

The purpose of each of the Lifespan series is to point the participants to the beauty, wonder, wisdom and grace of Jesus Christ. These studies are designed to be discussion-rich quests into some of the most profound words ever written. Professors, instructors, post docs, and/or graduate students may be surprised to discover that the Bible has a lot to say about their world as academics. Both Christian and non-Christian professors will find that there is much to wrestle with in these Bible studies.

Many book studies turn into arguments about the author's views. This study will be different. In this study, passages of the Bible are the focus and the study itself is more of a tour guide, providing background information and questions that open up the meaning of the passage for the participants to extract for themselves.

There are four of these Lifespan Bible studies for professors. Each one has six lessons each. The following will give you a glimpse into each study:

1. Parables for Professors is designed to explore Jesus' unique perspective of life and godliness. Since many of Jesus' parables were given while interacting with the Pharisees, who were the intellectual leaders of the day, it is not a far stretch to say that these very same parables have more than passing relevance to the intellectual leaders of our day – university professors.
2. Psalms for Professors looks at six of the Psalms that explore vastly different ways that professors experience God. Academicians tend to focus on things of the mind, but the Psalms help us to integrate the heart with the mind. It is amazing how these Psalms reveal Christ to be the apex of our experience.
3. 1st Peter for Professors is oriented towards Christian professors who may experience a sense of isolation in the university because of their faith in Christ. 1st Peter was written to a people who had been persecuted and scattered and was low on hope. This study shows how looking at difficulty from an eternal perspective can change one from being downcast to being joyful.
4. Proverbs for Professors looks at significant themes in the book of Proverbs and what they have to say about the world of the professors. These themes examine the professor's heart, tongue, attitudes, fears, friends, and intellect.

This is meant to be a participatory study with lots of interaction, with the scriptures alone serving as the authority. The value of this study will be in direct proportion to the willingness of the group to extract and share with one another truth derived *from the text itself*.

With that in mind, the following notes may be helpful:

1. Each of the six lessons follows the same format: Launch, Explore, Apply.
 - **Launch** is meant to create interest in the topic of the text. The discussion should be robust before leaving the "Launch"
 - **Explore** is designed to get the meat out of the text. Don't let participants glibly give their opinions. Make them wrestle with what the text is actually saying.
 - **Apply** will give opportunities to personalize the lessons of the study.
2. The vital part of each lesson comes at the end of the Explore section when the group is asked to discover the **Big Idea** of the passage. If the group will wrestle with that before sneaking a peek at the conclusion, the study will be far richer because of it.

3. Preparation prior to the group study is encouraged, but not necessary.
4. The scripture passage for each lesson is embedded in the lesson. There should be no need for participants to bring their Bible with them to the study unless they want to so.
5. Background information is given in the plain text and should be read out loud by someone in the group. *Discussion questions are given in italics. Time should be taken to allow each question to be answered adequately.* Each person is encouraged to write down his/her answer for future reflection.
6. Even allowing for extensive discussion on several of the questions, each lesson should be adequately covered in 50 minutes.
7. After the first or second lesson, the facilitator should give others a chance to lead some of the lessons.

The biggest benefit to this study will be in discovering and discussing what the passage has to say to us. For each question, keep going back to the text and look at it as if for the first time.

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"So teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom." Psalm 90:12 | www.cruprof.com

**LAUNCH**

Psalm 1 tells us that the outcome of our lives is dependent upon where we receive our instruction. It speaks of “delight” when describing how a person receives instruction from God.

Can you think of a time when you enjoyed (delighted in) receiving some type of instruction? What made it enjoyable?

Is delighting in the law of the Lord simply a matter of studying the Bible with joy in our hearts or does it mean more? Let's look at Psalm One and see.

**EXPLORE****Survey the Big Picture:**

The Book of Psalms is itself divided into five books. The first book includes Psalm 1 through 41, book two includes Psalms 42-72, book three consists of Psalms 73-89, book four includes Psalms 90-106, and book five covers Psalms 107-150. Many of the Psalms are identified as having been written by specific people who date as far back as Moses and as recently as Solomon. The author of Psalm 1 is not given, and it is therefore known as an “orphan” psalm. In some ancient Hebrew texts, Psalm 1 and Psalm 2 (also an orphan) are combined to form one psalm. Many scholars believe that Psalm 1 was written specifically as an introduction to the rest of the psalms that follow. Its emphasis on loving and obeying the word of the LORD is repeated throughout the Book of Psalms. Inasmuch as Psalms was written before Christ appeared, this encouragement to embrace the written word of God can also be extended to the living Word of God, Jesus Christ.

The Passage: Read Psalm 1 (ESV)

¹Blessed is the man¹ who walks not in the counsel of the wicked,
nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers;

²but his delight is in the law² of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night.

³He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season,
and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers.

⁴The wicked are not so, but are like chaff that the wind drives away.

⁵Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous;

⁶for the Lord knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.

¹The singular Hebrew word for man (ish) is used here to portray a representative example of a godly person; ²Or instruction

Verses 1-2:

The Hebrew word for “blessed” is difficult to translate into English. “Happy, prosperous (not only in an economic sense), and favored” are nuances of the word that are often implied in the context when “blessed” is used in the Old Testament.

What are the active verbs used in verse one? Why do you suppose these three verbs are used?

Give examples of places in your academic environment or personal life that could be considered the counsel of the wicked, the way of sinners, or the seat of scoffers.

What are examples of things in which you delight in your everyday life?

Has there ever been something that you could not stop thinking about both day and night? If so, why did it capture your thoughts so?

The phrase “the law of the LORD” can also be interpreted “the instruction of the Lord.” Of course, when this Psalm was written, the instruction of the Lord came primarily from the Law of Moses—the first five books of the Old Testament. Today, “the instruction of the Lord” would encompass the whole Bible.

Would you rather meditate day and night on rules about God or a relationship with God? Why?

Could the “instruction of the Lord” refer to both? Justify your answer.

Verse 3:

What simile does the author use to help us picture what a person who meditates on God’s Word is like? How is it described?

How do you think a tree that is planted near the wicked, sinners, and scoffers of verse 1 would be described?

This description of the life of the one who meditates on the Law in Psalm One is similar to descriptions of the life Christ brings. Perhaps there is a link. Look for the relationship between the two in John 1:14-17. See the following two passages from the book of John.

John 1:14-17

¹⁴And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. ¹⁵(John bore witness about him, and cried out, “This was he of whom I said, ‘He who comes after me ranks before me, because he was before me.’”) ¹⁶And from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. ¹⁷For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

John 15:5-8

⁵I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. ⁶If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. ⁷If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. ⁸By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples.

In the New Testament, we learn that the Word of God became flesh and dwelt among us, referring to Jesus. The written word was made alive through the Living Word. John 1:17 indicates how the Law of Moses is surpassed by that which is brought to us by Christ.

In your own words, describe the difference between what the Law of Moses offers to what Christ offers.

So if living by the Law of the Lord is incredibly fruitful, how much more so is delighting in Christ? Compare Psalm 1:3 to John 15:5-8: In what ways are they similar?

Read the following passages:

²⁴Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life. – John 5:24

¹⁰The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly. – John 10:10

²⁰Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me. – Revelation 3:20

What are elements of the fruitful life that Jesus makes possible that are described in these passages?

When Psalm 1 was written, obeying the Law of the Lord was the only hope for fruitful, abundant life. But now we have the Living Word wherein, despite our own shortcomings, we find authentic, rich and meaningful life. The Psalm's exhortation to delight in the Law of the Lord becomes for us a call to delight in Christ, the source of all grace and truth.

Verse 4:

What are the wicked like? What simile does the author use to help us picture what the wicked person is like?

What are the qualities of chaff?

Verses 5-6:

“Therefore” is commonly used in the Bible to summarize and draw a conclusion from the previous verses. *What is the fate of the wicked?*

Will we be able to hide our ways from the Lord?

Discover the Big Idea:

As the psalmist contrasts the life of the righteous with that of the wicked, how does he want his reader to respond? Think about it before proceeding.

This psalm asks the reader to choose between living as windblown chaff and judgment at death—which is the end of the wicked, or the Word of God wherein we find richness and abundance of life now and eternity with God. Now that Jesus has come, the written word points us to the living Word, who is the fulfillment of the law of the Lord, wherein we find grace and truth. We delight in Him.



APPLY

What false beliefs does Psalm 1 address?

For what longing of your heart does Psalm 1 provide an answer?

In what ways do you need to change where you walk, stand, and sit?

Do you “delight” in Christ? What hinders you?

All scriptures point to a beautiful Christ. How is He better than all the other things in which we try to find our delight?



“So teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom.” Psalm 90:12 | www.cruprof.com

**LAUNCH**

Do you ever think about the implications of the attributes of God? He spoke and the world came into existence, He knows the number of hairs on your head, He set every star in place, He is always faithful. *When you think about God, what is it (which attribute is it) that blows your mind?*

What is man? It depends with what you are comparing him. Compare him to a slug, and he is a vastly superior creature. But compare him to God, and it would be like comparing a drop of water to the Pacific Ocean. *How does the academic world (your discipline) answer the question: "What is man?"*

One of the most amazing things about God is that he notices us. Psalm 8 is David's attempt to get a grasp on the relationship between God and man.

**EXPLORE****Survey the Big Picture:**

C.S. Lewis called Psalm 8 a "short, exquisite lyric." Derek Kidner says "This psalm is an unsurpassed example of what a hymn should be, celebrating as it does the glory and grace of God, rehearsing who he is and what he has done, and relating us and our world to him, all with a masterly economy of words, and in a spirit of mingled joy and awe." (Kidner, 1973:65)

The Passage: Read Psalm 8 (ESV)

To the choirmaster: according to The Gittith. A Psalm of David.

¹O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!

You have set your glory above the heavens.

²Out of the mouth of babies and infants,
you have established strength because of your foes,
to still the enemy and the avenger.

³When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers,
the moon and the stars, which you have set in place,

⁴what is man that you are mindful of him,
and the son of man that you care for him?

⁵Yet you have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings
and crowned him with glory and honor.

⁶You have given him dominion over the works of your hands;
you have put all things under his feet,

⁷all sheep and oxen,
and also the beasts of the field,

⁸the birds of the heavens, and the fish of the sea,
whatever passes along the paths of the seas.

⁹O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!

Verses 1-2:

Two different words for “lord” are used in the first phrase. The Hebrew word translated “LORD” (all capital letters) is *Yahweh/Jehovah* which is a personal name that God chose for Himself by which He related specifically to His chosen people. The Hebrew word translated “Lord” is Adonai which means “master.” *What is the effect of David’s choice of each of the four words in the first phrase of verse 1?*

The definition of majestic is “to have or exhibit sovereign power, authority, and dignity.” *What is something else that you are familiar with that seems majestic to you?*

What is it about God that David finds majestic?

For what it’s worth, Jesus Himself, quoted the Greek translation of Psalm 8:2 in Matthew 21:15-16: But when the chief priests and the scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children crying out in the temple, “Hosanna to the Son of David!” they were indignant, and they said to him, “Do you hear what these are saying?” And Jesus said to them, “Yes: have you never read, “Out of the mouth of infants and nursing babies you have prepared praise?”

Since the context of this passage in Psalms 8 was referring to Yahweh/Adonai, this statement of Jesus’ was a very clear claim to deity.

Verses 3-8:

As a shepherd, David would lie on his back at night and gaze into the dark Middle Eastern sky. As he looked into the vastness of the universe, he imagined God looking at the same vast array of stars and somehow being able to notice man, and beyond that, to care about him. *Which do you have more difficulty grasping, the power of God or the personalness of God?*

Just as God knows every star by its name and has set the moon, planets, and sun in their place, he has also put man in a certain order in the realm of that which is living. *According to verses 5-6, where are human beings placed among God’s living creations?*

What is the significance of God crowning man with “glory and honor” and giving him “dominion”? Would you say that description of man indicates that God thinks of us to be more like animals or more like Himself? What is the significance of that?

What perspective of man’s place and behavior does modern scholarship advocate? Give examples.

Verse 9:

The last verse is an exact copy of the first verse. What is the significance of this poetic device?

Discover the Big Idea:

What was David telling us in this psalm?

God deserves to be worshiped as the majestic Lord who lovingly cares for his creation. Mankind's purpose is to reflect our creator's image and not the creation's.

**APPLY**

Is your perspective of God too small (you can't fathom His power) or too big (you can't fathom His love for you)?

What are the practical consequences of not believing God is all-powerful?

What are the practical consequences of believing that God is not mindful of you personally or cares for you?

During your next devotional, list five ways that God displays His power that blow your mind and list five ways that God displays His mindfulness and care for you that blow your mind.



"So teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom." Psalm 90:12 | www.cruprof.com

**LAUNCH**

Feeling abandoned by God, or very distant from God, is one of the hardest situations that a believer faces. He/she does not want to tell others because Christians are not “supposed” to admit such things. But sometimes honesty compels Christians to admit to themselves that there seems to be no sign that God cares about them or that He seems capable or willing to do anything about their situation.

Have you ever felt abandoned by God? If it is not too personal, share a time in your life when it seemed as if God were not there.

Even David, a man after God’s own heart who experienced God working through him in remarkable ways (Goliath comes to mind), went through times when he felt forsaken by God. In Psalm 13, David is incredibly transparent about his feeling of abandonment. At some point, it is likely that everyone has felt exactly as he did, or will feel that way in the future

**EXPLORE****Survey the Big Picture:**

This psalm follows Psalm 12 in which David expresses bewilderment after seeing the faithful vanish. It may not be coincidental that after David experienced being abandoned by his friends that he also felt abandoned by God.

From a technical aspect, in the original Hebrew, the first stanza of this poem had five lines, the second stanza had four lines, and the third stanza had three lines. James Montgomery Boice comments, “This means that the form of the poem, as well as the subject matter, moves from the tumultuous and emotional beginning (expressed in five lines), through an increasingly calm prayer (expressed in four lines), to a final expression of trust in God and harmony (expressed in three lines).”

The Passage: Read Psalm 13 (ESV)

To the choirmaster. A Psalm of David.

¹How long, O LORD? Will you forget me forever?

How long will you hide your face from me?

²How long must I take counsel in my soul
and have sorrow in my heart all the day?

How long shall my enemy be exalted over me?

³Consider and answer me, O LORD my God;

light up my eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death,

⁴lest my enemy say, “I have prevailed over him.”

lest my foes rejoice because I am shaken.

⁵But I have trusted in your steadfast love;

my heart shall rejoice in your salvation.

⁶I will sing to the LORD,

because he has dealt bountifully with me.

Verses 1-2:

What phrase is repeated four times? What is the relationship between time passing and feeling abandoned?

Have you ever had a trial that seemed to have no end? How did that affect your relationship with God?

In verse 2, the anguish of abandonment has led to turmoil of thought, sorrow and depression, and fear. Has there been a time in your life when this verse would describe you?

What are some of the fears of the modern day academic?

Do you think this kind of raw venting of despair is healthy or unhealthy for us spiritually? Why?

Verses 3-4:

In verse 3, there is a turning point in this psalm as David prays. Why does he ask God to light up his eyes?

In verses 3-4 there is a tension such that if God doesn't show up, David's enemy will prevail over him. How do you tend to react when God doesn't show up when you really need Him?

Verses 5-6:

What is the attribute of God in this verse that gives David hope? Why did David specify that attribute rather than others?

Nothing is quite so mood-altering as a note from a faraway sweetheart with a vow of undying love. It sounds like, in the course of writing this psalm, David's prayer was answered and he received his love note from God. What is David's response?

Discover the Big Idea:

What does this psalm tell us about handling spiritual abandonment?

“Be honest with your despair, seek God’s face in prayer, and let His steadfast love your emotions repair.”



APPLY

How certain are you of God’s steadfast love for you?

When you are not in despair, keep a journal of how God’s love is manifesting itself in your life.

When you are in difficulty, would you rather be removed from the problem or be able to see God’s presence there with you?



“So teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom.” Psalm 90:12 | www.cruprof.com

**LAUNCH**

Children find security in their parents, their favorite blankets and in familiar places. In what do adults find security?

In what do professors find security?

Make a list of some of the biggest threats to your sense of security, both personally and professionally.

**EXPLORE****Survey the Big Picture:**

The 23rd Psalm is considered the most beloved of the 150 psalms and possibly the best known chapter in the whole Bible. Millions have found comfort in the midst of difficulty from this psalm. One cannot read the 23rd Psalm without recognizing the very personal intimacy that the psalmist, David, finds with God. This intimacy becomes even more relevant to the Christian as he/she comes to know Jesus Christ as the good Shepherd.

The Passage: Read Psalm 23 (ESV)

A Psalm of David.

¹The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.

²He makes me lie down in green pastures.

He leads me beside still waters.

³He restores my soul.

He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

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

I will fear no evil, for you are with me;

your rod and your staff, they comfort me.

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

you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.

⁶Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life,

and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

Verses 1:

The Hebrew word for “LORD” is “Yahweh.” According to James Montgomery Boice, “the word literally means ‘I am who I am.’ It is an inexhaustible name, like its bearer. Chiefly, it refers to God’s timelessness, on the one hand, and to his self-sufficiency on the other. Self-sufficiency means that God needs nothing. He needs no wisdom from anyone else; he has all wisdom in himself. He needs no power; he is all powerful. He does not need to be worshiped or helped or served. Nor is he accountable to anyone. He answers only to himself.”

On the other side of this amazing equation is “my shepherd.” *What attribute(s) of God did David recognize in order to proclaim that God was his shepherd?*

Psalm 23 comes alive in the New Testament through Christ. In John 10:11-16, Jesus says, “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for his sheep.... I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for my sheep. And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd.”

According to Boice, “we are part of that ‘one flock’ composed of believing Jews and Gentiles. So we are not stretching the twenty-third psalm to see Jesus as our shepherd and to apply the lines of the psalm carefully and in detail to ourselves.”

In what way is the second half of verse one “I shall not (be in) want” a reasonable conclusion from the first half of the verse?

What is it that those in the care of the good shepherd shall not want? Verses 2-6 are an answer to that question.

Verse 2: No Want of Rest

In his masterful book, *A Shepherd Looks at Psalm 23*, pastor Phillip Keller who was a shepherd for eight years explains what it takes to get sheep to rest. “It is almost impossible for them to be made to lie down unless four requirements are met. Owing to their timidity they refuse to lie down unless they are free of all fear. Because of the social behavior within a flock, sheep will not lie down unless they are free from friction with others of their kind. If tormented by flies or parasites, sheep will not lie down. Only when free of these pests can they relax. Lastly, sheep will not lie down as long as they feel in need of finding food. They must be free from hunger.” Fear, Friction, Flies, Food

What does it take for you to find true rest—not only physical rest—but emotional and spiritual rest as well?

Why do you think that this series of needs that the shepherd meets begins with “rest?” What is the significance?

Jesus said, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest." According to this verse, what is necessary to find rest?

Verse 3a: No Want of Life

The word for "soul" is often translated "life". Where else can one go to have his soul/life restored? There is no store at the mall that offers that. Only Jesus.

Verse 3b: No Want of Guidance

In this verse, what is the nature of the path on which the Shepherd leads us?

From Boice, "(Sheep) are probably the most stupid animals on earth. One aspect of their stupidity is seen in the fact that they so easily wander away. They can have a good shepherd who can have brought them to the best grazing lands near an abundant supply of water, and they will still wander away to where the fields are barren and the water undrinkable."

How easy is it for you to wander away from the path of righteousness? Can you give an example?

Isaiah 53:6 says, "All we, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; but the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all." What a Shepherd we have in Christ!

Verse 4: No Want of Safety

Often this portion of the Psalm is quoted at times of death, and correctly so. But this is also a picture of the shepherd's protection during life's dangers. The shepherd is protecting his sheep where predators lurk as they walk through narrow canyons, passing from one pasture to another.

When do you experience fear?

In Mark 4:40, Jesus said to his disciples when they were in the boat in the midst of the storm, "Why are you so afraid? Have you still no faith?" *In what way does faith in the Shepherd combat fear?*

Notice that in the midst of danger, the shepherd is no longer referred to in the third person, but in the second person. *What does that communicate to you?*

Verse 5: No Want of Provision

In biblical imagery, a banquet table speaks of abundant blessing, oil and wine speak of joy and prosperity.

Verse 6: No Want of an Eternal Home

The life of a sheep is characterized by wandering - as was the nomadic life of many people who lived in biblical times. The life of a Christian is also often described as a pilgrimage or a sojourn. There is little security on this earth, but we are promised security in the house of the Lord forever.

In John 14:2-3 Jesus said, "I am going ... to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am."

How important is it to you to know that you will spend eternity with Christ in heaven?

Discover the Big Idea:

What does David want us to realize and experience when we read this psalm? *In this world, as well as the next, the only place that we can find true security is in Christ.*



Who or what do you tend to substitute as a shepherd for your life other than Christ?

What are signals to you that you are putting your security in some place other than Christ?

What keeps you from having the trust and intimacy with the Shepherd that David had?



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**LAUNCH**

Often professors will say that the time when they felt closest to God was while in graduate school—a time of pressure, high demands, little time, and little money. The Lord often uses difficult times in our lives to cause us to turn to Him and trust Him for deliverance. Many have come to faith in Christ or experienced Him in deeper ways during difficult hours.

What are difficulties that are unique to those in academia?

Recall a difficult time in your life when you turned to God and He delivered you.

This life is full of difficulties. Some are generated by evil people, some are circumstantial, and some are brought on by ourselves. Difficulties can help us experience God in a deeper way.

**EXPLORE****Survey the Big Picture:**

In Psalm 40, the psalmist, David, remembers a dark day and tells of the Lord's deliverance and how that affected him. Ironically, David writes this while he is in the midst of a dark day. Perhaps he is using the past experience of God's deliverance to help him trust the Lord again.

The Passage: Read Psalm 40 (ESV)

To the choirmaster. A Psalm of David.

¹I waited patiently for the LORD; he inclined to me and heard my cry.

²He drew me up from the pit of destruction, out of the miry bog, and set my feet upon a rock, making my steps secure.

³He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God. Many will see and fear, and put their trust in the LORD.

⁴Blessed is the man who makes the LORD his trust, who does not turn to the proud, to those who go astray after a lie!

⁵You have multiplied, O LORD my God, your wondrous deeds and your thoughts toward us; none can compare with you! I will proclaim and tell of them, yet they are more than can be told.

⁶In sacrifice and offering you have not delighted, but you have given me an open ear.

Burnt offering and sin offering you have not required.

⁷Then I said, "Behold, I have come; in the scroll of the book it is written of me:

⁸"I delight to do your will, O my God; your law is within my heart."

⁹I have told the glad news of deliverance in the great congregation; behold, I have not restrained my lips, as you know, O LORD.

¹⁰I have not hidden your deliverance within my heart; I have spoken of your faithfulness and your salvation;

I have not concealed your steadfast love and your faithfulness from the great congregation.

¹¹As for you, O LORD, you will not restrain your mercy from me; your steadfast love and your faithfulness will ever preserve me!

¹²For evils have encompassed me beyond number; my iniquities have overtaken me, and I cannot see; they are more than the hairs of my head; my heart fails me.

¹³Be pleased, O LORD, to deliver me! O LORD, make haste to help me!

¹⁴Let those be put to shame and disappointed altogether who seek to snatch away my life;

let those be turned back and brought to dishonor who delight in my hurt!

¹⁵Let those be appalled because of their shame who say to me, "Aha, Aha!"

¹⁶But may all who seek you rejoice and be glad in you;

may those who love your salvation say continually, "Great is the LORD!"

¹⁷As for me, I am poor and needy, but the Lord takes thought for me.

You are my help and my deliverer; do not delay, O my God!

Verses 1-3:

Make a list of your "pits of destruction" and "miry bogs." Make a note of which ones you put yourself into and which ones you had no control over.

Make a list of likely miry clay pits you will face before you die.

What was David doing while he was in the pits? (verse 1)

Verses 2 and 3 could easily be a description of someone's salvation. *In what ways does it reflect your personal salvation experience? In what ways does it not?*

Verses 4-10:

What/where are other places we could go when we are facing difficulty? (verse 4) Where are the places that academics are prone to turn?

How does verse 5 offer comfort when we are in difficult circumstances?

Judging by David's experience, what is a natural response when we see the Lord work in our lives? Verses 3, 5, 9-10.

Verses 11-17:

In verses 12 and 14, what were the sources of David's current difficulties?

What attributes of God do you see in these verses?

Do you think David thought of these attributes theoretically or experientially? What difference would it make in how he dealt with adversity?

In verses 16-17, what is the relationship between man's role in glorifying God and his need for God to help him.

Discover the Big Idea:

What does David want the reader to understand about God when difficulties trap us?

Troubles will come. Even though David could have turned different places to find help, He knew that the Lord was his only hope for deliverance. Trusting God to help in times of difficulty provides the opportunity to tell others about how great He is.



APPLY

Is your knowledge of God more theoretical or experiential? What are the implications if it is only theoretical and not experiential?

The next time you are in a "miry bog," what experience can you reflect upon that will encourage you to trust the Lord for deliverance? Are you quick to tell others of what God has done for you, or do you suppress it? Why do we tend to keep it in?

As a professor, what opportunities do you have to tell others of God's greatness and what He has done for you?



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**LAUNCH**

Does a good relationship with God (or a bad relationship with Him) have any bearing on your role as a professor? How so?

In a confidential way, indicate which of the Ten Commandments (below) you have not obeyed.

1. I am the Lord your God, You shall have no other gods before Me.
2. You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above
3. You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain.
4. Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God. In it you shall do no work
5. Honor your father and your mother
6. You shall not murder.
7. You shall not commit adultery.
8. You shall not steal.
9. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.
10. You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, nor his male servant, nor his female servant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, nor anything that is your neighbor's.

Was there any uncertainty as to whether or not you had disobeyed some of these? What was the basis of the uncertainty?

What are the consequences of disobeying God's commands?

Today we are going to look at a person who disobeyed at least two of the Ten Commandments and how he faced God after his sin.

**EXPLORE****Survey the Big Picture:**

Psalm 51 was written by David after his greatest moral failures. As king of Israel, David seduced Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah. Bathsheba became pregnant, so David plotted to cover up his evil doing, which eventually led to Uriah's death. David took Bathsheba as his wife as if he had done nothing wrong, but Nathan the prophet confronted David with his sin. At that point, David owned the evil of his actions saying, "I have sinned against the Lord." The story is in 2 Samuel 11-12 This psalm appears to be David's conversation with God after his affair with Bathsheba.

The Passage: Read Psalm 51 (ESV)

To the choirmaster. A Psalm of David, when Nathan the prophet went to him, after he had gone in to Bathsheba.

¹Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions.

²Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin!

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

⁴Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you may be justified in your words and blameless in your judgment.

⁵Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.

⁶Behold, you delight in truth in the inward being, and you teach me wisdom in the secret heart.

⁷Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.

⁸Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones that you have broken rejoice.

⁹Hide your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities.

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

¹¹Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me.

¹²Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit.

¹³Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will return to you.

¹⁴Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, O God of my salvation, and my tongue will sing aloud of your righteousness.

¹⁵O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise.

¹⁶For you will not delight in sacrifice, or I would give it; you will not be pleased with a burnt offering.

¹⁷The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.

¹⁸Do good to Zion in your good pleasure; build up the walls of Jerusalem;

¹⁹then will you delight in right sacrifices, in burnt offerings and whole burnt offerings; then bulls will be offered on your altar.

Verses 1-2:

Murdoch Campbell writes: "David had committed two sins for which the Mosaic law provided no forgiveness. For deliberate murder and adultery, death was the inevitable penalty. He knew that before God there was no forgiveness through any sacrifices which he might offer or any gifts which he might present.... There was only one way back to God. And David knew it. It is through the merits of the Lamb of God."

Do you see any indication in these first two verses that David was making excuses for his sins? That he was hoping that God would look at his track record of good deeds such as slaying Goliath, his loyalty to Saul, or leading Israel into battle?

What is the significance of his first words, "Have mercy on me, O God."?

David uses three words in verses 1-2 to describe his sin:

- *Transgression* refers to crossing a forbidden boundary in serious rebellion – a line in the sand.
- *Iniquity* means perversion, or what we would refer to as original sin or sin nature.
- The word *sin* means "falling short" of God's holiness.

Verses 3-6:

It has been said that confession is agreeing with God about what is true of me. What are some things that David says about his sin?

Verse 5 is not intended to mean that the act of conception was evil, but that his evil actions stem from a propensity for sin that has been his since birth. This is not a one-time thing.

Read vv 7-9

What verbs do you see repeated that are also in verses 1-2?

Hyssop was a small plant frequently found growing in the crevices of stone walls. Because of its shape and structure, it was used as a small brush. In the ceremonies of the temple it was used to sprinkle blood. The first time it is mentioned in the Bible is at the Passover when the Jews were leaving Egypt: "Take a bunch of hyssop, dip it into the blood in the basin and put some of the blood on the top of and on both sides of the doorframe." Exodus 12:22. When the angel of death saw the blood he passed over the Jewish households, and the firstborn in those homes did not die.

The author of the New Testament book of Hebrews indicates that hyssop was used in the enacting of the covenant in Moses' day: "When Moses had proclaimed every commandment of the law to all people, he took the blood of calves, together with water, scarlet wool, and branches of hyssop, and sprinkled the scroll and all the people.... In the same way, he sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle and everything used in its ceremonies. In fact, the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sin." (Hebrews 9:19-22)

David understood this, and when he asked that God cleanse him with hyssop he meant "cleanse me by the blood. Forgive me and regard me as cleansed on the basis of the innocent victim that has died." (James Montgomery Boice, 429)

Only the cross of Christ would reveal at what cost this cleansing would come. This is how we must come to God too. We need forgiveness badly. But "without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness." It is only on the basis of the shed blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, that we may find God's mercy.

Verses 10-12:

The word "create" in verse 10 is the same word used in Genesis 1:1 "God created the heavens and the earth." It means to create something out of nothing. Why do you think David uses this word?

What are David's other requests in these verses? What are some clues that David had enjoyed an intimate relationship with God before he sinned?

Many think that the way to joy or a good time is by sinning and that godliness is dull. What do these verses say about that?

Verses 13-17

What does David anticipate to be the result of his pardon and purity?

Why would a person be tempted to offer a “sacrifice” rather than a broken spirit to God?

Verses 18-19:

David realized that his sin had consequences; it compromised the security of his kingdom. His moral disobedience left a gap in the wall of Israel’s righteousness. He looks forward to a day when righteousness is restored.

When you sin, in what ways does it affect others around you – your family, your church, your students and colleagues?

Discover the Big Idea:

What does this Psalm tell us about sin and pardon?

Sin is never trivial but is an affront to a holy God. It is only by the blood of Christ that we find God’s mercy and are restored to the joy and intimacy that we were meant to have with God.



What percentage of the time would you estimate that you acknowledge your sins before God, and what percentage of the time would you estimate that you fail to acknowledge your sin?

What are some of the reasons you don’t address your sins properly?

What are the consequences of not acknowledging your sins?

What does it tell us about our understanding of God when we don’t confess our sins?

How does this psalm point us to Christ?



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