

AGES 11 – 16 YEARS OLD

Psalms

Lesson #1: Psalm 1

LESSON OBJECTIVES

Goals

1. To give students an overview understanding of the Psalms by studying one of the most influential psalms.
2. To help students see the difference between the lifestyle of one who is righteous and one who is wicked.
3. To equip students with tools to stay bound to Jesus.

Topics

Righteousness

Scripture Memorization

Psalm 1:3

OPENING PRAYER (5 to 10 minutes)

GROUP BUILDING (10 minutes)

Individually or in pairs or small groups, encourage your students to attempt writing a poem about God. It can be as long or as short as they'd like, but it should attempt to describe God, praise God, or ask God something.

Give them a few minutes to compose their poems, and then invite anyone who would like to share their work with the rest of the group.

GETTING STARTED (5 minutes)

Today we begin our study of the Book of Psalms. We're going to cover ten psalms in all. Let's see how much you know about the psalms before we start our journey of study together:

General Discussion:

- How many psalms are there in the Book of Psalms? (150)
- Who wrote most of the psalms? (David)
- What is the longest psalm? (Psalm 119)
- What is the shortest psalm? (Psalm 117)
- Which psalm talks about God being like a shepherd? (Psalm 23)

That's awesome! There's much more to glean from The Book of Psalms — you're going to know a ton by the time we finish our study— but today we are going to dig into the very first of the psalms.

DIGGING IN (30 minutes)

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Read Psalm 1

There is a lot of interesting stuff here when it comes to structure and poetry, but we only have time to talk about the meaning, so let's go back through it one more time.

Read Psalm 1:1-2

Discussion Questions:

1. A blessed person doesn't do three things, according to verse 1. What are they? (*Don't walk with the wicked, stand with sinners, or sit with scoffers.*)
2. What does a blessed person do? (*Delights in the law of the Lord.*)
3. How do they go about doing this? (*By meditating on it day and night.*)

Lesson one of Psalm 1 is that to live a blessed life one must be tethered to the law of God.

Read Psalm 1:3-4

Discussion Questions:

1. According to verse 3, what is the blessed man who delights in the law of the Lord like? (*A tree planted by streams of water.*)
2. What does a tree like that do? (*It bears fruit, it's leaves don't wither, it prospers.*)
3. By contrast, what is the result of the wicked? (*They are not rooted, they are like chaff, and the wind drives them away.*)

Read Psalm 1:5-6

Discussion Questions:

1. What is the result of the wicked? (*They will perish.*)
2. What is the assumed result of the righteous? (*They will not perish, but live eternally.*)
3. At the end of Psalm 1, what do you suppose the psalmist wishes for us to conclude? (*That we should live as a blessed person and not a wicked person.*)

The contrast of the righteous and the wicked is prominent in the Book of Psalms — we'll see it featured again as we continue our study. But as we do we must constantly ask ourselves — how do we live as we should?

MAKING IT REAL (15 minutes)

If we are going to live as the righteous and blessed, Psalm 1 says we must meditate on the law of God day and night. This psalm was written to the Jewish people, who had a special relationship with the law.

When Jesus appears on the scene, he uses very similar language to suggest that it is staying tethered to Him that will allow us to live like a strong tree by streams of water.

Read John 15:1-5

Some of that language, the plant references and the bearing of fruit or wasting away, is very familiar to us. This passage sounds a lot like Psalm 1, doesn't it?

Discussion Questions:

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1. What does Jesus say that He is? (*The true vine.*)
2. What does a healthy branch off the vine do? (*It bears fruit.*)
3. What happens to branches that don't bear fruit? (*They are pruned, taken away, etc.*)
4. According to verse 4, what does a branch need to do to bear fruit? (*Abide in the vine, the source of its strength and power and health.*)
5. Apart from Christ, verse 5 says, what can we do? (*Nothing.*)

Read John 15:6-11

Discussion Questions:

1. What happens if we do not abide in Christ, according to verse 6? (*We will wither, be wasted, useless, burned, etc.*)
2. By abiding in Christ, and by allowing His words to abide in us, what happens? (*We bear much fruit, demonstrate ourselves as disciples.*)
3. How do we "abide" according to verses 9-11? (*By abiding in His love, by keeping His commandments, etc.*)
4. How do we abide in Christ's love? (*Accept no substitute, don't look for the approval of others but only of Christ, etc.*)
5. How do we obey Christ's commands? How does Psalm 1 help us do this? (*We must know His commands, then we must stay tethered to those words.*)

If you want to be like a tree planted by streams of water, if you want to abide in the vine that will allow you to bear fruit, you must remember that it is the love of Jesus that fuels us and the Word and commands of God that we must obey.

CLOSING PRAYER (2 minutes)

Pray that your students can abide in Christ, bear much fruit, and grow spiritually.

Psalms

Lesson #2: Psalm 23

LESSON OBJECTIVES

Goals

1. To give students an overview understanding of the Psalms by studying one of the most influential psalms.
2. To help students see that Jesus is a Good Shepherd.
3. To assure us that if we follow Jesus, He will lead us to good things.

Topics

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Following Jesus, Guidance

Scripture Memorization

Isaiah 40:11

OPENING PRAYER (5 to 10 minutes)

GROUP BUILDING (10 minutes)

Have the students get into pairs of two. Give one person in each group a blindfold to tie around their face. One pair at a time, have the blindfolded partner try to make their way across the room to a bag of candy, hearing only the instructions of their partner.

The partner without the blindfold must make a choice: they can give their partner correct instructions and the candy will be split between them, or they can lead their partner astray and get the bag of candy all to themselves.

Perform the activity and pass out the rewards afterwards.

GETTING STARTED (5 minutes)

General Discussion:

- What made those of you guiding decide to lead your partner astray? (*I wanted all the candy for myself!*)
- What made those of you guiding decide to give your partner good instructions? (*It seemed fair.*)
- Is it hard following guidance when you can't see where you're going, or you can't see the person giving you the instructions? (*Sure...it's hard to trust in that which you cannot see, especially when you're trusting them to guide you.*)

Psalms 23 is a chapter that explains God's intentions with us. He explains how following his instructions and staying true to his word will result in a perfect, eternal life. We've already talked about how the entire book of Psalms is constructed of devotional songs dedicated to God, all of which were written by David.

David was a shepherd, who took care of sheep for his master and devoted his life to following the Lord, just like we should.

DIGGING IN (30 minutes)

We're going to practice something known as Lectio Divina together. This is an ancient practice for reading Scripture that helps you mediate on the meaningful words. We'll read this passage together 4 times in different ways, then we'll go back through the passage and have some discussion about what it means.

1. Have everyone read Psalm 23 to themselves quietly.
2. As the leader, read Psalm 23 a second time out loud.
3. Go around the room and ask each person to read a single verse from Psalm 23.
4. Have everyone read Psalm 23 to themselves quietly one last time.

Discussion Questions:

1. What struck you about Psalm 23? (*Allow students to share.*)
2. How does the shepherding God gives us according to this psalm relate to our game? (*God leads us*)

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to good things, He's not a selfish God, etc.)

Now let's go back through this psalm little by little and see what more we can take away from it.

Read Psalm 23:1-2

Discussion Questions:

1. In Psalms 23:1, David says that the Lord is his shepherd. As a shepherd, what do you think David is trying to communicate here? *(Just like David takes care of sheep and keeps them from being led astray, God takes care of us, and keeps us from sin.)*
2. Because God is a good shepherd, what do we lack according to verse 1? *(Nothing.)*
3. According to verse 2, what state of being does God put us in? *(Peace, calm, provision.)*

Read Psalm 23:3-4

Discussion Questions:

1. What do you think verse 3 means when it says that the Lord "restores our soul?" *(Just like a shepherd restores their sheep, God restores us with provision and oversight and care.)*
2. With a shepherd like this, and according to verse 4, what do we have to fear? *(Nothing...not even death, because God is with us.)*

Verse 4 says that even when we are in the darkest, most helpless situations, we should not be scared, because God is always with us. His rod and his staff, every part of him, they comfort us and convince us that all is well.

Read Psalm 23:5-6

Discussion Questions:

1. What do you think it means that God prepares a table before us "in the presence of my enemies?" *(It could mean that God cares for us to the shame of our enemies, or it could mean that God brings us to our enemies for reconciliation.)*
2. What else does God do for us as our shepherd according to these verses? *(Anoints our head, overflows our cup, etc.)*
3. What hope do we gain from all these things according to verse 6? *(We get to dwell in the house of the Lord forever.)*

MAKING IT REAL (15 minutes)

General Discussion:

- How does this psalm relate to our everyday lives? *(We need guidance, a shepherd.)*
- Do you think of God in this way, as a shepherd? *(Allow students to share.)*

What we've read so far is from the Old Testament, but the New Testament uses similar language to describe our relationship to Jesus.

Read John 10:11-16

Discussion Questions:

1. How does Jesus refer to Himself? *(As the "Good Shepherd.")*

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2. What makes Him the Good Shepherd? (*His willingness to lay down His life for His sheep.*)
3. What comparison does Jesus make? (*To a hired shepherd who is not willing to lead his sheep away from harm, but instead flees selfishly.*)

It kind of goes back to our game, doesn't it? Those who are good shepherds lead us to good things, even if it costs them. Those who are selfish usually think of their own self-interests, not the interests of those they're leading.

But there's one more aspect to all this worth considering. In addition to Jesus, we have other shepherds in our lives.

General Discussion:

- What are some examples of leaders, providers, and shepherds in our lives? (*Parents, teachers, law enforcement.*)
- How do those leaders help "shepherd" us? (*They keep us from harm, teach us where to go and how to behave, help us make wise choices, etc.*)
- How can we benefit from their example? (*We can learn to live unselfish lives for the good of others.*)

CLOSING PRAYER (2 minutes)

Ask for any prayer requests and pray for the group, especially that they can follow the Good Shepherd, Jesus.

Psalms

Lesson #3: Psalm 27

LESSON OBJECTIVES

Goals

1. To remind the students that when God is with us, there is no reason to be afraid.
2. To inspire students to stand in awe of His beauty.
3. To encourage students that if we stand strong and take heart, we will live in peace.

Topics

Dependability, Fear, Following Jesus, Patience

Scripture Memorization

Psalm 27:14

OPENING PRAYER (5 to 10 minutes)

GROUP BUILDING (10 minutes)

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Start out by having one person leave the room. The rest of the group decides upon an action the person outside the room tries to guess. This could be anything: eating, singing, biking, taking a shower... etc. Then the group decides on a random word to replace that action word with, such as: penguin, guitar, coffee, etc. Once the replacement word has been decided upon the person outside reenters the room, is told the replacement action word and starts asking people questions about the action. The group must answer with the substituted word in a sentence. The goal is for the person that was outside the room to guess the action.

Example of what the question and answers may sound like: (Penguin replaces Blinking)

Q. "Do you Penguin while you sleep?"

A. "No I don't tend to Penguin when I sleep"

Q. "Is Penguin seeing?"

A. "No, Penguin is not seeing."

Q. "Do you Penguin while you're under water?"

A. "I try not to Penguin while under water, but it happens"

Q. "Is Penguin blinking?"

A. "Yes, Penguin is blinking."

GETTING STARTED (5 minutes)

General Discussion:

- Was the game difficult? If so, why? (*Get the students' opinions.*)
- How do we associate certain words with actions? (*Allow students to theorize.*)
- Why do you think that's the way God made us? (*Gather opinions again.*)
- Based on the game, and what you may already know, what do you think Psalms 27 will be about? (*Allow students to guess.*)

Psalms 27 discusses how God will keep us safe in dire times. David is singing a song to God, asking him to never forsake us and exalt us above all when we follow his way. He says we will seek his face, and even when our earthly parents forsake us, God will accept us as his children.

DIGGING IN (30 minutes)

Last week we practiced something known as Lectio Divina together. This is an ancient practice for reading Scripture that helps you meditate on the meaningful words. This week we'll read it individually once and then we'll go back through it together.

Have everyone read Psalm 27 silently

Now let's go back through this text together a second time.

Read Psalm 27:1-5

In writing this text, David speaks in the first person, but all of what he says applies to us as well.

Discussion Questions:

1. According to this text, who/what shall David fear? (*No one, nothing.*)
2. What happens when the wicked advance to devour David? (*His enemies stumble and fall.*)
3. How does David feel when war breaks out against us? (*He will be confident.*)
4. What does David ask from the Lord? (*That he could dwell in his house all the days our lives.*)
5. What will happen on the king's day of trouble? (*He keeps David safe in his dwelling and sets him high upon a rock.*)

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Verses 1-5 teach us that no matter what happens — through wars, trials, and tribulations, the Lord will always keep us safe. He will protect us no matter the cost and hide us from the wicked enemies who advance upon us. The only thing we need to ask from him is to be kept safe in his holy dwelling and live in awe of the beauty of the Lord.

Read Psalm 27:6-10

Discussion Questions:

1. Where will David sacrifice with shouts of joy? (*In the Lord's sacred tent.*)
2. Whose face is he set on seeking? (*The Lord's.*)
3. What does David ask the Lord not to do? (*Hide His face from us, turn His servant away in anger, and reject or forsake us.*)

Verses 6-10 teach us that, as is true with David, we will thank the Lord for the safety He gives us with two things: music and sacrifice. We ask Him to answer us when we call Him and to receive us when our earthly parents forsake us, to not hide His face or turn away His servant in anger.

Read Psalm 27:11-14

Discussion Questions:

1. What does David ask the Lord to do for him? (*Lead us in a straight path and teach us His ways.*)
2. Why do you think false witnesses rise against David? (*Gather the students' opinions.*)
3. Of What does David remain confident? (*That he'll seek the goodness of the Lord.*)
4. For whom should we wait? (*The Lord.*)

Verses 11-14 teach that that we will remain confident of the Lord's ability to protect us from the false witnesses that spout malicious accusations. We should be strong, take heart, and wait for the Lord.

MAKING IT REAL (15 minutes)

These Psalm may be written by David, but much of what he says informs our lives as well.

General Discussion:

- How do these passages apply to our lives, in your opinion? (*Ask several students for an answer.*)
- How does God shelter you? (*From accusations, sin, temptation, physical danger, etc.*)
- How do we go about seeking the Lord? (*Read His word, prayer, His people, worship, etc.*)
- Like David, can you remain confident that you will see the goodness of the Lord? How? (*Allow students to share.*)

Think back to the opening game we played. Were you right when you guessed what the chapter would be about? What did you get wrong?

God's natural instinct is to keep us out of harm's way. He loves us so much He would do anything to protect us. He never thinks of Himself, always puts others first. It's a reflex, just like the words we normally use to describe everyday things.

Think of some relationships between our life with God and our life without God. Without the Lord, we would be lost, confused. Without following the natural rules of our language, we would feel the same way.

We are going to play another game.

(*Make sure each student has a Bible. We are going to read through the last two verses—13 and 14—going around the circle, with each student saying only one word as fast as they can. If you mess up, start again and continue until successfully completed.*)

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General Discussion:

- Was the game difficult? If so, why? *(Allow students to share.)*
- What do you think made it that way? *(It was difficult to know who was saying what and when and how fast...it was hard for your brain to keep up.)*
- How does it relate to the chapter? *(One similarity is that we had to depend on each other to get the words right or it didn't count, we must learn to depend upon God or life doesn't count, there may be other similarities students discover.)*
- Verse 14 is our memory verse — what do you think it means? *(That we should depend on the Lord.)*
- How do we "wait" on the Lord? *(We're patient, we trust Him, etc.)*
- How are we "strong" and how do we "take heart" as we wait? *(Again...we show trust like David that the Lord will take care of us, we seek His face, etc.)*

CLOSING PRAYER (2 minutes)

Ask for any prayer requests and have a student pray for the group.

Psalms

Lesson #4: Psalm 35

LESSON OBJECTIVES

Goals

1. Help the students understand that God will always protect us.
2. To help the students hear of the Lord's incredible power.
3. To teach that God will punish those who make mistakes but continues to love them.

Topics

Faith, Protection

Scripture Memorization

Psalm 43:1

OPENING PRAYER (5 to 10 minutes)

GROUP BUILDING (10 minutes)

We are going to play variation of the game "Would You Rather". In this game, I am going to ask you some questions comparing two different situations, and we will go around the room picking the circumstance we would rather be in.

Would you prefer to only have Halloween as a holiday, OR only have Christmas?

Would you prefer one hundred friends that you don't really know OR have one best friend that you know better than anyone else.

Would you prefer to win the lottery, OR have your dog run away?

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Would you prefer to live your life with Jesus, cleansed of all sin and imperfections, OR live with sin and hate, and never know God.

General Discussion:

- Were some of the questions hard? Which ones were easy? (*Allow students to make their case.*)
- Assuming the last question was the simplest to answer, what do you think made it that way? (*Common opinions, the drastic contrast in situation, etc.*)

GETTING STARTED (5 minutes)

Write the names of different Bible characters or important places on separate sticky notes and stick one on the forehead of each student. Each student should have a partner. The students then must guess who/what is on their forehead by asking only yes or no questions to their partner.

The first partnership to correctly guess the person/place on the sticky note are the winners.

Using rewards such as candy or small prizes can increase the competition as well as the game's excitement.

DIGGING IN (30 minutes)

The first half of Psalms 35 is David asking God to always protect him, along with all the Lord's children. David marvels in God's brilliance and asks that the Lord always protect us from those who put us in danger.

The second half of Psalms 35 is David asking God to punish those who wrong him. Many examples are given on how these sinners should be punished.

Have students get in pairs. Within each pair, have one student read Psalm 35:1-14, then the other student should read Psalm 35:15-28.

Now we will go through the verses again, breaking them apart and looking further into their meaning.

Read Psalm 35:1-5

Discussion Questions:

1. Based on context, what do you think the word contend means in verse 1? (*First gather opinions, then read the following..." To contend is to struggle to overcome an obstacle or a difficulty. It is saying that David asks the Lord to punish those who put us in danger. When they overcome us, God shall overcome them."*)
2. Why is God our salvation? (*He shields us from sinners, keeps us out of harm's way, etc.*)
3. Based on context, what do you think the word chaff means? (*A chaff is a corn husk or a piece of hay or straw. The passage states that our enemies will float helplessly in the wind after the Lord drives them away.*)

Read Psalm 35:6-9

Discussion Questions:

1. Why do we wish for our enemies to be punished? Why do we feel the need to have revenge? (*We're hurt, we tend to seek revenge, etc.*)
2. Read verse 10. How does that verse change your answer to the previous question, if at all? (*God will see to it that justice occurs, we need to only trust Him.*)

Read Psalm 35:11-14

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Discussion Questions:

1. The word bereave (verse 12) means to lose a loved one through their death. How does that relate to the rest of the verse? (*When we do good, but get treated with evil, we feel the same kind of sadness.*)
2. David says in verse 13 that when his enemy was ill, he put on sackcloth. This was an act of humbling himself to pray for his enemy's health. Would you pray for your enemy if they were in danger? (*If most of us are honest, it would be difficult for us.*)
3. In verse 14, David mourned for his foe when his prayers went unanswered. He cried as if it were for his family, for his mother or father. Why do you think he would do this, after all the pain his enemy had put him through? (*Allow students to answer.*)

Read Psalm 35:15-20

Discussion Questions:

1. Based on context, what do you think the word assailant means? (*A person who physically attacks another.*)
2. Why would David compare his enemies to lions? (*Gather opinions.*)
3. Throngs are large groups of people. Why do you think it is so important to thank/praise God publicly? (*There is power in it, we are an encouragement to each other, etc.*)

Read Psalm 35:21-27

Discussion Questions:

1. In Psalm 35:23, David uses the word contend, as he did in verse 1. Do you think their meanings are the same in both sets of contexts? (*Reminder: Contend is to struggle to overcome a difficulty or danger.*)
2. What do you think the word vindicate means? (*To clear someone of doubt, clear one's name.*)
3. In verses 26 and 27, David wishes that those who wrong him would never know God, and that those who are faithful to him dwell in the place of the Lord. Think back to the last group building question. It is so easy to decide which person you want to be, so why is it so hard to live that out? (*Wanting something and living something out are very different...one takes a simple desire, the second takes commitment.*)
4. Why is it so important to thank God for everything He has done for us? (*Gather opinions.*)

Verses 15 and 16 are about the ways our enemies can taunt us, the ways they make us feel like we are without God. Verses 17 and 18 describe David begging God for protection, promising that he will praise Him. Verses 19-25 describe David's specific instructions for God to keep him safe. The last three verses compare the actions of an enemy, a friend, and a follower of God.

MAKING IT REAL (15 minutes)

We are going to play the opening game again, but the rules will be a little different this time.

- Instead of having a partner, the students should be divided into groups of three.
- The group will decide which person should have a sticky note, then that student will receive one, not knowing what it is.
- The two group members without a biblical figure/place sticky note will decide among themselves which person will tell the truth to every yes/no question asked, and which will lie.
- The yes/no questions will be asked, responses will be given, and the person with the sticky note must determine which player is telling the truth.

General Discussion:

- Was this version of the game harder than the first? If so, why? (*Allow students to share.*)
- Which part of the passage do you think made more sense- where David wished for his enemies to

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suffer, or where he wept for their sufferings? *(It makes sense that he wished for their suffering, but this isn't the way we should behave.)*

Read Colossians 3:13

Discussion Questions:

1. Do you think this verse relates better to the first half of Psalm 35 or the second half? *(Allow students to share their opinion.)*
2. Do you think Paul (the author of Colossians) has a different view of forgiveness and repentance than David? Explain your answer? *(They seem different, and students may have a hard time explaining their view. Allow them time to think about it.)*
3. Why do you think it seems harder for David to forgive his enemies than it is for Paul? *(Their experiences, what they've seen, etc.)*
4. Is it hard for you to forgive your enemies? Why/why not? *(Allow students to share.)*

CLOSING PRAYER (2 minutes)

Ask for any prayer requests and have a student pray for the group.

Psalms

Lesson #5: Psalm 51

LESSON OBJECTIVES

Goals

1. To confront students with their need for God's forgiveness.
2. To teach students to be humble, recognizing they are sinful and inspiring them to do their best to follow God.
3. To motivate students to be willing to make sacrifices for God.

Topics

Faith, Protection

Scripture Memorization

Proverbs 20:9

OPENING PRAYER (5 to 10 minutes)

GROUP BUILDING (10 minutes)

We are going to play the game "Two Truths and A Lie". Each student will state three facts about themselves, two of them being true, and one being false. The rest of the group will work together to decide which fact is the lie. Go around the circle until each student has taken their turn.

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GETTING STARTED (5 minutes)

General Discussion:

- Were some of the lies easy to detect? Why do you think that is? *(Allow students to share.)*
- Were the facts shared, some that you already knew? *(Allow students to share.)*
- Take your experience from the game and what you may already have known and guess what you think the chapter will be about. *(Gather answers).*

Psalm 51 is a chapter much different than the others in its book. Rather than David asking God for protection and safety, he asks for forgiveness of his sins. This chapter talks about repentance.

DIGGING IN (30 minutes)

We're going to practice something known as Lectio Divina together. This is an ancient practice for reading Scripture that helps you meditate on the meaningful words. We've done it a couple times in this series already, and it's helpful to our understanding, particularly with poetic literature such as Psalms.

We'll read this passage together 4 times in different ways, then we'll go back through the passage and have some discussion about what it means.

1. Have everyone read Psalm 51 to themselves quietly.
2. As the leader, read Psalm 51 a second time out loud.
3. Go around the room and ask each person to read a single verse from Psalm 51.
4. Have everyone read Psalm 51 to themselves quietly one last time.

Discussion Questions:

1. What struck you about Psalm 51? *(Take opinions, validating each student's observations.)*
2. What's a word that you think is important to this psalm? *(Again, take students opinions, appreciating them for their contribution.)*

Now we will go through the chapter again, breaking it apart and looking further into its meaning.

Read Psalm 51:1-4

Discussion Questions:

1. Transgressions are the same thing as sins. What do you think it means to "blot them out"? *(Remove, cleanse, etc.)*
2. What do you think the word iniquity means? How does that apply to the verse? *(Iniquity is immoral behavior, something David admits to in this psalm.)*
3. Why is it good to acknowledge that you have done wrong? *(To not admit our wrongdoing is lying to ourselves, it is arrogant and prideful, etc.)*

Verses 1-4 talks about acknowledging our sins. Without seeing that we have made mistakes, we cannot welcome God into our lives to save us. He will forgive us no matter what, but we must be willing to accept Him.

Read Psalm 51:5-8

Discussion Questions:

1. Read verse 6 again. What do you think it means? *(God wants us to be faithful, He wants us to not be spotted with sin and guilt.)*
2. Hyssop (verse 7) is a herb that was commonly used in ancient medical remedies. When David asks God to cleanse him with it, he is associating physical healing with spiritual. What is the difference

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between the two? *(One can be physically well but spiritually sick, spiritual sickness isn't always evident, etc.)*

3. David wishes for even those who God has punished to rejoice, because the Lord forgives all of us. Do you believe that everyone, no matter their worth, sin, or beliefs, deserves to receive God's forgiveness? *(Really challenge students to be honest here.)*

Read Psalm 51:9-12

Discussion Questions:

1. Verse 9 repeats pleadings included in verses 1-2. Why do you think David uses this kind of repetition? *(It is a literary device to provide emphasis...he is begging God for forgiveness.)*
2. In verse 10, David asks God to "renew the steadfast spirit within him", saying that the spirit was once in him but is no longer there. How could the spirit have been lost? Through sin? Disbelief in God? *(Rebellion leads to a compromised relationship, loss of trust, break in fellowship, and guilt...repentance leads to restoration.)*
3. How could a mere "willing spirit" sustain us (verse 12)? *(It is a willingness to repent, obey, and enjoy close fellowship with God that does the sustaining...none of which can happen without willingness.)*

Verses 9-12 describe David asking God to fix what has been broken inside of him, whether physical, mental, emotional, or spiritual. He asks to be sustained, to be satisfied, and to no longer yearn for the worthless entities of earth.

Read Psalm 51:13-16

Discussion Questions:

1. In verses 13-15 David promises to spread the word of God's reputation after he is cleansed and forgiven, along with singing of his righteousness. Would being promised something in exchange be more motivating to God? Why or why not? *(No, God's forgiveness does not require additional motivation...this is not a deal David is making with God, just a commitment to refocus his life around God.)*
2. According to Psalm 51:16, God does not "delight in" earthly sacrifices — why do you think that is? *(We can make great sacrifices, but our heart still be far from God...what He desires is for our hearts to be set on Him.)*

Read Psalm 51:17-19

Discussion Questions:

1. Emotional sacrifices seem to please God. Looking back to the question of the difference between physical and emotional sacrifice, did your opinion change? Why do you think God prefers the latter? *(Because it is when our emotions, our spirit, and our hearts are tuned to Him that we are in close relationship to Him.)*
2. David seems to return to the topic of sacrifice often, including in the last verse of the chapter. Why is it so important? *(He lived in a sacrificial system that was visible and ceremonial and celebrated, but he is recognizing that those practices are empty if his heart isn't set on living for God.)*

MAKING IT REAL (15 minutes)

We are going to play the opening game again, but this time the truths/lies will be provided. *(See below.)*

- God forgives us even if we don't repent.
- David was wise, righteous, and had his heart set on the Lord.
- We should live our lives for God and spread His word no matter the consequence.

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Which statement was false? (Ask for opinions, there may be disagreement).

The false statement was the first one. Is God willing to forgive us, of course! But repentance is a huge part of our experience in following Jesus.

Select four students and assign each of them one of the verses to read aloud:

Acts 2:38, Acts 3:19, Acts 17:30, and Acts 20:21

What these verses teach is that God asks all of us to turn to Him in repentance. This means admitting our sin, committing to not repeat that sin, and trusting him with all that we are.

Read Luke 5:31-32

Discussion Questions:

1. What do you think Luke intended when he wrote these verses? *(To demonstrate to his readers that we are all sick and in need of a "doctor." Our only hope for healing is Jesus.)*

We all need a Psalm 51 moment. We need to recognize how we've failed God, seek him for his forgiveness, and make commitments to walk with him daily.

CLOSING PRAYER (2 minutes)

Ask for any prayer requests and then pray for the group.

Psalms

Lesson #6: Psalm 91

LESSON OBJECTIVES

Goals

- 1.To inspire students to trust in the Lord.
- 2.To help the student feel comfortable wanting to dwell in the place of the Lord.
- 3.To aid them in understanding with renewed enthusiasm that God loves us.

Topics

Protection, Relationship

Scripture Memorization

Isaiah 25:4

OPENING PRAYER (5 to 10 minutes)

GROUP BUILDING (10 minutes)

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You'll need some popsicle sticks, having written the books of the Bible on them in advance, as well as a small container in which to place those sticks.

Split the students into two groups. The popsicle sticks will be in the container, and each group will take turns picking up a popsicle stick, trying to say a verse that belongs in that book, and setting it outside the container. If they can do this from memory, they get two points.

If a certain popsicle stick has a book on it that the team knows no verses from, they may look up that book and recite a verse by reading it. For this they only get one point. Each team gets two minutes to earn as many points as they can.

Small prizes like candy for the winning team will increase competition and enjoyment.

GETTING STARTED (5 minutes)

Psalm 91 is a song written by David encouraging others to follow and trust in the Lord, just as he does. He wants those that hear the song to learn that God's dwelling is a safe place, that we should be comfortable living with Him and for Him. In this chapter, he gives many reasons why God is our only refuge, the only path to eternal safety and happiness, and why no harm will overtake us if we choose Him.

Read Isaiah 25:4.

Discussion Questions:

1. What do you think this verse is saying? (*That God is a refuge for the poor, a shelter for those in need, the oppressed, etc.*)
2. Based on what we've already learned, how might it relate to Psalm 91? (*God is a safe place for all to dwell.*)
3. What do you think "the wall" represents in this verse? (*The wall is our lives, and it is battered by the ruthless, the evil, and the forces that are against God in this world.*)

DIGGING IN (30 minutes)

We're going to practice something known as Lectio Divina together again this week. This is an ancient practice for reading Scripture that helps you meditate on the meaningful words. It's perfect for reading poetic literature like the psalms. We'll read this passage together 4 times in different ways, then we'll go back through the passage and have some discussion about what it means.

1. Have everyone read Psalm 91 to themselves quietly.
2. As the leader, read Psalm 91 a second time out loud.
3. Go around the room and ask each person to read a single verse from Psalm 91.
4. Have everyone read Psalm 91 to themselves quietly one last time.

Discussion Questions:

1. What struck you about Psalm 91? (*Gather opinions.*)
2. Did you notice new things about the chapter as you read/heard it for the second, third and fourth times? What did you notice? (*Students may point out particular words, phrases, even pauses in the text...ask them to tell you more about why they stuck out to them.*)

Now we will go back through the chapter, breaking it apart and looking further into its meaning.

Re-read Psalm 91:1-8

Discussion Questions:

1. "The Most High" and "The Almighty" both represent God, so why do you think David describes them with two separate titles? (*He is using the poetic device of repetition to emphasize God's character.*)

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2. Based on context, what do you think the word pestilence means? *(A fatal disease or epidemic.)*
3. This translation uses the metaphor that God covers us with His feathers and puts us “under His wings”. Why do you think the figure of speech applies to this chapter? *(It is another way of introducing the fact that God is our shelter, that He provides safety and a covering.)*
4. What kind of person would you define as “wicked?” *(Someone who is opposed to God, opposed to good.)*

Re-read Psalm 91:9-16

Discussion Questions:

1. How do we make God our dwelling, rather than just heaven being a dwelling? *(To dwell means to exist within — surrender, abiding, relationship, connection are all ways we ‘dwell’ in God)*
2. What might “our tent” represent? Our lives? Our homes? *(In OT language, the tabernacle/temple was the dwelling place of God...the “tent” here may simply represent wherever God is.)*
3. In most parables or other Bible stories, a serpent or a snake normally represents Satan, so in this verse, David is saying that we will conquer Satan. Who/what do you think “the great lion” represents? *(That is also a depiction of evil/Satan...he is a predator who means us harm.)*
4. According to David, the Lord seems to require an agreement between us honoring Him and Him protecting us? Does this make sense to you? Do you agree with it? *(This seems clear in the verse that God will protect those who allow Him to by entering into a relationship with Him.)*
5. With the gift of eternal life, would you choose to follow God in return? Do you think that decision is common? *(So many reject it, even as such a great promise...but allow students to share what they think.)*

MAKING IT REAL (15 minutes)

Let’s take another look at Isaiah 25:4. Have a student read the verse again, and then ask the group the following questions.

Read Isaiah 25:4

Discussion Questions:

1. Did this verse relate to Psalm 91 in the way you thought it would, if at all? *(Yes, the ideas of refuge, protection, etc. are all present there.)*
2. In your opinion, which passage describes protection better? *(They both describe it in slightly different ways...what is clear is that if we dwell with God, He will be there for us to be a safe place.)*

Isaiah was written by a prophet of the same name who lived in the Kingdom of Judah. He wrote prophesying the Messiah’s arrival and providing insight to God’s gifts to us. This Messiah would be a great protector of all.

David was a young shepherd who became King and who wrote many of the Psalms in the book of songs praising God and informing those who read Psalms of the Lord’s glory.

David seems to illustrate the fact that God will protect us from all harm and invite us into His shelter, providing that we choose to follow Him. No matter our worth, ranking, or social status, He will love and cherish us when we honor Him. Isaiah, at least in verse 4 of chapter 25, seems to say that God will love us no matter the circumstance, whether we acknowledge what He has done for us or not. Even if we choose not to honor Him, He will continue to honor us, and offer us a place in heaven, which we will enjoy if we ask for His forgiveness and repent.

General Discussion:

- Would you consider David and Isaiah’s views on God’s acceptance considerably different? *(Both speak of God’s promise (to protect) and our response (to honor or repent, etc.)*
- How do you think these men’s different experiences would affect their views on this topic? *(Isaiah is*

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prophesying, David is writing a poem, so their context is different for sure...and their life experience surely causes them to emphasize different things or look at things a different way.)

Both men come from different times and different occupations. They come from different eras of law and lifestyle, yet still talk about the same ideas regarding faith. Sure enough, their words are still applicable to us today, thousands of years removed from when they were first written.

Psalm 91 is a chapter talking about everything that God can do for us when we choose to follow and focus on Him and His message. He died for us, so we could live eternally peacefully in heaven, so we could be forgiven of our sins and washed clean by God. He has already chosen us to live in His kingdom, and if we trust in Him and do what He asks, we will be free to live with Him forever, where no harm can come to us and we are safe from sin.

General Discussion:

- Do you think you “dwell” in God? How? *(Allow students to share what they think about their own lives and what dwelling means — obedience, friendship, existing in community with other believers, etc.)*
- How have you seen God’s protection in your life? *(Allow students to share these experiences.)*
- Do you think God will always protect us from every evil/illness/trouble, even if we honor Him? *(No...that is not Scriptural...we will encounter trouble in the world...but God’s eternal dwelling place is there for those who honor Him, and we have hope in this life of that day.)*

CLOSING PRAYER (2 minutes)

Ask for any prayer requests and then pray for the group

Psalms

Lesson #7: Psalm 121

LESSON OBJECTIVES

Goals

1. To encourage students to seek God.
2. To help the students not be afraid in the presence of evil.
3. To teach the students that God is always with us, no matter what.

Topics

Protection, Relationship

Scripture Memorization

Jeremiah 3:23

OPENING PRAYER (5 to 10 minutes)

GROUP BUILDING (10 minutes)

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Let your group know that it is their job to arrange themselves in a line, in order, according to certain criteria. There are several ideas below, or you can make up new categories. For each round, give them 30 seconds to line up (for larger groups, allow 60 seconds).

- Line up in height order (shortest to tallest)
- Line up in height order (tallest to shortest)
- Line up in alphabetical order by first name
- Line up in alphabetical order by last name
- Line up by age, oldest to youngest
- Line up by age, youngest to oldest
- Line up by darkness of hair

GETTING STARTED (5 minutes)

Psalms 121 is another one of David's Psalms praising God for His greatness and telling others about the things He can do for us if we repent. He credits the Lord for the creation of everything that is good and right, everything He made for us, including us. He says that the Lord watches over us, will never abandon us, and will forever protect us from sin and evil influence.

Read Jeremiah 20:11

Discussion Questions:

1. What struck you about the verse? *(Let students share their thoughts.)*
2. Does it seem similar to what we've already learned about Psalm 121? *(That God is strong, able to protect, always with us, etc.)*

DIGGING IN (30 minutes)

As we turn our attention to Psalm 121, we're going to practice Lectio Divina together again this week. It's perfect for our study of the psalms, as we've discovered in past weeks. This is an ancient practice for reading Scripture that helps you meditate on the meaningful words. We'll read this passage together 4 times in different ways, then we'll go back through the passage and have some discussion about what it means.

1. Have everyone read Psalm 121 to themselves quietly.
2. As the leader, read Psalm 121 a second time out loud.
3. Go around the room and ask each person to read a single verse from Psalm 121.
4. Have everyone read Psalm 121 to themselves quietly one last time.

Discussion Questions:

1. What struck you about Psalms 121? *(God is always with us, won't let us fall, watches over us, keeps us from harm, etc.)*
2. How does it compare to any other Psalms lessons that you have studied? *(There is a common theme of presence, of protection, etc.)*

Now we will read through the lesson again, breaking it apart and looking further into its meaning.

Re-read Psalm 121:1-4

Discussion Questions:

1. What do you think the "mountains" are supposed to represent? *(Literally, it could have meant David was looking into mountains toward the temple in Jerusalem...figuratively, it infers that we're "looking up" to the heavens, etc.)*
2. What effect do you think David asking and answering the same question has on those who read the verse or listen to his song? *(It gives certainty, states faith, etc.)*

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3. David seems to emphasize the fact that God will not rest if it means that His children, whom He created, are safe from sin and temptation. Why do you think this point is so important? *(We all suffer and go through trials, and to know that He is always watching and always with us provides great comfort.)*

Psalms 121:1-4 is a passage about who will protect us and the measures they will go to in order to keep us safe. David explains that God is our most important ally, our savior. He says that God will not rest until everything we are in danger of has been conquered.

Re-read Psalms 121:5-8

Discussion Questions:

1. God is referred to as "shade", as in from heat or bright sunlight. This metaphor can mean that, as shade on a hot day, God is our shelter, protecting us from danger. How might this figure of speech contribute to the reader's understanding? *(Living where they lived, they certainly knew the benefit of shade in the heat...this is an image with which they are all familiar.)*
2. David says, over and over, that no harm will come to us, for God is watching over us at all times. He always has, is, and will be taking the best care of us. Is this surprising for you to hear? Why do you think David repeats it so frequently here? *(In poetic literature, the repetition provides emphasis...this emphasis helps this truth stick in the readers' minds.)*

Psalms 121:5-8 is mostly a review over what was addressed in the first four verse, only emphasized and elaborated on. The chapter in its entirety focuses on the anything and everything that God will do for us, the lengths the Lord would go to for us to have eternal life with him in his kingdom.

Now let's compare again this psalm with Jeremiah 20:11.

MAKING IT REAL (15 minutes)

Read Jeremiah 20:11

This verse touches on some of the same topics as many discussed in David's psalms, including Psalm 121. They are similar because they both discuss how David protects and provides.

General Discussion:

- Other than God, who are some people who are there for you whenever you need? *(Parents, friends, youth leaders at church, etc.)*
- What are some ways your parents are there for you? *(Providing what you need, providing physical protection, etc.)*
- How are friends a presence in your life? *(When you feel alone they provide companionship, when you get knocked down they help you back up, etc.)*
- How are you a presence and helper in the lives of others? *(Challenge students to think of someone for whom they are helpful...a younger sibling, classmate, etc.)*

All these helpers assist us in finding our way, helping us learn what we want to do and how we can do it for the Lord. They guide us in all the ways that God does, striving to reach a goal. God's goal for us is to help us live an everlasting life with him in his kingdom, and to serve him during our lives on Earth. He is always with us to that end, and we can depend on him and not fear.

General Discussion:

- In what ways can you sense God's presence and protection? *(Allow students to share.)*
- What does it mean to you that God is with you? How does that free you up to live? *(Without fear, in confidence, in security about your relationship with him, etc.)*
- Does God's presence in our lives mean that nothing bad will ever happen? *(No, but it does mean that the hope we have is greater than any trouble we face.)*

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Like David and Jeremiah, it's my prayer that you can live in confidence, knowing that a Mighty Warrior is watching over you at all times. Your help comes from the Lord!

CLOSING PRAYER (2 minutes)

Ask for any prayer requests and then pray for the group

Psalms

Lesson #8: Psalm 139

LESSON OBJECTIVES

Goals

1. To help the students know that they can turn to God in times of need.
2. To help them understand how following God will help them.
3. To help them be motivated to repent for their sins.

Topics

Mercy, Repentance, Sin

Scripture Memorization

Hebrews 4:13

OPENING PRAYER (5 to 10 minutes)

GROUP BUILDING (10 minutes)

We are going to play a game called 20 Questions. Some of the students may have played this before, and those who haven't should be able to learn the rules quickly, as the rules are quite simple.

1. Pick a student to think of anything. A celebrity, a place, a thing, a holiday, etc.
2. They will keep that idea in their heads, while the rest of the group asks yes or no questions, whether specific or general.
3. You can have the students raise their hands, or simply have them shout their questions out loud, though that can make the game chaotic (which can be fun!)
4. The twist is that the group only has twenty questions to figure out the person/place/thing in the student's mind.
5. The first person to correctly guess what the "host" is thinking wins.
6. If twenty questions go by and the concept has not been guessed, the "host" then wins.
7. A prize or some sort of reward can add excitement to the game.
8. Do this twice, selecting two different students to think of the concept.

GETTING STARTED (5 minutes)

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General Discussion:

- Was the game difficult? Why or why not? (*We had no idea what you were thinking, it was loud, and I couldn't always hear, it's hard to read minds, etc.*)
- Did only being able to ask yes/no questions make it more difficult? (*Yes...it was like we only got a small piece of the picture at a time, etc.*)
- How do you think this game could relate to the lesson? (*Allow students to speculate.*)

Psalms 139 is a chapter that discusses how we can turn to God in times of need. If we repent, and confess our sins, he will forgive us. He can help us through anything, if we trust in Him. We can communicate clearly to Him, ask Him as many questions as we want to. There is no limit. Not 20, not 50, not even thousands.

DIGGING IN (35 minutes)

Read Job 34:21-22

Discussion Questions:

1. What message do you think the author was trying to convey in these verses? (*That God sees and knows all, there is nothing hidden from Him, etc.*)
2. How could it relate to the message of Psalms 139? (*Allow students to speculate.*)

Throughout this lesson, try to identify the similarities between these verses from Job and Psalms 139. Make three notes of metaphors that David makes comparing God and his love to other things. (An animal, an inanimate object, etc.) Keep these metaphors in mind throughout the lesson.

We're going to practice something known as *Lectio Divina* together. This is an ancient practice for reading Scripture that helps you meditate on the meaningful words. We'll read this passage together 4 times in different ways, then we'll go back through the passage and have some discussion about what it means.

1. Have everyone read Psalm 139 to themselves quietly.
2. As the leader, read Psalm 139 a second time out loud.
3. Go around the room and ask each person to read a single verse from Psalm 139.
4. Have everyone read Psalm 139 to themselves quietly one last time.

Discussion Question:

1. What struck you about Psalm 139? (*It will take some time but ask each student to share what stuck out to them about Psalm 139, even if it's something simple.*)

Now we will go through the chapter again, breaking it apart and looking further into its meaning.

Re-read Psalm 139: 1-6

Discussion Questions:

1. How does reading these verses make you feel? (*It feels good to know God is near, watching, cares, sees, etc.*)
2. Do you feel safe? Protected? Or does this description of God's all-knowing love make you feel uncomfortable? (*This is a great question to encourage students to be honest about their perception and feelings about God.*)

Verses 1-5 talk about how God knows anything and everything about us. He watches over us and keeps us from the evils of sin. He shields us from the temptations, the lies, the decisions that we wouldn't be proud of.

Re-read Psalm 139:7-12

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Discussion Questions:

1. These verses best relate to those in Job 34 that we read earlier. How do you think the different authors took different approaches on this topic? Why? *(Both are works of poetry, both authors recognize God's presence, that nothing is hidden, etc.)*
2. Is God always being there for us a good or a bad thing? *(Allow students to share both sides of the issue — He will always be there to protect us, but when we slip up, there will be nowhere to hide from Him. He will always know us and everything that we do.)*
3. Think of something in your life that is darkness. It could be a person, or a situation, or just a feeling that you have. Now think of something in your life that represents a light. Imagine the light getting rid of the darkness. God is light, and sin is darkness. Sin can never overtake God. He will always be there to get rid of the darkness. How do you see this concept in your own life? *(Allow students to share.)*

Verses 7-12 are about how the Lord is always with us, whether we want him to be or not. He knows who are, what we do, why we do it, and what we'll do next. These verses help us better understand the power that God has and how he can use it.

Re-read Psalm 139:13-18

Discussion Questions:

1. David compares our creation to being "woven", or "knit together". Why do you think he made this connection? How does God creating us relate to being "knit together"? *(He was active in our creation, He is an artist, etc.)*
2. Verse 16 is saying that God knows exactly how our entire life is going to play out. He knows every move that we will make. Why do you think this is? Does this mean we can't make our own decisions? *(God is all-knowing, He knows us intimately and knows what we'll choose, etc.)*

Verses 13-18 talk about God being our light in the darkness, and how carefully he created us with the intention that we would go out into the world and do everything for him and in the name of him.

Re-read Psalm 139:19-24

Discussion Questions:

1. Verses 19 and 20 say that God is wicked toward those who disrespect him. As long as you believe and trust in Him, He will continue to guide you. Why do you think that David thinks this way? Do you agree with this? *(David is citing his enemies here, and how he wants God to drive them out.)*
2. "Abhor" means to regard with disgust or hatred." Is it okay for David to abhor God's enemies here? Why or why not? *(Allow students to share.)*
3. Why do you think David ends this Psalm with a prayer that God would search his heart? *(His desire is to be aligned with God in his thinking, feeling, and actions.)*

Verses 19-24 are about how God cares for us, plans out our lives in advance, and punishes those who don't follow the path He sets before them. These verses are like the verses before in the sense that both passages focus on the creation of our lives and how we carry out the plan God made for us. But they also discuss the way that David regards those who believe differently than him and how God treats those people. David asks God to search him, to know him, and to help him. We should ask the same of God, and of ourselves.

MAKING IT REAL (15 minutes)

Read Jonah 2:1-9

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As we consider Psalm 139 and how it fits into our lives, this prayer from Jonah serves as a valuable example of how we can pray.

Discussion Questions:

1. Where is Jonah when he prays this? (*Inside a great fish.*)
2. Where might you be in life when you feel similarly? (*At a low point, in despair, grieving, struggling, feeling alone, etc.*)
3. What is the basic premise of Jonah's prayer? (*He needs God's presence, power, and deliverance.*)
4. Is that a prayer you have ever prayed? Would anyone be willing to share what that time was like for you? (*Allow students to share.*)

(If no students have a story to share, be prepared to share one of your own. This is a good place to get vulnerable and really share how God has moved in your life.)

These verses are the prayer that Jonah says while in the belly of the fish that swallowed him. He is begging God for deliverance, asking him for another chance. God does so, and Jonah returns to land to do what he was told.

Re-read Psalm 139:7-12

Discussion Questions:

1. How do Jonah 2:1-9 and Psalm 139:7-12 compare? (*They are similar tone, they recognize that God is present anywhere, etc.*)
2. How are these passages different? How are they similar? (*Jonah is asking more openly for deliverance, David is more bluntly just stating the truth of God's presence.*)

Psalm 139 is a chapter that talks about all the different ways God loves, sees, and helps us. Through anything, he will be the light in the darkness. He will protect us from the darkness, make sure that we don't become it. We should see the people that don't follow God simply as other people, not enemies.

Have the students go back to the metaphors you found while reading the passage. Those who want to can share what they found. Let them compare answers, let them try to figure out what the metaphors mean.

CLOSING PRAYER (2 minutes)

As an exercise in prayer, have students hold that metaphor and pray to God utilizing it. They may say "Thank you God, for always being the sunshine on my face," or "Thank you God, for being like my shadow...never being far from me."

Offer up a concluding prayer for the group also.

Psalms

Lesson #9: Psalm 146

LESSON OBJECTIVES

Goals

1. To teach the students to trust in God.
2. To help the students find ways to honor God.
3. To help the students realize the good God has done.

Topics

Praise, Worship

Scripture Memorization

Exodus 15:2

OPENING PRAYER (5 to 10 minutes)

GROUP BUILDING (10 minutes)

Have everyone secretly write down the name of a person on a small piece of paper or a "post-it" note. It must be a person that everyone in the room would know about - a famous historical figure, an actor or sports celebrity, a politician, etc. Then have them tape the name on the back of the person on their left.

Everyone goes around and asks people yes or no questions about who is on their back. They can only ask each person one question. The person who can do it in the least number of questions wins. Small prizes can help increase the game's excitement.

GETTING STARTED (5 minutes)

Read Psalm 150

Discussion Questions

1. Why does David put such an emphasis on this message of praising the Lord? *(This is the last psalm in the collection, it's a focal point of his life and reign, etc.)*
2. What are the two places that David says you should praise God? *(In His sanctuary, in His mighty heavens.)*
3. What are the two reasons listed in this passage that you should praise God? *(For His acts of power and for His greatness.)*
4. What are the eight things listed within this passage with which you can praise God? *(Trumpet, harp, lyre, timbrel, dancing, strings, pipe, and cymbals.)*
5. Are these the only ways, places, and reasons you should praise God? *(Of course not!)*
6. What is the point of Psalm 150? *(No matter where you are, or whatever the reason, we should praise God!)*

Psalm 150 is the last of the psalms, but it's also the last of a particular section of psalms focused on praising God. Psalm 146-150 are praise psalms that David wrote to worship the Lord.

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Psalms 150 focuses on the reasons you should praise God and the different ways you can praise him. Psalm 146 discuss the different aspects of worship. As the lesson progresses, listen for similarities and differences between the two passages. Now turn to Psalm 146 for our reading for today.

DIGGING IN (35 minutes)

As we've done throughout this series, we're going to practice something known as Lectio Divina together. This is an ancient practice for reading Scripture that helps you meditate on the meaningful words. We'll read this passage together 4 times in different ways, then we'll go back through the passage and have some discussion about what it means.

1. Have everyone read Psalm 146 to themselves quietly.
2. As the leader, read Psalm 146 a second time out loud.
3. Go around the room and ask each person to read a single verse from Psalm 146.
4. Have everyone read Psalm 146 to themselves quietly one last time.

Discussion Questions:

1. What struck you about Psalm 146? (*Emphasis on praising God, focus on what God does, etc.*)
2. Do you see a relationship between this Psalm and our opening game? (*To describe people, we often talk about what they do, how we relate to them, where we notice them, etc. This is also how David talks about God in this passage.*)

Now let's take a closer look at what we read and reflect up it together.

Read Psalm 146:1-5 again

Discussion Questions:

1. David says in verse 2 that we should "praise the Lord all my life." How does the way you praise God change over the course of your life? (*It brings focus, purpose, encouragement, etc.*)
2. David uses the word "prince" in verse 3. Why do you think he chose this term? (*No earthly ruler compares to God as King. We can't put our trust in earthly rulers, but we must instead trust in God.*)
3. David seems to illustrate that when you die, your life on Earth becomes meaningless. Do you agree with this? (*Allow students to share.*)
4. What are some ways that you can put your "help" and "hope" in the Lord? (*By trusting in Him to save, and not earthly rulers or schemes.*)

Read Psalm 146:6-10 again

Discussion Questions:

1. Why do you think that David relates God's creation of the Earth to His faithfulness? (*God's love, care and creativity are evident in both His relationship to creation and humanity.*)
2. In verse 8, David says that "The Lord lifts up those who are bowed down." Why did David choose these words? (*It provides a word picture of how God saves those who are in despair.*)
3. Do you believe that "the foreigner, the fatherless, and the widow" are more deserving of love and support than the "wicked"? Do you think that is what David is saying? (*David is expressing that, but we know God loves everyone, even the wicked. However, the wicked will be lost and frustrated when they don't surrender to that love.*)
4. What does the last verse communicate to you? (*That God reigns forever and is worthy or praise forever*)

MAKING IT REAL (15 minutes)

We started today by looking at Psalm 150, which ends this section of psalms. Now that we've taken a deep dive into Psalm 146, let's compare the two:

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Discussion Questions:

1. How does Psalm 146 relate to Psalm 150? *(Both are very focused on praising God.)*
2. How are Psalm 146 and 150 different? *(Psalm 146 reflects more on the reasons we praise God and less on the ways — like with instruments — that we praise Him.)*

Psalm 146, like the other psalms is a song that would've been sung in worship. It's a poem. This one is written by David for God. Like many of the other Psalms, it focuses on the reasons we should praise God and how we should treat others based on God's principles.

In some ways, it's not unlike the songs we sing today in churches all over the world. But those songs are written by someone else that we don't know, for reasons which we aren't always aware.

So today, I want to try something a little different — we're going to write our own psalms based on your life.

(Have the students complete the following activity in their workbooks.)

Encourage them to write a psalm, using the following formula:

1. Write two lines about who God is — "The Lord is _____."
2. Write two more lines about what God has done — "He has _____."
3. Write two more lines about how those actions make you feel.
4. Write two more lines about praising God.

Have each student try to write a psalm of their own. It can be a song, set to their own music or a popular song, or a poem. The key is that it must be personal to their lives, citing things they have experienced and know to be true. Give them several minutes to complete this.

To close today, I'd like for a few of you to recite your psalms. These recitations will serve as our closing prayer.

CLOSING PRAYER (2 minutes)

Ask for two or three students to read their psalms, have everyone bow their heads and listen closely to these beautiful descriptions of who God is, what He's done, and calls to praise Him.