Biblical Insight

Matthew 22 was Jesus' last exchange with the Pharisees before He pronounced His judgment as a series of "woes" upon them. He ended this series with His stern question, "Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?" (Matthew 23:33). In Jesus' answer to the question about the greatest commandment, notice how He avoided falling into either of the flawed approaches to Scripture of the Pharisees and Sadducees. His understanding of the greatest commandment was based on the explicit words of the Torah (Deuteronomy 6:5; Leviticus 19:18), but He linked these verses in an unexpected way that pointed to the core principle underlying the whole of Torah: love God and love your neighbor.

Daily Devotion

The 1904 St. Louis Olympics was historically strange. In the men's marathon, thirty-two runners took their marks, and at the sound of the starter pistol, they were running. The multinational pack was led by the American-born Fred Lorz. After the full 26.2-mile race, Lorz was declared the first ever Olympic marathon winner. But there was a problem that changed Olympics history entirely. Frank Lorz completed the race, but he did not do so honestly. Around the ninth mile, he hitched a ride with a driver to complete the remaining 17.2 miles, but the car broke down around mile nineteen. Lorz exited the car and continued to run as if nothing happened. He completed the race, but his shortcut cost him the gold medal. How we cross the finish line matters. There are certain regulations set in place to ensure our safety and arrival. The message of the Torah is a perfect combination of rules and heart. It is still part of how we are to take our marks and run our race. Love God and love our neighbor. There are no shortcuts. No ways around these. This is how we cross the finish line.

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What can you	do to apply thi	is principle to y	our life today?	

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Bible Reading Plar

Jeremiah 20 \square 21 \square 22 \square 23 \square 24 \square | II Timothy 1 \square 2 \square

Luke 10:25-29

- ²⁵ And, behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?
- ²⁶ He said unto him, What is written in the law? how readest thou?
- 27 And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself.
- ²⁸ And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live.
- ²⁹ But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus. And who is my neighbour?

Biblical Insight

In Matthew 22:34-40, the lawyer—not Jesus— articulated the relationship between loving God and loving our neighbor. Jesus quickly acknowledged these two twin commandments as the path to inherit eternal life. This may indicate that Jesus' interpretation of the greatest commandment was already a point of view circulating among a small group of Jewish leaders. More likely, however, it might indicate that this lawyer had already heard Jesus' teaching on the relationship of loving God and loving our neighbor and had accepted it as truth.

Daily Devotion

I traveled to the Bahamas in the wake of Hurricane Dorian. Upon arrival, we piled into a van and headed away from the tropical waters and right into the heart of hurt. We drove house to house, giving checkups and caring for residents. I have no medical background, only a few CPR classes, so I assisted in other ways. I felt out of place because I was holding hands, not stethoscopes. I could not administer shots or shout out medical terms. However, I showed love to those in need in the ways I was able. I walked the neighborhoods and helped children put their shoes on the right feet. I assisted the nurses. I hugged the hurting. I gave water to the thirsty. I did what Jesus tells us all to do: love my neighbor as myself, and I did it unto Him. I could not give back to those sweet souls what they lost in the hurricane, but I could get on their level of emotional pain to fill a prescription that does not come in pill form. I gave love in buckets, Band-aids, water bottles, and smiles. You can too. Use what you have to change the world.

Reflection ar » What can y	=	this principle	to your life today	?	

DAY	4
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Bible	Reading	Plan
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Jeremiah 25 \square 26 \square 27 \square 28 \square | II Timothy 3 \square 4 \square

Luke 10:30-37

³⁰ And Jesus answering said, A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead.

³¹ And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side.

 32 And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side.

³³ But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him,

³⁴ And went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him.

³⁵ And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee.

³⁶ Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves?

³⁷ And he said, He that shewed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise.

Biblical Insight

Jesus' parable of the Good Samaritan was a shock because Jesus was addressing a Jewish audience. The idea that a Samaritan could serve as a model of righteous living—as one who had fully followed Torah and stood to inherit eternal life—would have left Jesus' original hearers gobsmacked. The pivotal moment of the narrative is when the Samaritan had compassion on the wounded man, language used of Jesus' own actions (Luke 7:13). Through Jesus' example and His story, the Good Samaritan embodied the compassionate mercy of God Himself!

Daily Devotion

In biblical times, the phrase "Good Samaritan" was rarely ever spoken, especially among the Jews. These two people groups were rarely seen mingling. When reading this parable, note the contrast to what some believed to be true about those who hailed from Samaria. We call these types of assumptions stereotypes. This unnamed moral and kind man was on a dangerous road when he encountered someone in need. He stopped and made a difference in a person's life who was out of hope. It does not matter where you come from, how you are labeled, or what your status is, you can still be known as good. When we stand before Jesus, we will not hear "Well done thou good and faithful Jew, good and faithful Samaritan, or even good and faithful Pentecostal." Even if life takes us on some detours and we find ourselves making unplanned pitstops to minister to hurting people, let us strive to hear the words, "Well done thou good and faithful servant."

Reflection and Prayer » What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?	

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Bible	Rea	dina	Plan
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Jeremiah 29 \square 30 \square 31 \square 32 \square | Titus 1 \square 2 \square 3 \square

Galatians 5:13-15

¹³ For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another.

¹⁴ For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

 15 But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another.

Biblical Insight

The canonical order of the New Testament does not reflect the chronological order in which the books were written. Many, if not most, of the New Testament epistles may have been written before the synoptic Gospels (especially Galatians, since it was likely one of Paul's earliest epistles). Chronologically, Paul's articulation of the principle that love of neighbor fulfills the spirit and intent of the Mosaic Torah may be the first written evidence. (See Galatians 5:14.) That is significant because it indicates the core of Jesus' teaching was already widely circulating within just a decade or two of His ascension.

Daily Devotion

Believe it or not, the way you view the person in the mirror reflects your relationship with those around you. The Bible gives a unique description of the greatest commandment in Matthew 22:39, "Love your neighbor as yourself." True love is unashamed and genuine. If it is real, it strips away any thought of trying to improve what is already beautiful. The word *neighbor* in Matthew 22:39 is not simply a call to love the person in the house right next to yours. Among other definitions, a neighbor can be described as "any person in need of one's help or kindness." A neighbor is the woman you see in the coffee shop, or the man you see waiting tables. This sincere love even applies to the criminal behind bars. Loving others starts with you. Maybe it is time to reevaluate your definition by taking some time to realize how fearfully and wonderfully made you really are. Speak kindly to yourself. If you are having trouble loving your neighbor, perhaps start by appreciating the person God created you to be and watch what happens.

eflection a	and Prayer				
What can	you do to	apply this to	o your life too	lay?	

SG PARTICIPANT'S GUIDE



Lesson Title: Love Your Neighbor

Scripture Focus: Luke 10:36-37

The Lesson in Context

Jesus told a story of about a Samaritan, but not just any Samaritan—a good Samaritan. This was quite appalling to the Jews listening to the story because they hated the Samaritans. Neither got along with the other. However, even though they avoided each other, they were still neighbors—whether they liked it or not. As Jesus told this story of a man suffering on the side of the road and needing assistance, the audience expected a character like the priest or the Levite to be the hero of the story. But when Jesus announced that it was the Samaritan who cared for the man, the audience was shocked. And not only did the Samaritan care for the wounded man, but he went above and beyond the call of duty by binding up the man's wounds using his own equipment, providing the man transportation to a safe place, and paying for his lodging and further medical care.

Just like learning to love God is a process, so learning to love others can also be a process, especially when God has called us to love people who have hurt us and actively do not love us in return. It is especially difficult to love those who have abused us—physically, spiritually, or otherwise. It is extremely difficult to love the murderer, the rapist, or the terrorist. However, the Bible contains examples of God loving and saving murderers, rapists, and terrorists. Furthermore, He often used simple humans like you and me to communicate that love. Thank God for people who were diligent to follow God's command to love our neighbors as ourselves.

Group Discussion

- 1. Why is it impossible to love God without loving your neighbor? Why is it impossible to love your neighbor without loving God?
- 2. Think about the fact that all people, even the worst sinners, are made in God's image. How does this change your perspective and approach to loving your neighbor?
- 3. How much do we love ourselves? If we were to truly love others as much as we love ourselves, what might this relationship look like?
- 4. Toward whom do you find it most difficult to practice this commandment to "love thy neighbour"? What people or groups are the most difficult for you? How could you pray and what actions could you take to be more compassionate?
- 5. How can you purpose to intentionally love your neighbor this week?

•	ne Upcoming Week It to be different because of what you have experienced today?

2.1

STRENGTH IN SUFFERING

LESSON BIG IDEAI will cry out to God and trust Him in my suffering.

TRUTH ABOUT GOD God will give strength to people who turn to Him in their suffering.



FOCUS VERSE: Psalm 22:1-2

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

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

LESSON TEXT: Job 3:25-26; 42:10-17; Psalm 22:1-11, 24-31



BIBLICAL OVERVIEW

Lesson Text: Job 3:25–26; 42:10–17; Psalm 22:1–11, 24–31

The Book of Job is considered a classic of ancient world literature, even by those who share no faith in the God Job worshiped. In Job, the beauty of ancient Hebrew poetry reaches unparalleled heights, even as it plumbs the depths of human tragedy, confusion, and near-despair, posed through Job's question: "Why has this happened to me?"

The book is a study in contrasts. It has a prose prologue (Job 1:1-2:13) and epilogue (42:10-17), surrounding a lengthy section of poetic discourses (Job 3-42). The poetic discourses open with Job lamenting and end with Job falling silent before the whirlwind of God's answer. The prologue ends with Job grieving with his friends, while the epilogue ends with Job interceding for his friends.

The most startling feature of the book is also its most overlooked: Job's question is never answered. Some scholars view the Book of Job as a theodicy, an argument that justifies belief in the existence of God in light of the problem of evil. This view is a bit of a misnomer, because the book does not "solve" the problem of evil. Perhaps Job is not so much about the problem of evil as it is about the power of prayer to sustain us through unimaginable tragedy (Moore & Peterson, *Voice, Word, and Spirit*).

Psalm 22 belongs to the genre of lament psalms that wrestle with the same problems of evil and suffering that occupy the Book of Job. These lament psalms are typically marked by an opening address to God and expressions of deep sorrow and suffering (usually connected to persecution by an enemy), punctuated with statements of trust, and concluding with a vow to praise the Lord once the trouble is past. In a book named "Praises" (the Hebrew name for the book), the psalms of lament comprise the single largest category of psalms. In what way then are these psalms to be considered acts of praise to God? It was noted that psalms of lament open with divine address. For example, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Psalm 22:1). They indicate the psalmists' fundamental assumption that God is covenantally obliged to respond to the prayers of His people and that He is able to intervene and bring about a resolution.

THE MOST STARTLING FEATURE OF THE BOOK OF JOB IS ALSO ITS MOST OVERLOOKED: JOB'S QUESTION IS NEVER ANSWERED.

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Jeremiah 33 □ 34 □ 35 □ 36 □ 37 □ | Philemon □

Job 3:25-26

²⁵ For the thing which I greatly feared is come upon me, and that which I was afraid of is come unto me.

²⁶ I was not in safety, neither had I rest, neither was I quiet; yet trouble came.

Biblical Insight

Job 3 belongs to a special category of laments known as the "self-curse" in which the lamenter expressed the depth of their anguish as a wish that they were never born (Jeremiah 20:14-18). We may contrast Job's tacit claim that he has always feared something like this would befall him with his initial reaction to the news of the tragedies in Job 1:14-19. The outcome of this seeming contradiction is recorded in the succeeding verses: "Then Job arose...and fell down upon the ground, and worshiped... the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD." This demonstrates that great sorrow and great faith can coexist in a righteous heart.

Daily Devotion

Job is a unique book that shows the life of a devout man who lost nearly everything and everyone. He suffered, and he worshiped. He questioned, yet he worshiped. A few times he cried out for God to answer him, and he got his answer. It just was not what he expected.

We may not suffer the extreme circumstances Job did, but we may have the same testimony of experiencing God's unexpected answer. The good news is that even when we suffer, we do not suffer alone. Whether we feel Him or see Him, God is with us as He was with Job. The pain of suffering can be tangible, but God can bring about emotional, mental, and spiritual growth through it all.

	and Prayer					
What can	you do to	apply thi	is to your	life today	?	

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					Bible Reading P	lan'
Jeremiah 38 □	39 □	40 □	41 🗆	42 □	│ Hebrews 1□	2 🗆

Job 42:12-17

¹² So the Lord blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning: for he had fourteen thousand sheep, and six thousand camels, and a thousand yoke of oxen, and a thousand she asses.

¹³ He had also seven sons and three daughters.

¹⁴ And he called the name of the first, Jemima; and the name of the second, Kezia; and the name of the third, Kerenhappuch.

¹⁵ And in all the land were no women found so fair as the daughters of Job: and their father gave them inheritance among their brethren.

¹⁶ After this lived Job an hundred and forty years, and saw his sons, and his sons' sons, even four generations.

¹⁷ So Job died, being old and full of days.

Biblical Insight

Contemporary readers of Job make two crucial mistakes. First, we forget that Job never found out about the opening "wager" between "the satan" (the literal translation of the Hebrew term used here) and God. We read with the false assumption that Job knew the real source of his suffering all along, but he did not. The other mistake readers make is assuming Job got everything back. While it is true that God "blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning," Job's seven sons and three daughters did not replace the children he lost. Job needed the comfort of God to get him through his grief.

Daily Devotion

Job 42:10 is arguably one of the most encouraging verses in the Bible. Job was restored when he looked beyond his own trials and prayed for his friends. How can you be a blessing to someone even in your own seasons of sorrow? The nineteenth-century missionary Adinoram Judson exemplifies this focus on others despite personal despair. A few years after arriving in Burma to proclaim the gospel, Judson was imprisoned and tortured for over a year, three of his children and his wife died, and he retreated to the jungle to cope with his grief. You might think it prudent or at least understandable had Judson quit. Instead he persevered beyond his personal grief to serve over forty years, burdened with compassion for the Burmese. There is something powerful and beautiful about the selflessness of sacrifice. Things may seem impossibly difficult in your life now, but stay the course. Do not stop praying, especially for those around you. There is comfort for believers because we know that no matter how hard the journey, we are not alone.

Reflection an	d Prayer				
What can y	ou do to a	apply this to	your life too	'ay?	

DAY	3
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Bible R	eading	Plar
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Jeremiah 43 □ 44 □ 45 □ 46 □ | Hebrews 3 □ 4 □

Psalm 22:1-5

- ¹My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring?
- ² O my God, I cry in the day time, but thou hearest not; and in the night season, and am not silent.
- ³ But thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel.
- ⁴ Our fathers trusted in thee: they trusted, and thou didst deliver them.
- ⁵ They cried unto thee, and were delivered: they trusted in thee, and were not confounded.

Biblical Insight

Citing the first line of a well-known literary work was understood to be an allusion to the entire work. When Jesus cried out on the Cross the opening words of Psalm 22, He was claiming this messianic psalm as a description of His suffering on the Cross. He was applying the twenty-second psalm as His own interpretation of His death. To say that Psalm 22 is a messianic psalm means David was speaking prophetically when he penned these words and that Jesus was identifying Himself with David, the ideal king of Israel.

Daily Devotion

Bonsai trees are plants grown in small containers made to stay small. Bonsai trees are more of a process than an actual tree. They are pruned, molded with wires, and watched with patience as they take their shape. There is a purpose for all the molding, the cutting away, the trimming, and the waiting. Pain has a purpose.

Who knew so many lessons could be learned from a tree? But wait, a tree is where it all started. Adam and Eve ate forbidden fruit from a tree. And a tree is where it all ended. Jesus took our place on a tree. In the life of a tree, there are seasons: a time for pruning, a time for growing, a time for giving, and a time for taking away. The same is true in our lives. There are times of growing and times of pruning. We see God in the lovely, but we sometimes miss Him in the broken, and we do not always trust Him in the waiting. Do not rush God's process. Trust God, especially when He has to break us or reshape us. He knows just what He is doing.

Reflection and I	•				
What can you	do to ap	ply this to	your life	today?	

DAY	4
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	Bible R	eading	Plan
Jeremiah 47 □	48 □	49 □	50 □

Psalm 22:6-11

- ⁶ But I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people.
- ⁷ All they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying,
- ⁸ He trusted on the Lord that he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him.
- ⁹ But thou art he that took me out of the womb: thou didst make me hope when I was upon my mother's breasts.
- ¹⁰ I was cast upon thee from the womb: thou art my God from my mother's belly.
- ¹¹Be not far from me; for trouble is near; for there is none to help.

Biblical Insight

David's confession, "I am a worm, and no man" (Psalm 22:6) echoes the language Bildad used to insult Job in his last recorded speech. Bildad said, "How then can man be justified with God...how much less man, that is a worm?" The suffering described here has reduced the speaker to almost sub-human status.

This makes David's assertion, "Thou art my God," even more powerful. The phrase is just two words in Hebrew. It literally translates to, "You me," understood as "You [belong to] me." (See Isaiah 43:1.) Even in his degraded state, David remained in covenant relationship with God.

Daily Devotion

The dodgeball team began to take shape during recess. James eagerly waited with the group of other third graders, hoping he would make it in a championship lineup. One by one, students were picked until only he remained. Picked last. Chosen after all the rest. He felt so embarrassed and so worthless. He began to label himself with unkind words

David, a team player and humble shepherd, was picked last too. By the world's standards, he did not belong, but God chose him to be king. It was a long road there, but because he did not believe the labels placed upon him by others, he walked into his destiny one small stone and one large giant at a time. Sometimes when we are in pain, we can forget our identity. Moreover, we can believe those false labels as facts and make our full identity out of them. No matter what others think of you, and no matter what you even tell yourself, remember God is the one who calls you chosen. He thinks you are wonderful. He gave His life for you. He says you are His and you are worth it. Let that be who you say you are.

Reflection and Prayer	
» What can you do to apply this to your life today?	

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Bil	ble	Rea	ding	Plan

Jeremiah 51 \square 52 \square | Hebrews 5 \square 6 \square

Psalm 22:27-31

- 27 All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the Lord: and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee.
- ²⁸ For the kingdom is the Lord's: and he is the governor among the nations.
- ²⁹ All they that be fat upon earth shall eat and worship: all they that go down to the dust shall bow before him: and none can keep alive his own soul.
- ³⁰ A seed shall serve him; it shall be accounted to the Lord for a generation.
- ³¹ They shall come, and shall declare his righteousness unto a people that shall be born, that he hath done this.

Biblical Insight

Psalm 22 is unique among the psalms of lament because it concludes with an actual hymn that looks forward to the day when all the nations are converted and gather to worship God. Other similar psalms conclude with a vow to praise God. This psalm has been filled with hyperbolic language that does not match the biblical record of David's reign (Painter, *Handbook on the Psalms and Wisdom Literature*). Perhaps more clearly than anywhere else, Psalm 22 points beyond itself to the reign of the One who will sit on David's throne.

Daily Devotion

Picture the most impressive scene imaginable. Paint in your mind a masterpiece of your perfect day and perfect life. Now multiply that by eternity. Heaven still does not come close to our most grandiose imaginations. How wonderful it will be to sit at the feet of Jesus forever, walking with Him on the golden street, swapping stories with those who have gone before as we rejoice in our reward and praise our Savior. The already but not yet is what we are striving for. We are in the in-between, the working-while-we-wait middle. We are walking hand in hand with each other on our way home. Go ahead; be homesick for a place you have never been. The unsettling is a yearning for what is next. C.S. Lewis eloquently understood, "The fact that our heart yearns for something Earth can't supply is proof that Heaven must be our home." We all have that longing inside, a desire to be back in the innocence of Eden, wanting for nothing. The psalmist shared close kinship with the Creator and understood that the present sufferings of his life were trivial compared to the glory to come. David knew. Paul knew. John knew. Mary knew. You know. Keep going. Well done is waiting.

Reflection and Prayer » What can you do to apply this to your life today?	

SG PARTICIPANT'S GUIDE



Lesson Title: Strength in Suffering

Scripture Focus: Psalm 22:1-2

The Lesson in Context

Most of us have not suffered in the extreme like Job. But perhaps you have lost your health or experienced great financial loss. Perhaps you have grieved the death of a child or grieved a child rejecting the Lord. Perhaps you have been betrayed by a loved one. Perhaps you have experienced persecution for your faith or been constantly attacked and undermined at work. Or perhaps you have experienced the acute suffering of being unable to relieve the suffering of someone you love.

God never promised we would not have trouble. He did promise, however, to be a very present help in trouble. God is not present simply to observe our suffering. No, He is present to help, to strengthen, and in His sovereign timing, to save us from our suffering. By faith, then, rather than drawing back in fear, "let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" (Hebrews 4:16). In response to God's promises to be present and to strengthen us in suffering, I will, with God's help, consciously put my trust in God in the midst of my suffering.

Group Discussion

- 1. If Satan could not attack Job without God allowing it, and if God could put limitations on the extent to which Satan could attack Job, can Satan attack us anytime and any way he wants? Explain.
- Who in your life is an encourager and helps you when you face difficulties? Explain.
- 3. How do you pray when you face suffering?
- 4. How can we use our past experience with God to strengthen our faith in the present?
- 5. What are some practical ways we can be sure to remember God's promises? How can we use these ways to be strengthened when we are suffering? or to strengthen others who are suffering?

My Prayer for the Upcoming Week How do you want to be different because of what you have experienced today?	

2.2

BLESS THE LORD AT ALL TIMES

LESSON BIG IDEAI will bless the Lord at all times.

TRUTH ABOUT GODGod is worthy of praise in every situation.



I will bless the Lord at all times: his praise shall continually be in my mouth.

LESSON TEXT: I Samuel 21:10-15; 22:1-5; Psalm 34:1-22



BIBLICAL OVERVIEW

Lesson Text: I Samuel 21:10-15; 22:1-5; Psalm 34:1-22

One of the most important insights of contemporary scholarship on the Book of Psalms has been the recognition that the various psalms share common literary features and can be grouped together by these identifiable forms such as psalms of thanksgiving, psalms of lament, royal psalms, and others. However, there are some challenges to this approach. First, scholars have reached only a general consensus on the taxonomy (or groupings) of forms used in the book, and some psalm types still generate vehement disagreement. For example, are the imprecatory psalms (prayers to God for justice) a subcategory of psalms of lament or their own category altogether?

The second challenge are the composite psalms: psalms that seem to combine elements from disparate categories. For example, Psalm 22 appears to combine elements of a psalm of lament with a hymn of praise (vv. 1–21, 22–31). Psalm 24 appears to combine a wisdom psalm with an entrance liturgy (vv. 1–6, 7–10). Psalm 34 is another example, appearing to combine a psalm of thanksgiving and a wisdom psalm (vv. 1–10, 11–22).

Psalm 34 is also unique because its inscription links it with a specific episode in David's life when he hid from Saul in the Philistine city of Gath. Saul remained king of Israel until his death recorded at the end of I Samuel even though God officially rejected him as king during the first half of the book. The last half of I Samuel relates the interlocked stories of David's rise and Saul's demise. As David's power grew—especially after his victory over Goliath—so did Saul's jealousy until it spilled over into murderous rage. I Samuel 21 records David's transition from favored courtier of King Saul to Israel's most hunted and hounded. The swirl of emotions he undoubtedly experienced logically gave birth to much of the beautiful poetry we read recorded in the Book of Psalms.

PSALM 34 IS ALSO UNIQUE BECAUSE ITS INSCRIPTION LINKS IT WITH A SPECIFIC EPISODE IN DAVID'S LIFE WHEN HE HID FROM SAUL IN THE PHILISTINE CITY OF GATH.

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Lamentations 1 □ 2 □ 3 □ 4 □ 5 □ | Hebrews 7 □

I Samuel 21:10-15

¹⁰ And David arose and fled that day for fear of Saul, and went to Achish the king of Gath. ¹¹ And the servants of Achish said unto him, Is not this David the king of the land? did they not sing one to another of him in dances, saying, Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands?

 12 And David laid up these words in his heart, and was sore afraid of Achish the king of Gath.

¹³ And he changed his behaviour before them, and feigned himself mad in their hands, and scrabbled on the doors of the gate, and let his spittle fall down upon his beard.

¹⁴Then said Achish unto his servants, Lo, ye see the man is mad: wherefore then have ve brought him to me?

¹⁵ Have I need of mad men, that ye have brought this fellow to play the mad man in my presence? shall this fellow come into my house?

Biblical Insight

The king of Gath was Achish, although the inscription of Psalm 34 calls him Abimelech. This was probably not a proper name but rather a royal title shared by multiple monarchs such as the Abimelech of Genesis 20 and Genesis 26. The title means "my father is king" and may have been a designation of the chosen heir. Given David's recent exploits in defeating the Philistine champion Goliath, David's visit to Gath was extremely risky since Gath was Goliath's hometown. This highlights the seriousness of the danger David faced from King Saul. He felt safer in Gath than in Israel. Later David returned to Gath with his band of men and formed an alliance with Achish that granted him safety in the territory of Ziklag (I Samuel 27:3–7).

Daily Devotion

In his 1968 article in the *Foreign Service Journal*, James Bullington recounted being alone behind enemy lines as the North Vietnamese army gained control of Hue, Vietnam, during the Tet Offensive. To avoid being revealed as an American, a Catholic priest helped Bullington masquerade as a Canadian priest until the U.S. Marines were able to rescue him.

Weeks later on Valentine's Day, Bullington reentered the region in search of the woman he loved. But instead of hiding, he walked boldly into the city accompanied by U.S. Marines. David in I Samuel and Bullington in the 1960s responded differently to being in the enemy's territory when they felt alone versus feeling supported. In I Samuel 21, David was alone when he acted in a manic state to the Philistine king of Gath, Achish. However, six chapters later, David faced King Achish with confidence because he was marching with six hundred of his men.

Feelings of loneliness influence how we respond to the enemy. Remember, we are not alone. We can face the enemy confidently knowing that the LORD of hosts is with us.

Reflection and Prayer » What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?	

DAY 2

				Bible Reading Plan
Ezekiel 1 □	2 🗆	3 □	4 □	Hebrews 8 □ 9 □

I Samuel 22:1-5

- ¹ David therefore departed thence, and escaped to the cave Adullam: and when his brethren and all his father's house heard it, they went down thither to him.
- ² And every one that was in distress, and every one that was in debt, and every one that was discontented, gathered themselves unto him; and he became a captain over them: and there were with him about four hundred men.
- ³ And David went thence to Mizpeh of Moab: and he said unto the king of Moab, Let my father and my mother, I pray thee, come forth, and be with you, till I know what God will do for me.
- ⁴ And he brought them before the king of Moab: and they dwelt with him all the while that David was in the hold.
- ⁵ And the prophet Gad said unto David, Abide not in the hold; depart, and get thee into the land of Judah. Then David departed, and came into the forest of Hareth.

Biblical Insight

David's time hiding in the cave of Adullam inspired other psalms such as Psalm 57, 142, and so forth. When David's mother and father joined him, he went to Mizpeh in Moab to arrange asylum for them. This seems to be a strange strategy, but Jesse's grandmother, David's great-grandmother, was the Moabitess Ruth. Samuel further recorded "everyone who was in distress" gathered to David. This echoed the story of the judge Jephthah, who was likewise cast out of his father's house and garnered a following of "vain men" (outlaws). This detail in Judges 11 called into question Jephthah's character, but this same detail showed that David had won over the people who claimed him as their hero.

Daily Devotion

On October 4, 2016, category 4 Hurricane Matthew devastated Haiti. Coastal flooding, wind, and rain led to destruction. In Lacadonie, Haiti, villagers huddled together for four days and nights in caves as their homes were destroyed. They slept on a floor of boulders, not knowing when the storm would end. Despite the caves' darkness, odor, and humidity, the villagers were grateful for refuge. One villager, Destine Jean, declared the cave to be "the house that God created when we most needed it" (Ahmed, "Haitians, Battered by Hurricane, Huddle in Caves").

Just as the villagers in Lacadonie found a cave to be a refuge when they had nowhere else to go, so did David in I Samuel 22. David could not go to his childhood home, to the palace, to his friend Jonathan, to the house of the Lord, or to the Philistines. David could only go to a cave. While David physically sought refuge in a cave, his true refuge was God (Psalm 142:5). The same is true for us. God is the refuge we need most.

reflection and Prayer	
What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?	

DAY 3

Bible Reading Plan

Ezekiel 5 🗆 6 🗆 7 🗆 8 🗆 9 🖂 | Hebrews 10 🗆

Psalm 34:1-7

- ¹I will bless the LORD at all times: his praise shall continually be in my mouth.
- 2 My soul shall make her boast in the LORD: the humble shall hear thereof, and be glad.
- ³O magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt his name together.
- ⁴I sought the LORD, and he heard me, and delivered me from all my fears.
- ⁵ They looked unto him, and were lightened; and their faces were not ashamed.
- ⁶ This poor man cried, and the LORD heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles.
- $^{7}\,\mbox{The}$ angel of the LORD encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them.

Biblical Insight

The key feature of psalms of thanksgiving is a declaration that the trouble has passed and deliverance has already been achieved. We see this in Psalm 34:4, "I sought the LORD, and he heard me, and delivered me from all my fears." This testimony is the basis on which David promised to praise God and invited the congregation to worship as well.

The term *lightened* in verse 5 literally means to "be radiant or shine." This word occurs only here in the book of Psalms, carrying with it a connotation of "glowing" with joy.

Daily Devotion

Fear is both an emotion and a bodily reaction. When the body senses a threat, the body triggers a fear response to prepare for fight or flight. Fear and the body's response heighten if an individual perceives to have less control of a situation (Javanbakht & Saab, "What Happens in the Brain When We Feel Fear").

The inscription for Psalm 34 reveals these words of praise were written when David was fleeing Saul and brought before the Philistine King Achish of Gath. David found himself in Goliath's hometown of Gath, standing before Goliath's king, and in a court of Philistines who knew the songs boasting of David's feats against the Philistines. Psalm 34:4 reveals David felt fear.

David was in a situation where he had no control. Instead of allowing fear to heighten his response, David humbled himself and acknowledged that he was a "poor man" (Psalm 34:6) who was completely dependent upon God. When faced with situations beyond our control, it is easy to allow fear to dictate our responses. Instead, our answer to fear ought to be a posture of humility and praise to God.

eflection and Prayer
What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?

DAY	4
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Bible	Reading	Plar
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Ezekiel 10 □ 11 □ 12 □ 13 □ 14 □ 15 □ | Hebrews 11 □

Psalm 34:8-14

- ⁸O taste and see that the LORD is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him.
- ⁹ O fear the LORD, ye his saints: for there is no want to them that fear him.
- ¹⁰ The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger: but they that seek the LORD shall not want any good thing.
- ¹¹ Come, ye children, hearken unto me: I will teach you the fear of the LORD.
- ¹² What man is he that desireth life, and loveth many days, that he may see good?
- ¹³ Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile.
- ¹⁴ Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace, and pursue it.

Biblical Insight

Psalm 34 has an unusual vocabulary overall, but most intriguing is the command to "taste" the goodness of the Lord. This is the only time this Hebrew verb appears in the entire Old Testament, although culinary imagery is not unprecedented ("sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb" [Psalm 19:10]). In Psalm 34, tasting leads to seeing. This is a most peculiar mixed metaphor, but it emphasizes the call to fully experience the Lord's goodness of which David has testified.

Daily Devotion

Through scientific and psychological studies on taste perception, experts have discovered that taste and smell are intimately entwined. Some scientific reports even claim that 75%–95% of taste is smell. In recent years, focus has shifted from the connection between taste and smell to the connection between taste and sight. The American Chemical Society reports research that shows the appearance of food affects how the food tastes. Simply altering the color of food can change the way we taste food. Likewise, how we perceive food to taste can alter the way we see food. Foods such as stew, sausage, and hashes are not visually appealing, but because of the taste, they are not looked at with disgust.

Taste can influence whether food looks appealing while sight can influence whether food tastes appealing. The same can be said of the Word of God. If God's Word does not taste "sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb," (Psalm 19:10), it is necessary to evaluate what we are placing before our eyes. If we cannot "see that the Lord is good" (Psalm 34:8), it is important to evaluate what we are consuming.

eflection and	Prayer					
What can yo	_	oply this pi	rinciple to	your life t	oday?	

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Bible	Reading	Plar

Ezekiel 16 🗆 17 🗆 18 🖂 19 🖂 Hebrews 12 🖂

Psalm 34:15-22

- ¹⁵ The eyes of the LORD are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry.
- ¹⁶ The face of the LORD is against them that do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth.
- ¹⁷ The righteous cry, and the LORD heareth, and delivereth them out of all their troubles.

 ¹⁸ The LORD is night upto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a
- ¹⁸ The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.
- ¹⁹ Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the LORD delivereth him out of them all.
- ²⁰ He keepeth all his bones: not one of them is broken.
- ²¹ Evil shall slay the wicked: and they that hate the righteous shall be desolate.
- $^{\rm 22}\,\text{The LORD}$ redeemeth the soul of his servants: and none of them that trust in him shall be desolate.

Biblical Insight

In contrast to the righteous ones of Psalm 34:5 whose faces are all aglow with the blessing of God's goodness, David asserted that the "face of the LORD is against them that do evil" (v. 16). In other contexts such as the Aaronic blessing (Numbers 6:24-26), seeing the face of God is the language of blessing and favor. But God can also set His face against an individual or nation, indicating divine disfavor or certain judgment. Although the righteous experience affliction and trouble just like the wicked, they do not experience the joy of divine intervention and deliverance but are ultimately condemned to destruction.

Daily Devotion

After the death of King Edward VI, Protestants were persecuted in England. A devout Protestant named Thomas Hawkes refused to allow his son to be baptized by a Catholic priest. This act of defiance resulted in Hawkes being tried and convicted by the bishop of London. Hawkes stood steadfast in his faith while imprisoned and was eventually condemned to death by burning.

Thomas' friends asked him to show them if the pain of burning was bearable. He believed that the help of God and the cause of Christ make even the most difficult situation bearable. If the pain of burning was bearable, he promised to lift his hands toward Heaven as he died.

On April 10, 1555, he was led away to be martyred. As his body neared death, Hawkes lifted his hands high above his head and clapped three times for joy. The eyewitnesses declared that Thomas Hawkes taught a divine strength will be given to the servants of God to withstand every trial.

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			to apply this principle to your life today?

SG PARTICIPANT'S GUIDE



Lesson Title: Bless the Lord at All Times

Scripture Focus: Psalm 34:1

The Lesson in Context

David learned a truth that can sustain us through all our trials and afflictions. He learned that God is always a steadfast presence and help. David assured us we are never alone; God will always save and deliver us—even when we are utterly crushed by circumstances. "The righteous cry, and the LORD heareth, and delivereth them out of all their troubles. The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit. Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the LORD delivereth him out of them all" (Psalm 34:17-19).

Having experienced such a promise, David showed us how we should respond. He began Psalm 34 with: "I will bless the LORD at all times: his praise shall continually be in my mouth." David did not praise the Lord for each detail of every affliction he faced. He did, however, praise the Lord for His faithful presence in the affliction and boasted of God's delivering power. David said, "I will praise Him in the middle of my afflictions too. At all times I'm going to bless Him because He's been with me at all times."

Group Discussion

- What was the root cause of Saul's jealousy? After all, he was still the king, and David was his servant.
- 2. Though David trusted in God, he also made an effort as well. What does this suggest about the role we are to play when we need deliverance and freedom?
- Can you testify of a time when God delivered you from a demonic attack? Explain.
- 4. How has receiving a direct word from the Lord helped you in a situation when you were afraid?
- 5. How challenging is it for you to trust in the Lord rather than to rely on yourself (or some other person) during trials?

My Prayer for the Upcoming Week How do you want to be different beca	ause of what you have experienced today?

JULY 24, 2022

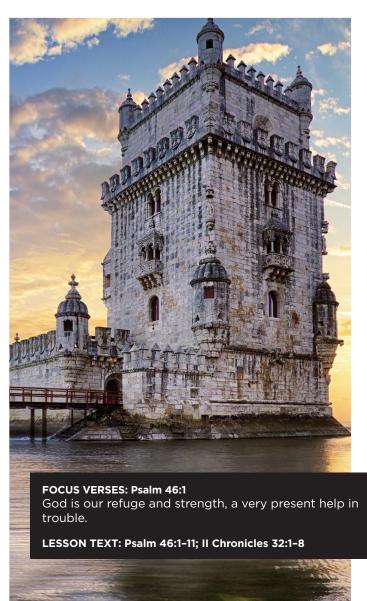
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SERIES 2: GOD IS OUR REFUGE

OUR REFUGE AND STRENGTH

LESSON BIG IDEA I will look to God as my refuge and strength.

TRUTH ABOUT GOD God will help us fight our battles.





BIBLICAL OVERVIEW

Lesson Text: Psalm 46:1-11; II Chronicles 32:1-8

Most typically, the psalms are categorized by their content. There are psalms of lament, psalms of thanksgiving, and so forth. In other cases, some psalms are better categorized by their function. For example, Psalm 120-134 are called the songs of degrees. These appear to have functioned as part of a pilgrimage liturgy (order of worship) for Israelites going up to Temple for a national festival. The royal psalms (Psalms 2; 72) appear to have been used in coronation ceremonies. Psalm 45 may have been composed for a royal wedding.

Psalm 46 is part of a category often labeled "psalms of Zion" because these psalms celebrate the city of Jerusalem. They especially celebrate Solomon's Temple and God's special care and protection for it (Psalms 48; 76; 84; 87; 122; and possibly 137). This category is distinct because these psalms declare God is "in" Zion (v. 7; Psalm 48:3); they report that God has stopped an attack on Zion (v. 6; Psalm 48:4, 6); they commanded Israel to acknowledge God as Zion's Protector (v. 10; Psalm 48:14).

Traditionally, Psalm 46 has been linked to the story of Sennacherib's invasion of Jerusalem during the reign of King Hezekiah (c. 701 BC). This pivotal event is also reported in II Kings 18-19 and in Isaiah 36-39. The prophet Isaiah played a pivotal role in the account in II Kings. The record in Isaiah marks a shift in the book from prophecies of judgment (Isaiah 1-35) to prophecies of hope (Isaiah 40-66).

We see this linkage based on the mention in Psalm 46 of a "river whose streams shall make glad the city of God" (Psalm 46:4). Alongside Hezekiah's efforts to strengthen Jerusalem's fortifications, he also diverted the upper outlet of the Gihon Spring and channeled it underground—via the Siloam Tunnel—to the western side of the city of David. This strategic move provided Jerusalem with secret access to fresh water that would enable her to ride out the expected siege (Il Chronicles 32:4).

TRADITIONALLY, PSALM 46 HAS BEEN LINKED TO THE STORY OF SENNACHERIB'S INVASION OF JERUSALEM DURING THE REIGN OF KING HEZEKIAH.

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Ezekiel 20 🗆 21 🗆 22 🗆 23 🗆 | Hebrews 13 🗆

Psalm 46:1-3

- ¹God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.
- ²Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea;
- ³ Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. Selah.

Biblical Insight

The language of God as a refuge is a common image throughout the Psalms (e.g., Psalms 9:9; 28:8; 59:16). Psalm 46 is unique because of the claim of immediate divine aid in times of trouble. God is not just a help; He is a very present, immediate help in troubled times. God heard and responded quickly to Jerusalem's distressed cry, revealing He is a living, active God, able and willing to miraculously intervene. Unlike the other gods of the ancient Near East who are pictured as living away from their worshipers, His dwelling is among His people in Jerusalem.

Daily Devotion

For an event to be labeled a natural disaster, there must be an economic loss of \$50 million, ten fatalities, fifty injured, or two thousand buildings or homes damaged. Floods and storms such as tsunamis, hurricanes, blizzards, and dust storms account for the most damaging natural disasters. Since the 1960s, the world has seen ten times more natural disaster events than earlier. In 2020 alone, there were a total of 416 natural disaster events worldwide (Madhumitha Jaganmohan, "Global Number of Natural Disasters Events 2000-2020").

Natural disasters bring destruction, but in their aftermath, altruism flourishes. As strangers and neighbors care for each other, they overcome socio-cultural and economic divides. Historian Rebecca Solnit claims, "Disaster is sometimes a door back into paradise, the realm in which we are who we hope to be, do the work we desire and are each our sisters' and brother's keepers" (A Paradise Built in Hell: The Extraordinary Communities that Arise in Disaster). This is especially true when Christians share their refuge, God, with others during a crisis. Instead of responding to a crisis in fear, we can respond to a crisis by caring for others and allowing them to see His love and compassion in us.

Reflection and Prayer	
What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?	

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DAY 2	Ezekiel 24 🗆	25 □	26 □	27 🗆	28 □	James 1□	2 🗆

Psalm 46:4-7

- ⁴ There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the most High.
- ⁵ God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved: God shall help her, and that right early.
- ⁶The heathen raged, the kingdoms were moved: he uttered his voice, the earth melted.
- ⁷ The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah.

Biblical Insight

Psalm 46:1–3 describes the undoing of the Creation: roaring oceans and shaking mountains. Yet Zion stands unmoved because of the presence of God within her, nurtured by a placid river (v. 4). While this is a literal reference to the diverted water source Hezekiah and his men engineered (II Chronicles 32:4), it contains allusions to the rivers that sustained the Garden of Eden as well as to the waters that flowed from under the door of Ezekiel's Temple (Ezekiel 47:1–5). Even here, the "river" that sustains Zion may be referencing the Temple, which symbolized God's presence among His people.

Daily Devotion

Location matters, whether you are looking for a home or establishing an early civilization. Early civilizations that featured urban development and agriculture were situated in river valleys. We see this with the Sumerian civilization between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers in Mesopotamia, the Egyptian civilization in the Nile River Valley, the Harappa civilization in the Indus River Valley in India, the Chavin civilization along the Mosna River in the Andes Mountains, and the Erlitou in the Yellow River Valley in China. Rivers gave inhabitants stability and reliability by having a source of water, ability to irrigate fields, opportunities to fish, and access to fertile soil. Water was seen as life-giving, security, and providing peace.

Jerusalem, on the other hand, does not have a significant river flowing through it. Instead, Jerusalem only has a few streams. Yet, the psalmist in Psalm 46:4, as well as others in Ezekiel 47:12 and Revelation 22:1, write of a day when a river will flow from the Temple. There will be a day of life, security, and peace in the New Jerusalem. As believers, we can taste this future reality through the infilling of the Holy Spirit.

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Bible Reading Pla	ar
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Ezekiel 29 \square 30 \square 31 \square | James 3 \square 4 \square 5 \square

Psalm 46:8-11

- ⁸ Come, behold the works of the LORD, what desolations he hath made in the earth.
- ⁹ He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth; he breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder; he burneth the chariot in the fire.
- 10 Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth.
- ¹¹ The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah.

Biblical Insight

Psalm 46 concludes with a focus on God's exalted status among the nations of the earth and with the call to "be still and know that I am God." The final refrain addresses all people, "The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge." This was a chorus sung by the entire earth, not just the Israelites. The next psalm picks up on this very theme: "Oh, clap your hands, all you peoples...for the LORD Most High is awesome; He is a great King over all the earth" (Psalm 47:1-2).

Daily Devotion

In our time, warfare is not a lived reality for many people in different areas of the world. However, in the ancient world, warfare was a part of the lived experience for all humanity. Ancient people often described kingdoms and empires by using disaster metaphors. For ancient people, an enemy kingdom was just as deadly as a flood, and hostile nations were as dangerous as an earthquake. Often, the king stood between the chaos of the enemy and the people.

Ancient kings are different from our contemporary concepts of kings. Today kings are often figureheads, but throughout most of world history, they were warrior-kings. As we see in Psalms 46, our God is the Lord of hosts (v.7) which means that He commands the hosts, or armies, of heaven. The psalmist continues in extolling God's military prowess by declaring that God ends wars by destroying the enemies' military equipment (v. 9). The very thing the enemy developed to destroy us, God will destroy. Knowing this, we can rest in the knowledge that "If God be for us, who can be against us?" (Romans 8:31). God is our warrior-king.

Reflection and Pray	er		
What can you do	to apply this princ	iple to your life today?	

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Bible	Reading	Plar
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Ezekiel 32 \square 33 \square 34 \square 35 \square | I Peter 1 \square 2 \square

II Chronicles 32:1-4

- ¹After these things, and the establishment thereof, Sennacherib king of Assyria came, and entered into Judah, and encamped against the fenced cities, and thought to win them for himself.
- ² And when Hezekiah saw that Sennacherib was come, and that he was purposed to fight against Jerusalem,
- ³ He took counsel with his princes and his mighty men to stop the waters of the fountains which were without the city: and they did help him.
- ⁴ So there was gathered much people together, who stopped all the fountains, and the brook that ran through the midst of the land, saying, Why should the kings of Assyria come, and find much water?

Biblical Insight

Sennacherib's invasion is a critical moment in Judah's history and is the defining event of King Hezekiah's reign. Just over twenty years earlier, the Assyrian army under Shalmaneser had conquered the northern kingdom of Israel (II Kings 17:1-6), wiping it off the face of the earth. Hezekiah was likely co-regent with his father at the time of this Assyrian invasion, witnessing the havoc firsthand, which probably explains the urgency of his preparations described here. Hezekiah's push to expand Judean territory was probably a strategic move to establish a more easily defensible border. (See II Kings 18:8.)

Daily Devotion

Second Chronicles 32:1 begins with "after these things...." These things refer to a myriad of spiritual reforms King Hezekiah oversaw throughout Judea. God was pleased with the spiritual reforms, especially since King Hezekiah did them "with all his heart" (II Chronicles 21:21).

After these demonstrations of Hezekiah's faithfulness, Assyria invaded. This was unique. Typically, in the Old Testament, invasion was the result of covenant disobedience, not covenant faithfulness. Sometimes spiritual attack occurs in our lives because of our disobedience. Other times, our faithfulness to God opens us up to attacks.

Instead of Hezekiah doubting his relationship with God or if the spiritual changes he made were worthwhile, he rested on the assurance that God was with him. When we are faithful to God, we can rest assured that God is with us in the battle. Do not doubt your relationship with God. Stay faithful, and God will give us peace amid attack.

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Ezekiel 36 □ 37 □ 38 □ 39 □ | I Peter 3 □

II Chronicles 32:5-8

- ⁵ Also he strengthened himself, and built up all the wall that was broken, and raised it up to the towers, and another wall without, and repaired Millo in the city of David, and made darts and shields in abundance.
- ⁶ And he set captains of war over the people, and gathered them together to him in the street of the gate of the city, and spake comfortably to them, saying.
- ⁷Be strong and courageous, be not afraid nor dismayed for the king of Assyria, nor for all the multitude that is with him: for there be more with us than with him:
- ⁸ With him is an arm of flesh; but with us is the LORD our God to help us, and to fight our battles. And the people rested themselves upon the words of Hezekiah king of Judah.

Biblical Insight

In Judean history, King Hezekiah is one of a handful of reforming kings who led God's people in a national revival of worship and piety. The others include Jehoshaphat (II Chronicles 17-20), Joash (II Chronicles 22-24), and Josiah (II Chronicles 34-35). However, even this list can be narrowed. Jehoshaphat's reign was marred by his (perhaps forced) alliance with King Ahab, and Joash's commitment to serve God lasted only as long as the priest Jehoiada was alive. That leaves Hezekiah and Josiah as the two kings of Judah who most follow David's model of kingship.

Daily Devotion

William Blacker's 1834 poem, "Oliver's Advice," is a dramatic portrayal of Oliver Cromwell addressing his army before invading Ireland in 1649. The poem is known for the refrain, "put your trust in God, my boys, and keep your powder dry." Wet gunpowder is useless. The phrase is an exhortation to have both faith and diligence in preparation.

When the Assyrian army invaded Judah, II Chronicles 32 records Hezekiah prepared for war by cutting off a local spring, rebuilding a broken city wall, building higher towers on the wall, strengthening the supporting terraces, making weapons, and appointing military officers. That is diligent preparation.

Next, King Hezekiah encouraged the people to be courageous because God would help them and fight on their behalf. Faith in God and preparation are not diametric opposites; they go together. King Hezekiah demonstrated the wisdom of Proverbs 21:31, "the horse is prepared against the day of battle: but safety is of the Lord." Hezekiah trusted God, and he kept his gun powder dry. We too must balance faith and preparation as we remember that God alone receives the glory for success.

Reflection and Prayer » What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?	

SG PARTICIPANT'S GUIDE



Lesson Title: Our Refuge and Strength

Scripture Focus: Psalm 46:1

The Lesson in Context

Courage swelled in the people's hearts as Hezekiah's words had their intended effect. This was not Hezekiah just putting on a bold face in a desperate attempt to stir up some of the people to remain firm. The people could see in Hezekiah's eyes and hear in his voice that he was certain of what he spoke. The end of II Chronicles 32:8 says, "And the people rested themselves upon the words of Hezekiah king of Judah," or as the ESV puts it, "The people took confidence from the words of Hezekiah king of Judah." They placed their confidence in the help from God that Hezekiah proclaimed, and they rested in Him.

We can find strength in these promises too and believe that God still fights for His people and is a saving refuge for us. Never does a New Testament writer assert that this was only true for Old Testament believers. On the contrary, in Romans 15:4 Paul said, "For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope." He added in I Corinthians 10:11, "Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come" (NKJV). We too can claim these promises.

Group Discussion

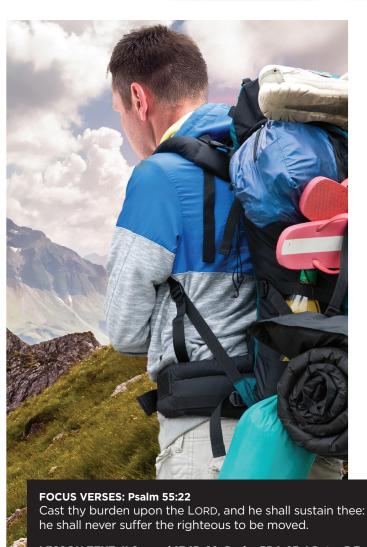
- 1. Would you fault Hezekiah for trying to pay off Sennacherib and characterize his actions as a lack of faith, or would it be more accurate to characterize it as wisdom and even love for his own people?
- 2. What does Hezekiah's example reveal about the power of one person's faith?
- 3. What is a promise from Scripture that you find yourself repeating as a source of encouragement and strength?
- 4. How have you found God to be an ever-present help in trouble?
- 5. How can we be still and know that He is God but also be in motion as we walk through the tests and trials of life?

My Prayer for the Upcoming Week How do you want to be different because of what you have experienced today?	

OUR BURDEN BEARER

LESSON BIG IDEA I will cast my cares upon the Lord.

TRUTH ABOUT GOD God will bear the burdens we surrender to Him.



LESSON TEXT: II Samuel 17:15-22; Psalm 55:1-23; I Peter 5:7



BIBLICAL OVERVIEW

Lesson Text: II Samuel 17:15-22; Psalm 55:1-23; I Peter 5:7

The story of Hushai and Ahithophel in II Samuel 17 is a subplot in the much larger story of Absalom's rebellion against David, which demonstrates the decline of David's later years. (See II Samuel 15.) However, it is important to remember that Absalom's rebellion and its lingering aftereffects are really an indirect consequence of David's own sin with Bathsheba. Sometime after that terrible event, David's son Amnon began lusting after his half sister Tamar. Upon the evil advice of his friend Jonadab, Amnon entrapped and raped Tamar.

Second Samuel 13:21 tells us David was very angry, but he took no corrective action against Amnon. We are left to wonder if David's inaction is somehow an effect of David's guilt over his involvement with Bathsheba. After two years of careful planning, Absalom murdered his half brother Amnon to avenge his full sister, Tamar.

There is no historical or literary connection between Absalom's rebellion, Ahithophel's betrayal, and Psalm 55. The psalm's inscription only identifies it as a "maskil" of David, but the nature of the lament certainly shares an emotive connection with these treasonous events (*Apostolic Study Bible*). Not only is it more loosely structured than other psalms of lament—perhaps because David faced multiple forms of opposition—but it also contains elements that seem to connect with an imprecatory psalm, or a psalm of curse against one's enemies. As God's anointed king, David had the right and even responsibility to execute righteous judgment on God's behalf. (See Deuteronomy 17:18.)

Psalm 55 and the story of Ahithophel both demonstrate the ongoing precariousness of God's purposes at work in an all-too-human world. External opposition and internal weakness often maliciously align against even the best of God's appointed leaders.

PSALM 55 AND THE STORY OF AHITHOPHEL BOTH DEMONSTRATE THE ONGOING PRECARIOUSNESS OF GOD'S PURPOSES AT WORK IN AN ALL-TOO-HUMAN WORLD.

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Ezekiel 40 🗆 41 🗆 | I Peter 4 🗆 5 🗆

II Samuel 17:15-22

¹⁵Then said Hushai unto Zadok and to Abiathar the priests, Thus and thus did Ahithophel counsel Absalom and the elders of Israel; and thus and thus have I counselled.

¹⁶ Now therefore send quickly, and tell David, saying, Lodge not this night in the plains of the wilderness, but speedily pass over; lest the king be swallowed up, and all the people that are with him.

¹⁷ Now Jonathan and Ahimaaz stayed by Enrogel; for they might not be seen to come into the city: and a wench went and told them; and they went and told king David.

¹⁸ Nevertheless a lad saw them, and told Absalom: but they went both of them away quickly, and came to a man's house in Bahurim, which had a well in his court; whither they went down.

¹⁹ And the woman took and spread a covering over the well's mouth, and spread ground corn thereon; and the thing was not known.

²⁰ And when Absalom's servants came to the woman to the house, they said, Where is Ahimaaz and Jonathan? And the woman said unto them, They be gone over the brook of water. And when they had sought and could not find them, they returned to Jerusalem.

²¹ And it came to pass, after they were departed, that they came up out of the well, and went and told king David, and said unto David, Arise, and pass quickly over the water: for thus hath Ahithophel counselled against you.

²²Then David arose, and all the people that were with him, and they passed over Jordan: by the morning light there lacked not one of them that was not gone over Jordan.

Biblical Insight

In the world of theater there is a difference between frontstage and backstage. Frontstage is where the performance unfolds. The audience can see and experience what takes place on the frontstage. The backstage is hidden. It is the place where props are positioned, costumes are changed, lighting is adjusted, and other important aspects of the production take place. For the audience to enjoy a performance, things must occur behind the scenes. Action unfolds on the frontstage because of what unfolds on the backstage.

At times, God's providence is seen in visible and dramatic ways. Other times, God's providence occurs behind the scenes. For David to escape Absalom and seek safety on the other side of the Jordan River, God positioned an undercover advisor, loyal priests, young men willing to risk their lives, a woman, and a well. All the events in Il Samuel 17:17-22 had to occur to fulfill God's intent to "bring evil upon Absalom" (Il Samuel 17:14). Yet, David was oblivious. While hiding and waiting for news, he was unaware how God was working behind the scenes. Take heart; God is working even if we do not see Him on the frontstage.

Reflection and Prayer » What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?	

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		В	ible	Reading	Plan
Ezekiel 42 🗆	43 □	44 🗆		Peter 1 □	2 🗆

Psalm 55:1-8

- ¹Give ear to my prayer, O God; and hide not thyself from my supplication.
- ² Attend unto me, and hear me: I mourn in my complaint, and make a noise;
- ³Because of the voice of the enemy, because of the oppression of the wicked: for they cast iniquity upon me, and in wrath they hate me.
- ⁴ My heart is sore pained within me: and the terrors of death are fallen upon me.
- ⁵ Fearfulness and trembling are come upon me, and horror hath overwhelmed me.
- ⁶ And I said, Oh that I had wings like a dove! for then would I fly away, and be at rest.
- ⁷Lo, then would I wander far off, and remain in the wilderness. Selah.
- ⁸I would hasten my escape from the windy storm and tempest.

Biblical Insight

David described his feelings of dread with several freighted terms: terrors, fearfulness, trembling, and horror (vv. 4-5), all essentially synonyms for the word *fear*. This piling up of descriptions, rather than attempting to find the one precisely correct term, was a common Hebrew poetic technique for revealing the depth of David's anxiety and fear. To attempt to distinguish separate psychological phenomena here is to miss the literary power.

David's wish for life in the wilderness is also another indication of the depth of the crisis. Traditionally, the wilderness is a place of trial and temptation, but here it was a place of relief.

Daily Devotion

When we feel fear, our body prepares to respond in a defensive, protective manner. Our body's initial response is not a conscious decision but an automatic one. This automatic reaction is conditioned based on experience because our initial fear response is learned over time. However, fear can be reframed.

David experienced fear throughout his life. That is evidenced throughout the psalms he wrote. It is not shocking that David felt fear, but his response to fear is rather unusual. As seen in Psalm 55:1–8, David reframed his fear to respond with vulnerability in prayer. Vulnerability is a state of being exposed emotionally or physically. Vulnerability is the opposite of "fight or flight."

Over a lifetime of living for God and dealing with fear, David learned to condition his fear response to be emotionally and physically exposed before God in prayer. Vulnerability and openness with God about the depth of our emotions is where trust in God's faithfulness is built. In vulnerable prayer, we find strength regardless of the situation.

eflection and Prayer	
What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?	

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Ezekiel 45 □ 46 □ 47 □ 48 □ | II Peter 3 □

Psalm 55:9-15

- ⁹ Destroy, O Lord, and divide their tongues: for I have seen violence and strife in the city.
- ¹⁰ Day and night they go about it upon the walls thereof: mischief also and sorrow are in the midst of it.
- ¹¹ Wickedness is in the midst thereof: deceit and quile depart not from her streets.
- ¹² For it was not an enemy that reproached me; then I could have borne it: neither was it he that hated me that did magnify himself against me; then I would have hid myself from him:
- ¹³ But it was thou, a man mine equal, my guide, and mine acquaintance.
- ¹⁴ We took sweet counsel together, and walked unto the house of God in company.
- ¹⁵ Let death seize upon them, and let them go down quick into hell: for wickedness is in their dwellings, and among them.

Biblical Insight

David's cries for justice form an *inclusio* (also known as an "envelope structure") around David's prayer. The cry in verse 9 seems to be an allusion to the divine judgment against the tower builders in Genesis 11. To thwart what would may have been an unstoppable rebellion, God "confused their language." (See Genesis 11:6-7.) At the conclusion of this segment of Psalm 55, David asked that the enemies "go down quick [straight] to hell" (v. 15), which seems to allude to God's judgment on the rebellious sons of Korah (Numbers 16:32–33).

Daily Devotion

William Blake, an English Poet of the Romantic Age, wrote, "It is easier to forgive an enemy than to forgive a friend." These words echo David's sentiments in Psalm 55:12 when David revealed it was neither an enemy nor someone who hated him who hurt him. David was accustomed to having enemies and being hated, so he already knew how to handle those scenarios.

The immense fear and pain David poured out to God in prayer throughout Psalm 55 was because of betrayal. The wickedness, deceit, and guile all came from David's "equal" who advised him and worshiped alongside him. There had once been a feeling of trust, but now there was the searing feeling of betrayal.

Instead of seeking vengeance, David prayed, albeit strongly, for God to avenge him. When we feel fear or betrayal, it is important for us to remember Romans 12:19, "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord." Just be still and let God avenge you in His timing and in His way.

Reflection and Prayer » What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?	

DAY	4
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Psalm 55:16-23

- ¹⁶ As for me, I will call upon God; and the LORD shall save me.
- ¹⁷ Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud: and he shall hear my voice.
- ¹⁸ He hath delivered my soul in peace from the battle that was against me: for there were many with me.
- ¹⁹ God shall hear, and afflict them, even he that abideth of old. Selah. Because they have no changes, therefore they fear not God.
- ²⁰ He hath put forth his hands against such as be at peace with him: he hath broken his covenant.
- ²¹ The words of his mouth were smoother than butter, but war was in his heart: his words were softer than oil, yet were they drawn swords.
- 22 Cast thy burden upon the LORD, and he shall sustain thee: he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved.
- ²³ But thou, O God, shalt bring them down into the pit of destruction: bloody and deceitful men shall not live out half their days; but I will trust in thee.

Biblical Insight

Since David was beset by evil day and night, he cried out to the Lord in prayer evening, morning, and at noon. This may seem strange to us in the West, but in Hebrew reckoning, the day began at sunset rather than sunrise. It has been suggested that the phrase in v. 19, "they have no changes," could be read as a further description of God's unchanging divine nature. This may be the preferable understanding since the entire point of this section is the contrast between the faithfulness of God and the unfaithfulness of the wicked.

Daily Devotion

God always responds. In Psalm 55:16–23, we see that God responded to the psalmist's actions and to the actions of his betrayers. God saw they lacked repentance and the fear of the Lord. David's betrayers violated peace, broke their covenant, and had evil in their hearts. David recognized that God would answer the betrayers' actions by shortening their lives and leading them to the pit of destruction. But David did not know when. He was simply living in God's space for grace.

The space between what God sees and God's response to the wickedness is "for a little space grace" (Ezra 9:8). It is a time for the wicked to repent and genuinely change. The space for grace is something we rejoice in when we are on the receiving end, but when those who hurt us are in God's space for grace, we may feel like God is blind or deaf to wickedness. Remember, the same space for grace God has for us is the same space God has for the wicked.

Reflection a	=	annly this pri	nciple to your	: life today?	
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Daniel 4 □ 5 □ 6 □ | I John 3 □ 4 □

l Peter 5:7

Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.

Biblical Insight

This verse appears to be a reference to Psalm 55:22: "Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee." The word for "care" is translated "burden" in the Septuagint (*Apostolic Study Bible*). Note that this promise is given in the context of an exhortation to humility (I Peter 5:5), implying this is the Christian's path to freedom from worry and care. Only the one who humbly relies on God alone for strength can legitimately hope to experience His wonderful care!

Daily Devotion

Within Union General Ulysses S. Grant's memoirs, Grant's humble tone stands out in stark contrast to his contemporaries' memoirs. Unlike them, Grant recorded both his victories and defeats. He openly admitted his mistakes such as the Union attack at Cold Harbor in 1864. The battle was one of the bloodiest battles in American history in which the North suffered a defeat and a large number of casualties. Within his memoir, Grant could have easily placed the blame for failed strategies on his subordinates. In like manner as King David, Grant demonstrated humility in admitting failures and learning from his mistakes. He then won the Civil War without gloating.

We live in a culture centered around fame, pride, and humanism—a culture where humility is often mistaken for weakness. Society promotes seeking honor for oneself by being overconfident and recognized for what you own or do. While the world teaches humility as weakness, God's Word exalts humility as strength. It takes strength to value others over yourself, to admit shortcomings, to ask for help, and to honor others. In God's kingdom culture, pride, not humility, is the sign of weakness.

eflection an	d Prayer				
What can y	ou do to ap	ply this prir	nciple to you	life today?	

SG PARTICIPANT'S GUIDE



Lesson Title: Our Burden Bearer

Scripture Focus: Psalm 55:22

The Lesson in Context

Psalm 55 records a prayer of David during a time of great distress and anguish at the treachery of a friend. Some believe David was writing concerning the betrayal of his son Absalom, but others believe it was written when David was running from King Saul. Regardless of when David penned this psalm, it surely must reflect the kind of pain and suffering he endured at the betrayal of his own son.

David knew the best way to come out of his anguish and deal with his pain was to cast his cares upon the Lord. He knew that only the sustaining power of the Lord could deliver him from the suffering of betrayal. He was certain that as long as he kept his faith and confidence in God, nothing could move him from the Lord's hand of righteousness. David wrote, "Cast thy burden upon the LORD, and he shall sustain thee: he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved" (Psalm 55:22).

Group Discussion

- 1. Have you ever experienced betrayal at the hands of a trusted friend? What were your emotions during that unfortunate experience?
- 2. Contemplate the effect of your daily time of prayer and reflecting on the Lord. How does it strengthen and prepare you for daily spiritual challenges? What might be the negative effects of failing to maintain that daily time with the Lord?
- 3. How do you handle troublesome burdens you experience through life's trials? What have you found to be your best course of action at these times?
- 4. Contemplate the adage "facing your fears with faith." How might that approach help you to live a victorious Christian life?
- 5. How can we practically cast our burdens upon the Lord? How do you do so personally?

My Prayer for the Upcoming Week How do you want to be different beca	ause of what you have experienced today?

3.1

UNMOVED BY GOD'S WORD

LESSON BIG IDEAI will heed and obey
God's Word.

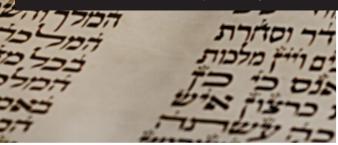
TRUTH ABOUT GODGod expects us to heed and obey His Word.



FOCUS VERSE: Jeremiah 36:24

Yet they were not afraid, nor rent their garments, neither the king, nor any of his servants that heard all these words.

LESSON TEXT: Jeremiah 36:1-32; II Timothy 4:1-4



BIBLICAL OVERVIEW

Lesson Text: Jeremiah 36:1–32; II Timothy 4:1–4

Within the Book of Jeremiah, King Jehoiakim is pictured as his archnemesis, actively antagonizing the prophet Jeremiah and attempting to destroy any prophetic resistance. Prior to Jehoiakim's appearance here in chapter 36, he also appeared in Jeremiah 26 in the aftermath of Jeremiah's infamous Temple sermon, but he was not Jeremiah's opponent. (See Jeremiah 7:1-31.) He was the opponent of a prophet named Urijah ben Shemaiah from Kiriath Jearim who, like Jeremiah, preached soon-coming judgment on Jerusalem and all of Judah. Jehoiakim's animosity to Urijah was so intense that, even after he fled to Egypt and was no longer a threat. Jehojakim pursued him. kidnapped him, and brought him back to Jerusalem to be assassinated. To add insult to injury, his body was "cast...into the graves of the common people," (v. 23) which could either mean his body was left unburied or that he was buried without ceremony in an undesirable grave. It should not be surprising that a king who so blatantly disrespected the prophetic person would also disrespect the prophetic word as he did in Jeremiah 36.

However, the main point of the story is the durability of the prophetic Word, symbolized by the rewritten scroll. Jehoiakim lacked spiritual perception and persisted to see every action through a lens of political expediency. Jeremiah and Urijah's message of Jerusalem's fall and the need to surrender to Babylon was rejected as subversive and disloyal. But not every reality is a political reality, nor can everything be manipulated by political maneuvering, especially the sovereign will of God. This is the overarching lesson that Jeremiah's life represented and Jehoiakim refused to learn.

In a much later and different context, the apostle Paul encouraged his "son in the faith" with the assurance of the Word's continued durability and effectiveness. Those who reject Timothy's sound doctrine do no damage to it, only to themselves and their eternal destiny. Although there is no explicit allusion to the figure of Jeremiah here—as there is in Paul's description of his own apostolic call—his life would not have been far from Paul or Timothy's recollection as another stalwart "preacher of the Word." (See Galatians 1:15; Jeremiah 1:5.)

THE MAIN POINT OF THE STORY IS THE DURABILITY OF THE PROPHETIC WORD, SYMBOLIZED BY THE REWRITTEN SCROLL.

DAY 1

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Daniel 7 □ 8 □ 9 □ 10 □ | I John 5 □

Jeremiah 36:1-8

- ¹ And it came to pass in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah, that this word came unto Jeremiah from the LORD, saying.
- ² Take thee a roll of a book, and write therein all the words that I have spoken unto thee against Israel, and against Judah, and against all the nations, from the day I spake unto thee, from the days of Josiah, even unto this day.
- ³ It may be that the house of Judah will hear all the evil which I purpose to do unto them; that they may return every man from his evil way; that I may forgive their iniquity and their sin.
- ⁴ Then Jeremiah called Baruch the son of Neriah: and Baruch wrote from the mouth of Jeremiah all the words of the LORD, which he had spoken unto him, upon a roll of a book.
- ⁵ And Jeremiah commanded Baruch, saying, I am shut up; I cannot go into the house of the LORD:
- ⁶ Therefore go thou, and read in the roll, which thou hast written from my mouth, the words of the LORD in the ears of the people in the LORD's house upon the fasting day: and also thou shalt read them in the ears of all Judah that come out of their cities.
- ⁷ It may be they will present their supplication before the LORD, and will return every one from his evil way: for great is the anger and the fury that the LORD hath pronounced against this people.
- ⁸ And Baruch the son of Neriah did according to all that Jeremiah the prophet commanded him, reading in the book the words of the LORD in the LORD's house.

Biblical Insight

The action of proclaiming the Word in the Temple precincts recalls the earlier story of Jeremiah's Temple sermon (Jeremiah 7:1; 26:2) with two important differences. First, Jeremiah had been physically detained and could not enter the Temple precincts, so he sent an emissary to perform this task. Due to Jeremiah's detainment, the word of judgment was first recorded in a scroll and then read aloud. When Jeremiah last spoke within the Temple precincts, he was met with a violent backlash and death threats, but a small faction of the royal court defended him.

Daily Devotion

We live in a similar time as Jeremiah 36. Prophecies are unfolding in our world every day regarding the end of the age. Amid these prophecies, there is also a call to repentance and salvation. Just like Judah had a choice in how they responded to God's Word, so do we. When we hear God's Word and see the fulfillment of prophecies, will we repent and change how we live? Or will we despise God's Word by ignoring or even attacking God's Word? May we hear and heed the unchanging, unfailing Word of God.

Reflection and Prayer » What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?	
» What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?	

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Jeremiah 36:11-19

¹¹ When Michaiah the son of Gemariah, the son of Shaphan, had heard out of the book all the words of the LORD,

¹² Then he went down into the king's house, into the scribe's chamber: and, lo, all the princes sat there, even Elishama the scribe, and Delaiah the son of Shemaiah, and Elnathan the son of Achbor, and Gemariah the son of Shaphan, and Zedekiah the son of Hananiah, and all the princes.

¹³ Then Michaiah declared unto them all the words that he had heard, when Baruch read the book in the ears of the people.

¹⁴ Therefore all the princes sent Jehudi the son of Nethaniah, the son of Shelemiah, the son of Cushi, unto Baruch, saying, Take in thine hand the roll wherein thou hast read in the ears of the people, and come. So Baruch the son of Neriah took the roll in his hand, and came unto them.

¹⁵ And they said unto him, Sit down now, and read it in our ears. So Baruch read it in their ears.

¹⁶ Now it came to pass, when they had heard all the words, they were afraid both one and other, and said unto Baruch, We will surely tell the king of all these words.

¹⁷ And they asked Baruch, saying, Tell us now, How didst thou write all these words at his mouth?

¹⁸ Then Baruch answered them, He pronounced all these words unto me with his mouth, and I wrote them with ink in the book.

¹⁹Then said the princes unto Baruch, Go, hide thee, thou and Jeremiah; and let no man know where ye be.

Biblical Insight

The small faction of royal advisors who agreed with Jeremiah that Judah's only option for survival was submission to Babylon included Gemariah, the son of Shaphan. Throughout the Book of Jeremiah, the powerful family of Shaphan provided protection for the beleaguered prophet. Decades earlier, Shaphan was the scribe who delivered the lost copy of the Law of Moses to King Josiah (II Kings 22:8-10) and sparked Judah's greatest religious reformation and spiritual revival since the days of King David. (See II Kings 23:25.)

Daily Devotion

Since many of us live in areas of the world where owning and reading Bibles is legal and Bibles are readily available online, in apps, and in stores, we can easily take the Bible for granted. It is easy to disregard the Bible app or allow our Bibles to collect dust. It is easy to forget that right now many people risk imprisonment and death just to read God's Word. The very Bible we have translated into our language is a privilege that countless people around the world do not have. Yet many of us struggle to set aside time in our day to read the Word.

Reflection and Prayer	
» What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?	

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Jeremiah 36:20-26

- ²⁰ And they went in to the king into the court, but they laid up the roll in the chamber of Elishama the scribe, and told all the words in the ears of the king.
- ²¹ So the king sent Jehudi to fetch the roll: and he took it out of Elishama the scribe's chamber. And Jehudi read it in the ears of the king, and in the ears of all the princes which stood beside the king.
- ²² Now the king sat in the winterhouse in the ninth month: and there was a fire on the hearth burning before him.
- ²³ And it came to pass, that when Jehudi had read three or four leaves, he cut it with the penknife, and cast it into the fire that was on the hearth, until all the roll was consumed in the fire that was on the hearth.
- ²⁴ Yet they were not afraid, nor rent their garments, neither the king, nor any of his servants that heard all these words.
- ²⁵ Nevertheless Elnathan and Delaiah and Gemariah had made intercession to the king that he would not burn the roll: but he would not hear them.
- ²⁶ But the king commanded Jerahmeel the son of Hammelech, and Seraiah the son of Azriel, and Shelemiah the son of Abdeel, to take Baruch the scribe and Jeremiah the prophet; but the LORD hid them.

Biblical Insight

King Jehoiakim's actions here are alarming in their callousness, even to some of his own advisors (v. 25). The detail that "they were not afraid, nor rent their garments" (v. 24) serves to contrast this incident to the story of his father King Josiah's reception of another scroll, the lost Law of Moses discovered in the Temple: "When the king had heard the words of the book of the law, that he rent his clothes" (II Kings 22:11). Rather than bringing about a mighty revival, Jehoiakim's actions serve to seal his fate and the fate of Jerusalem.

Daily Devotion

Beyond pride, there is *hubris*. Hubris is an Ancient Greek term referring to overconfidence that leads people to try overstepping their human limitations to become more godlike in their minds. Within classical Greek tragedy, hubris was often the shortcoming, or Achilles' heel, that brought the hero to his tragic demise. The demise was a sharp and humbling reminder of mortality.

Hubris can be seen in history and in contemporary leaders. It is seen throughout the Bible in King Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 4:30), Goliath (I Samuel 17:41-44), King Belshazzar (Daniel 5:20), and King Jehoiakim (Jeremiah 36:23-24). Unlike King Nebuchadnezzar, Goliath, and King Belshazzar, King Jehoiakim did not boast of his power nor claim to be like a god. But King Jehoiakim's reaction and actions towards God's Word demonstrated he believed he was more than other humans. There was no fear, remorse, or sorrow upon hearing God's Word because hubris hardened his heart.

Reflection and Prayer	
» What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?	

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Jeremiah 36:27-32

- ²⁷ Then the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah, after that the king had burned the roll, and the words which Baruch wrote at the mouth of Jeremiah, saying,
- ²⁸ Take thee again another roll, and write in it all the former words that were in the first roll, which Jehoiakim the king of Judah hath burned.
- ²⁹ And thou shalt say to Jehoiakim king of Judah, Thus saith the LORD; Thou hast burned this roll, saying, Why hast thou written therein, saying, The king of Babylon shall certainly come and destroy this land, and shall cause to cease from thence man and beast?
- ³⁰ Therefore thus saith the LORD of Jehoiakim king of Judah; He shall have none to sit upon the throne of David: and his dead body shall be cast out in the day to the heat, and in the night to the frost.
- ³¹ And I will punish him and his seed and his servants for their iniquity; and I will bring upon them, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and upon the men of Judah, all the evil that I have pronounced against them; but they hearkened not.
- ³²Then took Jeremiah another roll, and gave it to Baruch the scribe, the son of Neriah; who wrote therein from the mouth of Jeremiah all the words of the book which Jehoiakim king of Judah had burned in the fire: and there were added besides unto them many like words.

Biblical Insight

In this passage we learn that the rewritten scroll was longer than the first scroll. Some scholars have speculated that the first scroll contained the messages recorded in Jeremiah 1–25, whereas this second, longer scroll may have contained the material we have in chapters 26–52—especially the memoir material in chapters 26–28, 38–41—that focuses more on Jeremiah's stories than his messages. This idea of two different editions of Jeremiah is made even more intriguing by the book's own textual history. The ancient Greek (Septuagint) version of the book is roughly 20 percent shorter than the ancient Hebrew (Masoretic) version.

Daily Devotion

King Jehoiakim of Judah tried to destroy the Word of God. As he read sections of the scroll, Jehoiakim cut pieces and cast them into the fire. Jehoiakim thought he could destroy God's Word, but he failed. But he was not the last to try.

The Seleucid King Antiochus Epiphanes ruled from 175–164 BC. He not only plundered the Temple in Jerusalem and desecrated the altar, but he also attempted to eliminate the scrolls of the Law by ordering all copies of the Law to be burned (Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*). His attempt to destroy the Law failed. In 303 AD, Roman Emperor Diocletian began "The Great Persecution" against Christians by ordering every Bible to be burned and everyone who owned a Bible to be killed (Eusebius, *History of the Church*). His attempts to eradicate Scripture and Christianity failed.

Reflection and Prayer » What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?	
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Bible Reading Pla	ır
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Hosea 10 □ 11 □ 12 □ 13 □ 14 □ | Revelation 2 □

II Timothy 4:1-4

- ¹I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom;
- ² Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.
- ³ For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears;
- ⁴ And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.

Biblical Insight

The opening line lends this text an unsurpassed solemnity, carrying with it the cross-Testament emphasis on the "last words" of key figures: Jacob (Genesis 49), Moses (Deuteronomy 31–33), Joshua (Joshua 23–24), Samuel (I Samuel 12); and Jesus (John 13–17). These speeches are typically used to mark the end of a phase of God's salvation-history.

With the death of Paul, one of the last of the eyewitnesses (see I Corinthians 15:8), the churches he founded would be led by second-generation leaders. Paul's charge to Timothy marked the transition from the Apostolic to the post-Apostolic eras of church history.

Daily Devotion

Paul's exhortation to Timothy to preach the truth even when people prefer false teaching resonates today. According to a 2018 Pew Research Center study, six out of ten Christians hold at least one New Age belief such as astrology, reincarnation, psychics, or spiritual energies in nature (Claire Gecewicz, "New Age' Beliefs Common Among Both Religious and Nonreligious Americans").

The study further discovered that these New Age beliefs are not replacing beliefs in the Bible or traditional Christian beliefs. Instead, they are blended into Christians' views of the Bible. This syncretism (or blending of beliefs) is linked to the "I'm not religious; I am spiritual" shift in religious expression often classified as "nones." While Christianity is decreasing in the Western world, the number of "nones" are increasing.

People are increasingly turning away "their ears from the truth" and are trying to mix truth with lies. Now is the time to speak up about Jesus. It is time to proclaim sound doctrine louder than ever lest generations continue believing fables they believe are truth.

eflection and F	rayer				
What can you	do to apply	this princip	le to your life	today?	

SG PARTICIPANT'S GUIDE



Lesson Title: Unmoved by God's Word

Scripture Focus: Jeremiah 36:24

The Lesson in Context

Government officials sent Jehudi to bring Baruch to them so they too could hear what the scroll had to say. Then the princes hid the scroll and told the king what they had heard. Jehoiakim wanted to hear this for himself, so he sent Jehudi to get the scroll and to read it to him. As Jehudi read to the king and his princes, a fire burned on the hearth in the room. Jehudi would read three or four columns from the scroll, and the king would take a scribe's knife, cut off the columns that had been read, and throw them into the fire. He did this until the entire scroll was destroyed.

The Word of God cuts across the grain of humanistic philosophy. It is offensive to those opposed to God's purposes in their lives. Paul described these people as those who "will no longer listen to sound and wholesome teaching. They will follow their own desires and will look for teachers who will tell them whatever their itching ears want to hear" (II Timothy 4:3, NLT). As a consequence of turning from truth, they turn to fables (II Timothy 4:4).

Group Discussion

- Name one person whose spiritual example has had the most influence on your life.
- Can you list some specific biblical commands you have obeyed during the past seven days? Are there any direct commands you have disobeyed? Explain.
- 3. Are there Scriptures you avoid reading because they make you uncomfortable? Explain.
- 4. Why do you think some people, even some pastors and churches, refuse to highlight some portions of Scripture?
- 5. Do you read Scripture daily? How long has it been since you have read the Bible from beginning to end?

My Prayer for the Upcoming Week How do you want to be different because of what you have experienced today?	

3.2

RESTORING WORSHIP

LESSON BIG IDEAI will make my life a house of worship.

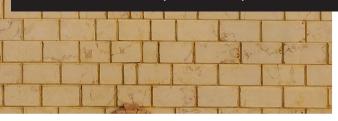
TRUTH ABOUT GODGod's house should be filled with the sacrifice of worship.



FOCUS VERSE: Ezra 3:6

From the first day of the seventh month began they to offer burnt offerings unto the Lord. But the foundation of the temple of the Lord was not yet laid.

LESSON TEXT: Ezra 3:1-13; Psalm 118:1-4, 26-29



BIBLICAL OVERVIEW

Lesson Text: Ezra 3:1-13; Psalm 118:1-4, 26-29

The history of the post-exilic period is found in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah, which have long been treated as a two-volume work by a single author (similar to Luke-Acts in the New Testament). It is also broadly assumed that this same individual compiled the retold history of Israel found in I and II Chronicles. Although this individual is technically anonymous and is best referred to as the "Chronicler," the description these books provide of the crucial role of the scribe Ezra make him a more-than-likely candidate. As these books reveal, Israel's return from Exile occurred in several waves:

- The initial return in 539 BC, led by the Persian-appointed governor Zerubbabel, after Cyrus' decree that the city of Jerusalem and the Temple were to be rebuilt (Ezra 1:1-4)
- A second return, led by the scribe Ezra, in 458 BC, almost sixty years after the Temple had been rebuilt (Ezra 7:7-8)
- A third return, led by Artaxerxes I's personal advisor, Nehemiah, in 445 BC (Nehemiah 2:1)

Given the proximity of the returns led by Ezra and Nehemiah, their leadership of the returned community overlapped. (See Nehemiah 8:9.) Ezra represented the religious authority, while Nehemiah represented the civil authority. Their team leadership model imitated the example of Joshua and Eleazar, who led the initial conquest of the Promised Land after the death of Moses. (See Joshua 1:1–6; 14:1.)

In Ezra's report of the dedication of the Second Temple's foundations, we are offered a rare glimpse of an ancient Israelite "worship service." We even hear a snippet of their singing (Ezra 3:11): "He is good, for his mercy endureth forever toward Israel." In Psalms 118 and 136, this phrase appears as a kind of refrain that seems to have been chanted as an anthem with a lead singer, giving us important clues about the responsive nature of Israelite worship.

EZRA REPRESENTED THE RELIGIOUS AUTHORITY, WHILE NEHEMIAH REPRESENTED THE CIVIL AUTHORITY.

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Bible Reading Plan	Bible	Reading	Plar
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Joel 1 \square 2 \square 3 \square | Revelation 3 \square 4 \square

Ezra 3:1-3

¹ And when the seventh month was come, and the children of Israel were in the cities, the people gathered themselves together as one man to Jerusalem.

² Then stood up Jeshua the son of Jozadak, and his brethren the priests, and Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and his brethren, and builded the altar of the God of Israel, to offer burnt offerings thereon, as it is written in the law of Moses the man of God.

³ And they set the altar upon his bases; for fear was upon them because of the people of those countries; and they offered burnt offerings thereon unto the LORD, even burnt offerings morning and evening.

Biblical Insight

The seventh month was the month of Tishri, the first month of the Israelite calendar. The first day of the month was Rosh Hashanah (meaning the "head of the year") and is still celebrated by blowing trumpets (Numbers 29:1). Ten days later, Yom Kippur ("Day of Atonement") was observed, the holiest day of the Israelite year. Four days following, the Feast of Tabernacles was celebrated (Leviticus 23:33-36). The altar was rebuilt in the month of Tishri, marking a new beginning for Israel's religious life that had been disrupted by the destruction of the Temple and the Babylonian exile.

Daily Devotion

To-do lists can seem never-ending. When we wake in the morning, it can be easy to feel overwhelmed with what needs to be done before we leave the house, not to mention the other things that must be done. Sometimes it can be a struggle to figure out what item we should do first.

When the remnants returned to Jerusalem after a long exile, their to-do list was immense. Yes, it was a dream come true to be in Jerusalem, but the city was broken, the wall was rubble, and their beloved Temple was in ruins. Zion was only a shadow of what it once was. There was so much that needed to be done, but where should they begin? Should they begin with the walls since there were enemies? Maybe restore the farms for food? There were countless ways the exiles could have begun their rebuilding project, but they began by rebuilding the altar. No matter how many things are on our to-do list, our priority must be our relationship with God. When an altar is not our priority, it can be easily forgotten by the end of the day. Let us build and rebuild our altars first.

Reflection and Prayer » What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?	

			Bib	ole Reading Plan
Amos 1□	2 🗆	3 □	4 🗆	Revelation 5 🗆

Ezra 3:4-6

⁴They kept also the feast of tabernacles, as it is written, and offered the daily burnt offerings by number, according to the custom, as the duty of every day required;

⁵ And afterward offered the continual burnt offering, both of the new moons, and of all the set feasts of the LORD that were consecrated, and of every one that willingly offered a freewill offering unto the LORD.

⁶ From the first day of the seventh month began they to offer burnt offerings unto the LORD. But the foundation of the temple of the LORD was not yet laid.

Biblical Insight

The Feast of Tabernacles (Hebrew *Sukkot*) was the final greatest of the three pilgrimage festivals when all Israelites were required to make pilgrimage to the central place of worship. (See Exodus 23:14.) During this week-long celebration, they were to live in booths constructed of luxuriant branches as prescribed in Leviticus 23:39–40. The feast was a dual celebration of the end of the grape and olive harvest (and the harvest season in general) and Israel's sojourn in the wilderness, marked by God's bountiful provision. In every seventh Jubilee year, the Book of the Law was to be read at this festival. (See Deuteronomy 31:9-13; Nehemiah 8:13-18.)

Daily Devotion

When the Holocaust ended in 1945, many liberated survivors from the Nazi labor and concentration camps had nowhere to go and no one waiting for them. Displaced Persons camps (DPs) were created as temporary housing for Holocaust survivors throughout Austria, Italy, and Germany. The DPs were temporary sanctuaries, or tabernacles, where survivors found community, began healing from their captivity, and began reconnecting to their faith. For these survivors, the Feast of Tabernacles resonated deeply.

Soon after returning from exile, the remnant celebrated *Sukkot*. They were also living in temporary dwellings much like their ancestors had in the wilderness. Remembering the wilderness wanderings was a reminder that the tents were only for a season until they reached the Promised Land. For those returning, celebrating the Feast of Tabernacles was a reminder that their destroyed Jerusalem was also only temporary. It was a place for them to heal from captivity, grow closer as a community, and reconnect to their faith. These temporary dwellings symbolized the transition from captivity to freedom. The season of transition is often a time of joy, healing, and connecting with God.

eflection and Prayer		
What can you do to a	oply this principle to your life	today?

DAY	3
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Bib	le	Rea	din	a P	lar

Amos 5 □ 6 □ 7 □ 8 □ 9 □ | Revelation 6 □

Ezra 3:10-13

¹⁰ And when the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the LORD, they set the priests in their apparel with trumpets, and the Levites the sons of Asaph with cymbals, to praise the LORD, after the ordinance of David king of Israel.

¹¹ And they sang together by course in praising and giving thanks unto the LORD; because he is good, for his mercy endureth for ever toward Israel. And all the people shouted with a great shout, when they praised the LORD, because the foundation of the house of the LORD was laid.

¹² But many of the priests and Levites and chief of the fathers, who were ancient men, that had seen the first house, when the foundation of this house was laid before their eyes, wept with a loud voice; and many shouted aloud for joy:

¹³ So that the people could not discern the noise of the shout of joy from the noise of the weeping of the people: for the people shouted with a loud shout, and the noise was heard afar off.

Biblical Insight

The dedication of the Second Temple's foundations was symbolic of the poignancy of Israel's overall experience of the return from the Exile. As all the people shouted for joy, the elder priests and Levites wept because of the disappointing appearance of the new structure. This feeling of disappointment eventually overwhelmed the excitement and the work ceased altogether. Almost twenty years later, God raised up the elder prophet Haggai to encourage the people to resume rebuilding with the promise, "The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former...and in this place will I give peace" (Haggai 2:9).

Daily Devotion

Imitation brands, although generally less expensive, are no real substitute for authentic merchandise. Any religion can offer some sort of water or Spirit baptism and even make it look appealing as they promote it as the genuine article in the salvation process. However, if it is not the genuine, biblical water and Spirit baptism we see in the New Testament church, it is not the genuine experience God planned for us. It is only a watered-down version of the truth that leaves us searching for the real thing.

With His own blood, Jesus bought remission of sins. We can respond to His sacrifice and receive freedom from sin through water baptism and the infilling of the Spirit through Holy Spirit baptism. It cost Him everything, but Jesus counted our souls worth the cost of His life. Being baptized in Jesus' name and with His Spirit ensures a better life here on earth and a promise of eternity with our Maker. No half-price, generic form will work when it comes to the kingdom of God. Get the product that is endorsed with the name you can trust, the only saving name—the name of Jesus.

Reflection and Prayer » What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?	

DAY	4
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	Bible Reading	Plan
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Obadiah □ | Revelation 7 □ 8 □

Psalm 118:1-4

- ¹O give thanks unto the Lord; for he is good: because his mercy endureth for ever.
- ² Let Israel now say, that his mercy endureth for ever.
- ³ Let the house of Aaron now say, that his mercy endureth for ever.
- ⁴ Let them now that fear the Lord say, that his mercy endureth for ever.

Biblical Insight

It appears this refrain was to be sung by the gathered congregants, then the priests, and finally by the entire assembly (vv. 2-4). The proclamation evokes the character (the Lord is good) and the action (His mercy endureth forever) of God. The claim that God's mercy endures forever is rooted in the divine self-revelation to Moses at Sinai after the Golden Calf debacle. There God claimed divine judgment for sin would last up to four generations, but divine mercy and forgiveness would extend to a thousand generations ("forever").

Daily Devotion

The Protestant Reformation was a watershed moment in world history. For centuries, the Roman Catholic church operated as strict gatekeepers to understanding the Bible, while becoming increasingly embroiled in political intrigues and abuses of spiritual authority. On October 31, 1517, Martin Luther posted his "Ninety-five Theses" on the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg, Germany. His actions sparked the Protestant Reformation and many trials and tribulations for Luther. In 1530 Luther wrote a commentary on Psalm 118 in which he said, "This is my own beloved psalm" (D. Ngien, *Fruit for the Soul: Luther on the Lament Psalms*).

It is not surprising that Psalm 118 would resonate with someone who felt threatened and abandoned. In Luther's commentary, he shared how Psalm 118 comforted him when everyone turned their backs on him. We can also find comfort in this selfsame psalm because it reminds us we can give thanks to God in every situation. God's mercy endures even when others have turned their backs on us or nations rise against us. We must never forget that God's mercy will endure through our current situation.

Reflection and Prayer	
What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?	

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Bible	Reading	Plar
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Jonah 1 \square 2 \square 3 \square 4 \square | Revelation 9 \square 10 \square

Psalm 118:26-29

- ²⁶ Blessed be he that cometh in the name of the Lord: we have blessed you out of the house of the Lord.
- ²⁷ God is the Lord, which hath shewed us light: bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar.
- ²⁸ Thou art my God, and I will praise thee: thou art my God, I will exalt thee.
- ²⁹ O give thanks unto the Lord; for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever.

Biblical Insight

In context, this appears to be a blessing that the priest or the king pronounced over the congregation. Blessing the people "in the name of Yahweh" was a regular priestly responsibility. (See Numbers 6:24–26.) However, here the emphasis is that this blessing only properly belongs to those who come "in the name of (in covenant relationship with) the LORD." The crowd recited this text at Jesus' Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem (Matthew 21:9). Jesus interpreted Psalm 118 as a description of the Jews' rejection of Him as Messiah and their consequent judgment. (See Matthew 21:42–45.)

Daily Devotion

At the beginning of Jesus' Passion, the crowd shouted "Hosanna!" as praise and a plea for salvation, but they ended the week by calling for Jesus to be crucified. We see both extremes play out in Psalm 118. One minute, the crowds welcomed the deliverer with an open gate with shouts of "save now" and a blessing. The next minute, the psalmist wrote about the stone the builders rejected. This cycle can be seen throughout the Bible and in our own lives. When we want to be saved from sin or its consequences, we cry out to God for deliverance and praise Him because we know He can deliver us. Once we are delivered, we are grateful—for a while. However, if we are not intentional in changing our life and growing closer to God, we will soon reject Jesus and restart the cycle. Breaking the cycle begins when we start praising God for who He is rather than what He can do for us.

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What can	you do to a	pply this pri	inciple to your	life today?	

SG PARTICIPANT'S GUIDE



Lesson Title: Restoring Worship

Scripture Focus: Ezra 3:6

The Lesson in Context

Upon arriving in Judah and Jerusalem, the Jews had a great deal of work to do. It is understandable that they first took care of their basic needs—building homes, for example—so they could simply survive. But once their basic needs were met, they made fully restoring their worship and relationship with God their priority. No doubt they prayed and sang the songs of Zion as they took care of their basic needs, but freed from this initial labor, they built their altar.

The Israelites' example shows us that we can, and should, make worship a priority. Our world, our flesh, and the devil will constantly work to distract us from worship by making other things seem more necessary—and certainly more desirable. But nothing can take the place of our worship. No one is going to make this happen for us. Our moods and feelings cannot be our guide—we do not worship just when we happen to feel like it. Our gratitude for God covering our sins and saving us should be the foundation for us choosing day by day to make worship our priority.

Group Discussion

- 1. What was the significance of Jeshua and Zerubbabel building the altar on the exact spot the original altar had been?
- 2. What was the significance of the daily sacrifices being offered twice a day?
- 3. Why would God feel the need to command the Israelites to rejoice during the Feast of Tabernacles?
- 4. Why is it a challenge for us to keep worship a priority in our lives?
- 5. What does it mean to make our lives a house of worship?

 or the Upcoming Week want to be different because of what you have experienced today?

AUGUST 21, 2022

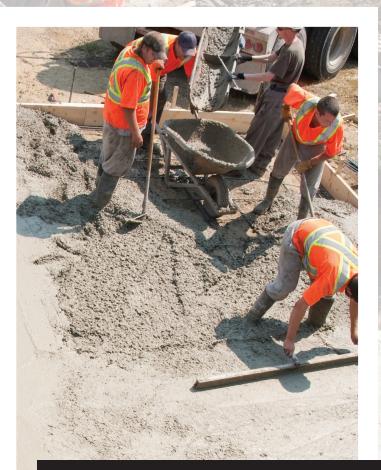
SERIES 3: THE IMPORTANCE OF GOD'S WORD

3.3

BUILDING ON GOD'S WORD

LESSON BIG IDEAI will build my life upon God's Word.

TRUTH ABOUT GODGod's house should be filled with the sacrifice of worship.



FOCUS VERSES: II Chronicles 34:31

And the king stood in his place, and made a covenant before the Lord, to walk after the Lord, and to keep his commandments, and his testimonies, and his statutes, with all his heart, and with all his soul, to perform the words of the covenant which are written in this book.

LESSON TEXT: II Chronicles 34:8-33; II Timothy 3:16-17

BIBLICAL OVERVIEW

Lesson Text: II Chronicles 34:8-33; II Timothy 3:16-17

The books of I and II Chronicles present us with a retelling of the fate of the nation of Israel during the monarchy. Though these books largely cohere with the portrayal of the period in I Samuel through II Kings, there are some significant differences. For example, the story of King David's reign contains no allusion to his adulterous affair with Bathsheba or his murder of her husband, Uriah the Hittite, we read in II Samuel 11. Likewise, the story of Adonijah's rebellion from II Kings 1 is also absent. Most notably, here we have no recounting of the reign of King Saul (only the story of his death; see I Chronicles 10) or of the seven-and-a-half-year interim period where David reigned over Judah, and Saul's son Ishbosheth reigned over the rest of the kingdom (II Samuel 2-4). There is also no account of the entire history of the Northern Kingdom of Israel.

In contemporary terms, Chronicles would be counted as a "revisionist" history that conveniently cut out difficult parts of the story. However, that is an inappropriate label for at least three reasons. To begin, Chronicles never contradicted the story related in I Samuel-II Kings, though it did leave out parts of that story. At certain points, such as Manasseh's repentance in II Chronicles 33:10-17, the Chronicler went beyond the story we already read. Next, Chronicles was clearly written during the post-exilic period and had a different intention than the other historical books. Whereas the books of Samuel and Kings strove to present an explanation for why the Exile happened in the first place. Chronicles was revisiting the same historical period, looking to provide discouraged returnees reasons for hope; even wicked King Manasseh was forgiven! Third, as we see in II Chronicles 34, a key focus of the work was the Temple and worship in the Temple. Since the return from Exile did not include a restoration of Davidic kingship, Israelite identity in this era was firmly rooted in the Temple and in observance of the Torah, which is presented to us as the basis for all true reform. In the story of Josiah's reform, one can easily trace the various functions of the divine Word that Paul outlined in II Timothy 3:16-17.

THE BOOKS OF I AND II CHRONICLES PRESENT US WITH A RETELLING OF THE FATE OF THE NATION OF ISRAEL DURING THE MONARCHY.

	Bible	Rea	ding	Plan
Micah 1□	2 🗆	3 □	4 🗆	5 🗆

II Chronicles 34:8-13

⁸ Now in the eighteenth year of his reign, when he had purged the land, and the house, he sent Shaphan the son of Azaliah, and Maaseiah the governor of the city, and Joah the son of Joahaz the recorder, to repair the house of the Lord his God.

⁹ And when they came to Hilkiah the high priest, they delivered the money that was brought into the house of God, which the Levites that kept the doors had gathered of the hand of Manasseh and Ephraim, and of all the remnant of Israel, and of all Judah and Benjamin; and they returned to Jerusalem.

¹⁰ And they put it in the hand of the workmen that had the oversight of the house of the Lord, and they gave it to the workmen that wrought in the house of the Lord, to repair and amend the house:

¹¹ Even to the artificers and builders gave they it, to buy hewn stone, and timber for couplings, and to floor the houses which the kings of Judah had destroyed.

¹² And the men did the work faithfully: and the overseers of them were Jahath and Obadiah, the Levites, of the sons of Merari; and Zechariah and Meshullam, of the sons of the Kohathites, to set it forward; and other of the Levites, all that could skill of instruments of musick.

¹³ Also they were over the bearers of burdens, and were overseers of all that wrought the work in any manner of service: and of the Levites there were scribes, and officers, and porters.

Biblical Insight

Josiah's massive national religious reform worked in a noticeable pattern from the outside in. It began in the earlier part of the chapter with the destruction of the outlying high places and groves throughout Judah and the territory of the long-departed Northern Kingdom of Israel (II Chronicles 34:3,6). In v. 7 Josiah turned his attention to reform in the Judean capital. Josiah's reforms extended into the northern territory, indicating his ambition to see the divided Kingdom reunited under a Davidic king!

Daily Devotion

Idolatry is as prevalent today as in the ancient world. While we may not see altars to Baal or Asherah poles, there is still idolatry. An idol can be anything or anyone we put before our God. It is something that consumes our mind and diverts our attention. Instead of seeking first the kingdom of God, we seek a person or thing first. We cannot love God with all our heart, soul, and mind if we keep idols in our lives. Only when idols are entirely destroyed and removed can renewal begin in our lives.

Reflection and Prayer » What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?	
» What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?	

DAY	2
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		Bible Reading	Plan
Micah 6 □	7 🗆	Revelation 11 □	12 □

II Chronicles 34:14-21

¹⁴ And when they brought out the money that was brought into the house of the Lord, Hilkiah the priest found a book of the law of the Lord given by Moses.

¹⁵ And Hilkiah answered and said to Shaphan the scribe, I have found the book of the law in the house of the Lord. And Hilkiah delivered the book to Shaphan.

¹⁶ And Shaphan carried the book to the king, and brought the king word back again, saying, All that was committed to thy servants, they do it.

 17 And they have gathered together the money that was found in the house of the Lord, and have delivered it into the hand of the overseers, and to the hand of the workmen.

¹⁸ Then Shaphan the scribe told the king, saying, Hilkiah the priest hath given me a book. And Shaphan read it before the king.

¹⁹ And it came to pass, when the king had heard the words of the law, that he rent his clothes.

²⁰ And the king commanded Hilkiah, and Ahikam the son of Shaphan, and Abdon the son of Micah, and Shaphan the scribe, and Asaiah a servant of the king's, saying,

²¹ Go, enquire of the Lord for me, and for them that are left in Israel and in Judah, concerning the words of the book that is found: for great is the wrath of the Lord that is poured out upon us, because our fathers have not kept the word of the Lord, to do after all that is written in this book.

Biblical Insight

In 2018, a reporter arrived in the Kimyal community in West Papua, Indonesia, to record their reactions when they received the New Testament translated into their language. According to a man interviewed, their once heavy hearts were now lighter because they could have the entire New Testament in their language. As the plane landed, the tribe was waiting and cheering with their voices raised in song. Upon receiving the Bibles, they stopped to pray. There were tears, rejoicing, and praise when they received God's Word .

The story of the Kingdom of Judah would have been different if they responded to God's Word like the Kimyal community. Instead, at some point during one of the reigns of the blasphemous kings, the Book of the Law had been misplaced in the Temple (II Chronicles 34:15). This means that the Word had been with them all along, but it had been neglected. Because of its neglect, Judah was judged.

How we treat the Word of God matters. Do we respect, honor, and rejoice in the Word of the Lord? Or have we misplaced and neglected the Word in our lives?

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What can you do to a	oply this principle to your life	today?

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Nahum 1 \square 2 \square 3 \square | Revelation 13 \square 14 \square

II Chronicles 34:24-27

²⁴Thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will bring evil upon this place, and upon the inhabitants thereof, even all the curses that are written in the book which they have read before the king of Judah:

²⁵Because they have forsaken me, and have burned incense unto other gods, that they might provoke me to anger with all the works of their hands; therefore my wrath shall be poured out upon this place, and shall not be guenched.

²⁶ And as for the king of Judah, who sent you to enquire of the Lord, so shall ye say unto him. Thus saith the Lord God of Israel concerning the words which thou hast heard:

²⁷ Because thine heart was tender, and thou didst humble thyself before God, when thou heardest his words against this place, and against the inhabitants thereof, and humbledst thyself before me, and didst rend thy clothes, and weep before me; I have even heard thee also, saith the Lord.

Biblical Insight

The prophetess Huldah actually gave two messages to the emissaries: one for the people of Judah (vv. 24-25) and the other, longer message for King Josiah himself (vv. 26-28). The message to Josiah essentially exonerated him from the judgment coming on the people because he maintained a tender (responsive and repentant) heart. This implied that the people of Judah allowed their hearts to grow hardened with unrepentance. Josiah continued his religious reform even after receiving divine confirmation that his best efforts were in vain, confirming Huldah's estimation of Josiah's humble and faithful character.

Daily Devotion

William Wilberforce was born into a well-to-do merchant family in 1759. He was elected as a member of parliament in the House of Commons where he developed a reputation as a powerful debater, one who humiliated others, drank, and gambled heavily. Yet he continued to rise in political power. Then a great change took place in his life when he began to accept the authority of God's Word. Soon after, he gave up gambling and drinking. He began treating others with respect and used his political position to serve God by serving his fellow humanity. He especially found the need to reform his country through abolition. His tenacity and faith made him integral to ending the British slave trade in 1807.

Both Wilberforce and King Josiah were in positions of power they could have used to promote their egos. Instead, they allowed God to change them and use them to better their nations. Because of God, both men gained a spiritual tenacity to right wrongs even in cultures with unrepentant hearts. We need this today, but it can only come from spending time on our knees and in God's Word.

Reflection and Prayer » What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?	

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			Bible Rea	ding	Plan
Habakkuk 1□	2 🗆	3 □	Zephaniah 1□	2 □	3 □

I Chronicles 34:29-33

²⁹ Then the king sent and gathered together all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem.

³⁰ And the king went up into the house of the Lord, and all the men of Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and the priests, and the Levites, and all the people, great and small: and he read in their ears all the words of the book of the covenant that was found in the house of the Lord.

³¹ And the king stood in his place, and made a covenant before the Lord, to walk after the Lord, and to keep his commandments, and his testimonies, and his statutes, with all his heart, and with all his soul, to perform the words of the covenant which are written in this book.

³² And he caused all that were present in Jerusalem and Benjamin to stand to it. And the inhabitants of Jerusalem did according to the covenant of God, the God of their fathers.

³³ And Josiah took away all the abominations out of all the countries that pertained to the children of Israel, and made all that were present in Israel to serve, even to serve the Lord their God. And all his days they departed not from following the Lord, the God of their fathers.

Biblical Insight

According to the Chronicler, the entire land of Israel reached a level of ritual purity and religious faithfulness under King Josiah that was unknown since the early reign of King Solomon. He removed "all the abominations out of all the countries that pertained to...Israel" (v. 33). In this account, though, all of Josiah's religious reforms were mere prelude to the national Passover celebrated in II Chronicles 35, a celebration such as had not been held in the land since the days of Joshua. (See Joshua 5:10.) For the Chronicler, Josiah was a clearly "messianic" figure, reviving a fallen Israel.

Daily Devotion

We see an important progression in Josiah's life as recounted in II Chronicles 34. First, Josiah sought after God. Second, Josiah removed the idols in Judah. This was an act of repentance personally and corporately. Third, Josiah focused on the house of the Lord. Fourth, Josiah responded to the Word of God with honor, humility, and obedience. Because of these things, King Josiah is known for doing what was right in God's eyes and walking in the ways of David.

This progression is important in the lives of Christians. It is not enough to seek after God but not remove idols in our lives. It is not enough to remove idols and repent but ignore attending the house of the Lord. It is not enough to be faithful to the house of the Lord while neglecting to obey God's Word. For us to do what is right in the sight of the Lord, we must be intentional to seek God, repent, faithfully worship with our church family, and obey God's Word.

Reflection and Prayer » What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?	

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Haggai 1 □ 2 □ | Revelation 15 □ 16 □

II Timothy 3:16-17

¹⁶ All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:

¹⁷ That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

Biblical Insight

When reading this passage, it is always important to recall that the apostle Paul was specifically addressing the value of the Old Testament. At that time, the Old Testament was the only Scripture the early church possessed. In fact, we extend this same designation to Paul's writings and the other New Testament books, largely because of the apostle Peter's inclusion of Paul's letters as Scripture (II Peter 3:16). Recognizing the value Paul placed on the Old Testament as authoritative Scripture counterbalances the tendency of some Christian denominations to undercut its value and authority.

Daily Devotion

In 2018 Andy Stanley, a well-known pastor, author, and speaker, preached that we must "un-hitch" our Christian faith from the Old Testament. This sermon received a great deal of criticism, but Stanley doubled down on his claims by saying that "participants in the new covenant are not required to obey any of the commandments found in the first part of their Bibles" because they only had the one command to love others like they love themselves (Andy Stanley, "Why Do Christians Want to Post the 10 Commandments and Not the Sermon on the Mount?"). While Stanley's comments gained a lot of attention, the belief that the Old Testament was not valuable to Christians is not a new concept.

To neglect the Old Testament is to neglect the foundation of the Church. Ephesians 2:20 reminds us that the household of God is founded upon the apostles and prophets with "Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone." The apostles represent the New Testament; the prophets represent the Old Testament. They fit together because of Jesus. For us to have a deeper appreciation and understanding of Jesus, we must appreciate and value the Old Testament.

eflection and Prayer		
What can you do to apply this	principle to your life today?	

SG PARTICIPANT'S GUIDE



Lesson Title: Building on God's Word

Scripture Focus: II Chronicles 34:31

The Lesson in Context

The conviction that smote King Josiah's heart by the reading of the "book of the law" and the promise of God's judgment for their disobedience found therein compelled him to commission a group of trusted men to go inquire of the Lord. To do so, these men made their way to a prophetess in Jerusalem named Huldah. She gave a clear word to the king through these emissaries, addressing both what was soon to come on the kingdom and on him personally.

Such a fearsome and wrathful God is not acceptable to modern man. Certainly, His mercy endures forever, and without question He is gracious and slow to anger. (See Psalm 103:8; 106:1.) Still we must never lose sight of the truth that God is fiercely protective of His Word. Nothing it says will ever fail, so when it declares that sin will be dealt with, we know it to be so. God's character is the guarantee behind every word He has spoken.

Group Discussion

- How does the account of Josiah's departure from the patterns set by his ungodly ancestors offer encouragement today to someone with a less-thanstellar family lineage?
- 2. Discuss a Bible reading plan that has been successful for you. What made it work for you?
- 3. Think of a time when conviction produced a specific spiritual benefit in your life. What was it about that moment that caused conviction to bear fruit?
- 4. Why do people convince themselves that the promise of judgment will not apply to them? How is doing so dangerous?
- 5. What is one area of your life that the Word of God is calling you to change? What is a new commitment you need to make or an old, forgotten commitment you need to renew?

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GOD'S WORD AND MY HEART

LESSON BIG IDEA

I must make sure my words and my desires are pleasing to the Lord.

TRUTH ABOUT GOD

God's Word is a discerner of the thoughts and intentions of our hearts.



FOCUS VERSE: Hebrews 4:12

For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

LESSON TEXT: Psalm 19:7-14; Hebrews 4:12-16



BIBLICAL OVERVIEW

Lesson Text: Psalm 19:7-14; Hebrews 4:12-16

Psalm 19 is one of three psalms categorized as Torah psalms, perhaps a subset of the larger category of wisdom psalms (Psalms 38; 73) although they do not share any common literary forms or features to be considered a distinctive genre. The other two Torah psalms include Psalm 1, the introduction to the entire book, which extols the virtues of meditating on the Torah. In fact, Psalm 1 is itself a form of meditation upon Torah. Not coincidentally, the Book of Psalms is broken up into five smaller books marked by concluding doxologies (Psalms 41:13, 72:18-19; 89:52, 106:48), mirroring the Torah's structure. The second Torah psalm is Psalm 119, which holds the distinction of being the longest psalm as well as falling at nearly the precise center of the Protestant Old Testament.

A key feature of the Torah psalms is the way in which they attempt to distill the essence of the Torah, or more correctly, discover its fundamental operating principle. These psalms do not center on the cultic rituals described in the Torah but on daily obedience to the law of God which, as early as the story of Abraham in Genesis 26, is defined as the essence of a covenantal relationship with God. Thus, personal piety becomes the foundation for corporate piety, and not the other way around. In the Psalms, especially the psalms celebrating Torah, we come closest to the ideas incorporated in the contemporary language of a personal walk with the Lord.

This background of the primacy of a personal relationship with God and its connection to the corporate piety of believers is important to keep in mind when reading the epistle to the Hebrews. Facing a situation of apparent apostasy due to the social pressure of shame and ostracism, the writer of the book worked to assert the superiority of faith in Jesus Christ to all aspects of his audience's prior Jewish faith. Jesus Christ is superior to the Law of Moses (Hebrews 3:5–6), the Aaronic priesthood (Hebrews 7:20–24), the Mosaic covenant (Hebrews 8:13), and the Tabernacle (Hebrews 9:11–15), among other things. Scattered throughout Hebrews we find multiple exhortations to faithfulness that connect the superiority of Christ to the high calling of faithful obedience.

THROUGHOUT HEBREWS WE FIND MULTIPLE EXHORTATIONS TO FAITHFULNESS THAT CONNECT THE SUPERIORITY OF CHRIST TO THE HIGH CALLING OF FAITHFUL OBEDIENCE.

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Zechariah 1 \square 2 \square 3 \square 4 \square | Revelation 17 \square 18 \square

Psalm 19:7-11

- ⁷ The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple.
- ⁸ The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes.
- ⁹ The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.
- ¹⁰ More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.
- $^{\rm II}$ Moreover by them is thy servant warned: and in keeping of them there is great reward.

Biblical Insight

This portion of the psalm is notable for piling up descriptors and metaphors to create in the reader a sense of the incomparable beauty of the divine Word. What was intended here was a cumulative effect. Note also how the attributes of God's Word parallel the attributes of His works in verses 1–6. Just as the night sheweth knowledge (v.2), so the Law makes "wise the simple" (v.7). As God has provided the sun (v.4), God's commandments "enlighten the eyes" (v. 8). As the sun "rejoices" in its skyward journey (v.5), so God's statutes "rejoice the heart" (v.8).

Daily Devotion

A recent study revealed Americans spend only 8 percent of their time outside. Even more surprising, children spend an average of only four to seven minutes outdoors (Buchholz, "Americans Spend Less Than 8 Percent of Their Time Outdoors"). Spending time outside offers numerous benefits including decreased levels of anxiety and depression, enhanced focus, an increased immune system, and the opportunity for exercise. There are also spiritual benefits to spending time outdoors.

Psalm 19 demonstrates how nature reveals God. God's glory and work are revealed in His creation. In Romans 1:20, Paul wrote that every single place on earth boasts of God's power and divine nature. Even so, there are times we may question if God is real or if He is powerful enough to move in our situation. If you find yourself needing a reminder of how big our God is, take some time to go outside and look around. Whether in the mountains, the oceans, or the valleys, His greatness can be seen in all His creation.

Reflection a	and Prayer				
What can	you do to a	pply this p	rinciple to yo	our life today?	

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Bible	Reading	Plan
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Zechariah $5 \square 6 \square 7 \square 8 \square |$ Revelation 19 \square

Psalm 19:12-13

12 Who can understand his errors? cleanse thou me from secret faults.

¹³ Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression.

Biblical Insight

The effect of the Law in the heart of the pious believer is two-fold: corrective and preventative. The psalmist prayed for God to cleanse him from his faults (corrective) and to keep him from his sins (preventative). Even though the psalmist admitted we cannot understand the depth of our own sinfulness, he still prayed for the Lord to grant his petition. This is the only way we can be "upright," which carries the idea of completion rather than perfection. Thus, the great reward of following God's law is the wholeness of covenant relationship with God.

Daily Devotion

When we focus on our errors, secret faults, and presumptuous sins, it is easy to allow fear to enter our minds. We may struggle to believe that God could really forgive us. Is He really big enough and powerful enough to forgive us after what we have done? Does God genuinely love us enough to forgive us?

Beginning our time of prayer with praise helps to create an environment where we can fix our mind upon the greatness of God and repent of our doubts and fears. Praise reminds us of who our God is. It reminds us of His power, love, faithfulness, mercy, and grace. It not only humbles us, but it also reminds us that God desires to reveal our sins so we can repent and make things right with Him. Praise conditions our heart and mind for repentance; repentance, in turn, increases our praise.

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Reflection and Prayer		
What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?		

DAY	3
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Bible	Reading	Plan

Zechariah 9 □ 10 □ 11 □ 12 □ | Revelation 20 □

Psalm 19:14

¹⁴ Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength, and my redeemer.

Biblical Insight

Notice how the psalm has moved from the cosmic to the national to the personal. This is signified by a shift in the way the psalmist referred to God. He called Him God in verse 1; LORD (*Yahweh*) in verse 8; finally my strength and my redeemer in verse 14. The two-fold manifestation of divine revelation—God's works and God's Word—is matched by a two-fold manifestation of human faithfulness to God: the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart.

Daily Devotion

Psychologists have found that humanity tends to have a negativity bias. Negativity bias is the tendency for the brain to register negative events and words faster than positive events and words. The brain also tends to dwell on negative stimuli longer than positive stimuli. Because of our tendency to dwell on the negative, we are more likely to speak negatively (Cherry, "What is the Negativity Bias?).

As David pointed out, there is a direct correlation between our words and our thoughts. When we dwell on negative things, we will speak negatively. If our minds are preoccupied with sinful things, we will speak sinfully. Jesus told us in Luke 6:45 that a good man will bring good things out of his heart, whereas an evil man will bring evil things out of his heart because our words reveal what is inside our hearts. It is important to include David's Psalm 19:14 prayer in our prayers. We must surrender our words and what we think upon so they are pleasing in God's sight.

Reflection and Prayer » What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?	
» What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?	

DAY	4
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	Bi	ble Reading Plan
Zechariah 13 🗆	14 🗆	Revelation 21 🗆

Hebrews 4:12-13

¹² For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

¹³ Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.

Biblical Insight

As Psalm 19 already attested, the unique power of the Word of God is its ability to reveal us to ourselves. Many theologians have long utilized this verse to speculate about the distinctions of the soul from the spirit, but this pair is paralleled with the "joints and marrow," indicating these may be images of elements that cannot be divided (at least not by human strength or ingenuity). Thus, the Word of God has power to do that which is humanly impossible. It is powerful because it is "quick," meaning living, active, sustaining, and life-giving.

Daily Devotion

During the time the Book of Hebrews was written, the most common and well-known double-edged sword was the *gladius Hispaniensis*. It was the preferred sword of Roman legionnaires because the sword was deadly, yet small. The double-edged sword was used edgewise for cutting and for thrusting when the fighting was intense (D'Amato, *Arms and Armour of the Imperial Roman Soldier*).

In like manner, the Word of God pierces and cuts deeply into our hearts. Nothing else can pierce our conscience like God's Word because it reaches to the parts of the heart we are often unaware of. The revealing nature of God's Word makes all things "naked" and "opened unto the eyes" (Hebrews 14:13). This can be uncomfortable. Much like Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, our first instinct is often to hide once the Word reveals the thoughts and intents of our heart. Instead of ignoring the uncomfortable feelings or trying to justify them, let us be like King David and repent before God and ask Him to change the meditations of our heart.

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What can yo	ou do to a	pply this p	orinciple to	your life to	day?	

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Malachi 1 □ 2 □ 3 □ 4 □ | Revelation 22 □

Hebrews 4:14-16

¹⁴ Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession.

¹⁵ For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.

¹⁶ Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

Biblical Insight

The power of God's Word to expose the inaccessible recesses of the human heart is a frightening prospect! However, it is mercifully matched by the compassion of our great High Priest who is touched by our weaknesses. Obviously, this cannot be taken to mean that Jesus Christ shared our sinfulness because the writer was quick to reaffirm the sinlessness of Christ. Rather, it means He fully shared our humanity and experienced the power of temptation. If Jesus was able to withstand the power of temptation, we who follow Him faithfully can also hope to overcome it!

Daily Devotion

The king's throne room was one of the most awe-inspiring and intimidating places in the ancient world. Throne rooms were built and decorated to show power, wealth, and majesty. The raised platform and large throne were constructed in a way that the king appeared larger than life. They were built to remind everyone that the king was untouchable. To be called into the throne room was often terrifying because the king held the power of life and death. Only those invited could enter. Instead of a place of refuge, the throne room was a place of anxiety and stress.

The throne room of the King of kings is different. Our God invites us to enter boldly. In the kingdom of God, we are not fearful peasants; we are children of the King. When entering His throne room in prayer, we should feel awe and peace instead of intimidation. We know that the powerful, magnificent Creator who sits upon the throne is our Father and loves us deeply. It is His desire to forgive, restore, renew, bless, and care for us because he is our good Father.

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What can y	ou do to ap	ply this prir	nciple to you	life today?	

SG PARTICIPANT'S GUIDE



Lesson Title: God's Word and My Heart

Scripture Focus: Hebrews 4:12

The Lesson in Context

The Word of God has a unique ability to conduct its work on our hearts in deep and secret places. Anyone can conduct a surface review of our lives. People can analyze and evaluate our deeds and actions, which are visible to all. However, it takes the power of the Spirit to discern the motives behind our methods.

The Bible, and particularly the preaching of its principles, can lay bare humanity and compel us to confront what is often not visible to our fellow worshipers. It examines our attitudes and not just our actions. It discerns what is concealed from others, and in so doing serves us well in the quest to protect the condition of our hearts.

Group Discussion

- 1. How has the two-edged nature of the Word of God affected you?
- 2. How is God's omniscience both a comfort and a concern?
- 3. How does faith and confidence in God affect how you pray? How are your prayers affected when you feel guilt and shame before God?
- 4. Think of a time in your journey when you were blind to a spiritual problem in your life. How did the Word of God reveal that to you? What did you do about it?
- 5. How do we make sure our words and desires please the Lord?

•	Upcoming Week o be different because of what you have experienced	today?

A GLIMPSE AHEAD TO FALL

SERIES 1: THE GOD OF DELIVERANCE

This series, "The God of Deliverance," will follow the Israelites on their journey out of slavery in Egypt to the building of the Tabernacle in the wilderness. We will watch Moses grow up in the palace of Pharaoh and have a close-up view of the plagues that ultimately led to the Israelites' freedom. We will follow them through the Red Sea to the mountain where they received the commandments, and we will end up watching the glory of the Lord fill the Tabernacle. This series will show us a God who delivers and allow each of us to experience that deliverance in our own lives.

SERIES 2: JESUS IS LORD

This series, "Jesus Is Lord," will look closely at the claim that Jesus is the one true God. After hearing His teachings and seeing the miracles He performed, many in Scripture came to express faith in Jesus Christ as the Son of God. They watched Him cast out devils. The disciples were there when He calmed the storm. He delivered the demoniac in Gadara and set a woman free from a twelve-year-long disease. This series will not only remind us of the power of God that was at work in Jesus' day, but it will challenge us to have faith that His power is still available to us today. Truly, Jesus is Lord of all.

SERIES 3: CHOOSING WISDOM

This series, "Choosing Wisdom," will lead us on a trip through highlighted portions of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes. We will look at wisdom's worth, wisdom's works, the truth that wisdom waits, and then hear wisdom's warning. The Scripture passages we will study will help us to better understand the importance of choosing wisdom. Wisdom is not elusive or impossible to attain. But if we will seek wisdom by seeking the God who gives wisdom, we will gain what we need to please the Lord and walk in His commandments.

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