



THE BOOK OF  
PSALMS

WITH PASTOR GARY HAMRICK



CORNERSTONE CHAPEL

November 27, 2016

“God’s Recipe for a Blessed Life”

Psalm 1

Pastor Gary Hamrick



There are two paths in life – one that is blessed by God and one that is not. One path leads to life, one path leads to death. Which one are you on? How do you get on a good path that is blessed by God? In today’s introduction to the book of Psalms, Pastor Gary teaches about how our choices impact receiving the Lord’s blessing.

### Historical Background

1. The book of Psalms is the hymnbook of Israel.
  - a. In Hebrew, *sefer tehillim*, means, book of praises.
  - b. In Greek, *psalmoi*, means, songs sung to the harp.
  - c. The English translation of the Greek word is psalms.
2. There are 150 psalms.
  - a. David wrote seventy-three psalms, which accounts for the majority.
  - b. Asaph, who was a musician in the Levitical order, wrote twelve psalms.
  - c. The sons of Korah (the same Korah who rebelled against Moses), of the tribe of Levi, wrote ten psalms.
  - d. Solomon, David’s son, wrote two psalms.
  - e. Heman, Ethan, and Moses each wrote one psalm.
  - f. There are fifty psalms written by anonymous writers.
3. The book of Psalms is primarily about God and his relationship to his creation.
4. The psalms demonstrate that God is both a powerful God and a tenderhearted father.
  - a. He is revealed as a powerful God, being King, Judge, Avenger, Creator, and Healer.
  - b. He is shown to be a tenderhearted Father, as Shepherd, Provider, Refuge, Protector, and Redeemer.

### A Psalm Of Contrasts

5. The first word in **Psalm 1** is “*blessed*,” and the last word in the psalm is, “*perish*.”
6. This psalm is a contrast between the righteous/godly and the wicked/ungodly.
7. God only sees people as being righteous/godly or wicked/ungodly.

8. We must choose the path of the righteous so we might receive the blessing of God in our lives.

### **A Psalm Of Influence**

9. We need to be careful about who or what is having an influence in our lives.
10. It's a true statement that we will become like the people we associate with.

### **A Psalm Of Blessing**

11. It's important to first recognize that God is the sole source of blessing in our lives.
12. **James 1:17** – *“Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.”*
13. “Oh, how happy/content is that man/woman who pursues God,” is the literal translation of **Psalm 1:1**.
14. It is true, however, that there are many people who don't respond to following the Lord, who, in a worldly sense, lead what many would call, a blessed life.
15. A major point of emphasis would be that these people are not necessarily happy or content, no matter how successful or wealthy they are.
16. Pastor Gary said: “If you don't understand this chapter, you're never going to understand why it is that some people can have everything, and yet feel like they have nothing [or] why they can accomplish so much and yet be so empty.”
17. **Psalm 1** is a recipe, so to speak, for us to follow, which will lead to receiving blessing, contentment, joy, and happiness, from the Lord.

### **If You Want A Blessed Life: Do Not Walk In the Counsel Of The Wicked (Ungodly)**

18. **Psalm 1:1** – *“Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked...”*
19. Pastor Gary said: “We should never allow our lives to be directed, fashioned, [or] influenced by ungodly people – those who have no relationship with God. We will dialogue with them. We will work side-by-side with them in our offices. We will socialize with them from time to time. We will

love them. We will go to school with them, and we will hopefully witness to them. But we must not make them our advisors! [Because] they don't have the counsel and wisdom of God; they have an earthly wisdom."

20. **Psalm 16:7** – *"I will praise the Lord, who counsels me; even at night my heart instructs me."*

21. **Psalm 119:24** – *"Your statutes are my delight; they are my counselors."*

22. **John 14:16–17a** – *"And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever – the Spirit of truth."*

**If You Want A Blessed Life:  
Do Not Stand In The Way Of Sinners**

23. **Psalm 1:1** – *"Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way [path] of sinners..."*

24. We must avoid the path of the sinner!

25. Pastor Gary said: "If you want to live a blessed life, you should never be afraid to be on the road less traveled. There is a popular path that a lot of people are on [and these people] don't know the Lord and don't care to know the Lord. [If] you want a blessed life and if you want to live for the glory of God, take the road less traveled. [On] the road less traveled there's blessing, happiness, contentment, and ultimately, eternal life."

26. **Matthew 7:13–14** – *"Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it."*

27. **Psalm 16:11** – *"You have made known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand."*

28. We must choose our friends and our companions wisely!

29. **1 Corinthians 15:33** – *"Do not be misled: 'Bad company corrupts good character.' "*

30. Pastor Gary said: "We must never jeopardize our future or forfeit our blessings because we are unwilling to take the road less traveled."

**If You Want A Blessed Life:  
Do Not Sit In The Seat Of Mockers**

31. **Psalm 1:1** – *“Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers.”*
32. This verse speaks about a progression: don’t walk, don’t stand, and don’t sit.
33. Pastor Gary gave an overview of Lot’s life and how he started out living in the plain of Sodom, only to move into Sodom, and finally, he was so comfortable in Sodom, that he became a leader!
34. We must never be comfortable living with, or being closely associated with, those who mock God.
35. We must either leave or defend the honor of the Lord when people mock the Lord, not because the Lord needs us to defend him, but because we need to do this as a demonstration of our love for the Lord.

**If You Want A Blessed Life:  
Delight And Meditate On God’s Word - The Bible**

36. **Psalm 1:2** – *“But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night.”*
37. The Word of God is his revelation and his “love letter” to us.
38. To delight in God’s Word means that we must make reading the Bible a habitual part of our lives.
39. Pastor Gary used **Psalm 145:13b** as an example of the ways we would be blessed if we would allow Scripture to refresh and encourage us throughout the day.
- a. **Psalm 145:13b** – *“The Lord is faithful to all his promises and loving toward all he has made.”*

**The Lord’s Promised Blessing Received**

40. **Psalm 1:3** – *“He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers.”*
41. If we apply these principles in our lives, the Lord will cause us to flourish, be fruitful, resilient, and prosperous.
42. The Hebrew word for prosper is salach, which means, to have a successful venture, as opposed to failure.
- a. Pastor Gary said, “This basically means that God is going to help us do well in life. If we do life God's way, his prescription, live life according to what he says and how he says to do it, (keeping to all the points listed above), it will go well with you”

- b. This doesn't mean that we are never going to have troubles, etc.; it just means that God's favor will be upon us.

43. The "health, wealth, and prosperity gospel" is bad theology!

- a. Some people have twisted the word prosperity to mean that all Christians are to be wealthy, which is nonsense.
- b. Materially and financially are ways God can bless you, so that you can be a blessing.

### **Life Without The Lord's Blessing**

44. **Psalm 1:4** – *“Not so the wicked! They are like chaff that the wind blows away.”*

45. Pastor Gary said: “You can't lay claim to these wonderful promises if you are on the wrong path. These don't apply to you. If you want to live your life in rebellion [toward] God and decide that you know best, and you [decide you] want to live life the way you jolly well want, you are free to do so. But do not think that you will experience the happiness and contentment that comes only through a personal relationship with Jesus.”

### **Choose Life Today!**

46. In **John 3:16**, the Lord helps us see that he has made a way for us to have life today, in addition to eternal life, and not perish with the wicked!

- a. **John 3:16** – *“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”*

### **Discussion Questions**

1. Review the introduction to the study guide with your group to provide the appropriate background.
2. Read **Psalm 1** to provide the foundation for this study.
3. What are some of the ways you've been willing to do what it takes to live a blessed life?
4. Who or what have you allowed to be your advisor/counselor, and how has your life been influenced?
5. Read and discuss **James 1:17** and focus on the ways the Lord has been the giver of many wonderful blessings.

6. How would you describe your life in terms of contentment and happiness?
7. Read and discuss Pastor Gary's comments about not walking in the counsel of the wicked. (See #19 above)
8. What are some of the ways the Scriptures counsel you?
9. Read and discuss [Matthew 7:13–14](#) and [Psalm 16:11](#).
10. Have there been times in your life when you followed the path of Lot? (See #31 - #33 above)
11. How do you delight and meditate on the Word of God?
12. Read and discuss Pastor Gary's comments about those who won't receive the blessing of the Lord. (See #45 above)
13. Allow the people in your group to share their experience about the moment they came to personally know the Lord.
14. Close your time in prayer as the Holy Spirit leads.

\* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New International Version (NIV 1984)

December 4, 2016

"A Majestic God Cares About You"

Psalm 8

Pastor Gary Hamrick



In Psalm 8, David focused on the majesty of God. He was overwhelmed by God's greatness, power, and glory! He referred to three marks of God's majesty, but then he shifted to a question that amazed him most – in light of God's greatness, how was it that this majestic God cared so much about him? Be encouraged today as Pastor Gary reminds us that God cares about us too!

### Historical Background

1. David, who is credited with having written seventy-three psalms, wrote this psalm.
2. The Hebrew word gittith is a musical term, which basically means, winepress.
  - a. This term is used to describe [Psalm 8](#), [Psalm 81](#) and [Psalm 84](#).
  - b. All three of these psalms celebrate the victory of God.
  - c. These were songs that were sung while the Jews were treading out the grapes in the winepress.
  - d. Pastor Gary said these songs reminded him of a football end zone dance for God!
3. The Hebrew word for majestic is addiyr, which means, powerful, mighty, excellent, and glorious.
4. [Exodus 15:11](#) – *"Who among the gods is like you, O LORD? Who is like you – majestic in holiness, awesome in glory, working wonders?"*
5. [Psalm 96:6](#) – *"Splendor and majesty are before him; strength and glory are in his sanctuary."*
6. [Jude 25](#) – *"... to the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen."*

### The Three Marks Of The Majesty Of God

#### First - The Magnificence Of God's Name

7. In the Bible, there is a difference between LORD and Lord.
  - a. LORD is the proper name of God.
    - i. [Exodus 3:14](#) – *"I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: 'I AM has sent me to you.'"*

- ii. The Hebrew word for God is Yahweh, which has been translated in English as Jehovah, and it's used more than sixty-five hundred times in the Bible!
    - iii. **Revelation 1:8** – “ ‘I am the Alpha and the Omega,’ says the Lord God, ‘Who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty.’ ”
  - b. Lord is a title for God.
    - i. The Hebrew word is Adonai, which means, lord or master.
8. **Exodus 20:7** – “You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name.”
9. **Psalm 30:4** – “Sing to the LORD, you saints of his; praise his holy name.”
10. **Psalm 34:3** – “Glorify the LORD with me; let us exalt his name together.”
11. **Psalm 29:2** – “Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name; worship the LORD in the splendor of his holiness.”
12. Pastor Gary mentioned five of the more than nine hundred names and titles for God found in the Bible.
- a. El Shaddai – God Almighty
    - i. **Genesis 17:1** – “When Abraham was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to him and said, ‘I am God Almighty, walk before me and be blameless.’ ”
    - ii. This name for God communicates the might and strength of God, and the nurturing, loving, tenderness of our Father in heaven.
  - b. El Elyon – The Most High God
    - 1. **Psalm 57:2** – “I cry out to God Most High, to God, who fulfills his purpose for me.”
  - c. El Olam – The Everlasting God
    - i. **Isaiah 40:28a** – “Do you not know? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth.”
  - d. El Channun – The Gracious God
    - i. **Jonah 4:2c** – “I knew that you are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love, a God who relents from sending calamity.”
  - e. El Rachum – The Merciful God
    - i. **Deuteronomy 4:31** – “For the LORD your God is a merciful God; he will not abandon or destroy you or forget the covenant with your forefathers, which he confirmed to them by oath.”

## Second - The Innocence Of Children

13. **Psalm 8:2** – “From the lips of children and infants you have ordained praise because of your enemies, to silence the foe and the avenger.”

14. Pastor Gary said: “Children are God’s creation. Every child is a blessing from God. Whether that life was ‘planned’ or not, that life is precious to God. And every life is precious to God from the ‘womb to the tomb,’ and must be protected. Every baby and every child is precious to the Lord. When a child comes into this world through the miracle of birth, [that child] testifies to the majesty of God. When a baby cries, [that baby] testifies to the majesty of God. When a child laughs, [that child] testifies to the majesty of God. What David is saying here is that even the innocent cries of a child sound like praise to the ears of God, [because their cry] drowns out all of the noise of the enemies of God.”
15. **Mark 10:15** – *“I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.”*
16. Pastor Gary said: “We need to take a lesson from little kids!”
17. **Matthew 18:1–4** – *“At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, ‘Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?’ He called a little child and had him stand among them. And he said: ‘I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.’ ”*
18. Child-like faith and humility are characteristics Christians should emulate.
19. **Matthew 21:15–16** – *“But when the chief priests and the teachers of the law saw the wonderful things he did and the children shouting in the temple area, ‘Hosanna to the Son of David,’ there were indignant. ‘Do you hear what these children are saying?’ they asked him. ‘Yes,’ replied Jesus, ‘have you never read, “From the lips of children and infants you have ordained praise?” ”*

### **Third - The Evidence Of Creation**

20. **Psalm 8:3** – *“When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place...”*
21. **Jeremiah 32:17** – *“Ah, Sovereign LORD, you have made the heavens and the earth by your great power and outstretched arm. Nothing is too hard for you.”*
22. Pastor Gary said: “God is Creator. And, irrespective of what public schools teach in terms of a theory, and it is only that, I submit to you that an intelligent, open-minded examination of this universe, in all of its vastness and complexities and grandeur, will [lead] to one single conclusion, [and] that is only the result of one Divine Designer!”

23. “This most beautiful system of the sun, planets, and comets could only proceed from the counsel and dominion of an intelligent and powerful Being... This Being governs all things, not as the soul of the world, but as Lord over all; and on account of his dominion, he is wont to be called Lord, God... Universal Ruler.” – Sir Isaac Newton <sup>1</sup>
24. **Psalm 19:1–2** – *“The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they display knowledge.”*
25. “Fun facts” about the universe!
- a. The moon is 240,000 miles from the earth, and it orbits the earth with clockwork precision.
  - b. The moon travels at 2,288 mph, and it completes its journey around the earth in approximately 30 days.
  - c. If the moon were just a few degrees off, the earth would be flooded with unrestrained tides.
  - d. The sun is 93 million miles from earth, and it is 400 times the size of the moon, and it is also 400 times farther away from the earth than the moon, which makes both appear to be about the same size in the sky.
  - e. The surface temperature of the sun is 12,000 degrees, and if the sun were just a few degrees off, we would either freeze to death or burn to death!
  - f. After the sun, the closest star is 25 trillion miles away from the earth.
  - g. There are an estimated 100 billion stars in our galaxy alone.
  - h. The Hubble Space Telescope and other more sophisticated instrumentation have made it possible to recognize that there are more than 10 trillion galaxies, and each galaxy, if it has the same number of stars as The Milky Way, would include 100 billion stars per galaxy.
  - i. This means that there are more than 1,000,000,000,000,000,000,000 stars in existence!
    - i. The mathematical word is quattuorvigintillion.
26. **Psalm 147:4** – *“[God] determines the number of the stars and he calls them each by name.”*

### The Conclusion – What Is Man?

27. **Psalm 8:4** – *“What is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him?”*
28. Pastor Gary said: “For those of you who right now are going through something, I want you to hear [this] loudly and clearly – a majestic God cares about you. He cares about your life. He cares about your future. He cares about your marriage. He cares about [your] prodigal son or daughter. He cares about your mom and your dad. He cares about your health. He cares about everything you’re going through. A majestic God, the Creator of the universe, cares about you.”

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.icr.org/article/newton/>

29. **Nahum 1:7** – *“The LORD is good, a refuge in times of trouble. He cares for those who trust in him...”*
30. **Psalm 55:22** – *“Cast your cares on the LORD and he will sustain you; he will never let the righteous fall.”*
31. **1 Peter 5:6–7** – *“Humble yourselves, therefore, under God’s mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.”*

### Discussion Questions

1. Review the introduction to the study guide with your group to provide the appropriate background.
2. Read **Psalm 8** to provide the foundation for this study.
3. Read and discuss **Exodus 15:11**, **Psalm 96:6**, and **Jude 25**.
4. Provide an overview concerning the difference between LORD and Lord. (See #7 above)
5. Spend time talking about the five names for God that Pastor Gary shared in his message. (See #13 - #17)
6. Read and discuss Pastor Gary’s remarks concerning children. (See #19 above)
7. Read and discuss Pastor Gary’s remarks concerning creation. (See #26 above)
8. Provide an overview of the facts Pastor Gary shared concerning the moon, sun, and stars. (See #29 above)
9. Read and discuss Pastor Gary’s remarks concerning the ways God cares for us. (See #32 above)
10. Close your time in prayer by praying the following Scriptures: **Nahum 1:7**, **Psalm 55:22**, and **1 Peter 5:6–7**.

\* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New International Version (NIV 1984)



Pastor Gary teaches from Psalm 15, and he explores two important questions that David asked regarding how it would be possible for unholy people to be accepted by a holy God. These questions came from a tragic incident that happened seven years into David's reign as king. In this message Pastor Gary helps us learn more about showing reverence for and being accepted by God.

### God Exists

1. **Psalm 15:1** – *"LORD, who may dwell in your sanctuary? Who may live on your holy hill?"*
2. Pastor Gary commented on the fact that David assumed, that it would be understood, that God exists.
3. The number of people in the U.S. who identify themselves as being an atheist or an agnostic has almost doubled in the last nine years.
  - a. In 2007 the number was 4.0%, and in 2016 the number is 7.1%.
4. **Psalm 14:1** – *"The fool says in his heart, 'There is no God.' "*
5. It's foolish to deny the existence of God!
  - a. The atheist denies the evidence of God in creation.
    - i. **Romans 1:20** – *"For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities – his eternal power and divine nature – have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse."*
  - b. The atheist denies a moral absolute, and a standard of right and wrong.
  - c. The atheist denies personal accountability.

### God Is Holy - And We Are Not

6. Pastor Gary commented on the fact that David assumed, that it would be understood, that God is holy.
7. The word holy means sacred, consecrated, pure, and perfect.
8. Everything about God is perfect and pure.

9. The Bible speaks about God’s holiness in terms of his name, his throne, and his temple/dwelling, all being holy.
10. God declares that he is holy.
  - a. **Isaiah 43:15** – “*I am the LORD, your Holy One, Israel’s Creator, your King.*”
11. The only word in the Bible that is used to describe God in triplicate is the word holy.
  - a. **Isaiah 6:3** – “... ‘*Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory.*’ ”
  - b. **Revelation 4:8** – “... ‘*Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come.*’ ”
12. The obvious distinction between a holy God and us, is that we are not holy.

### A Tragic Incident

13. God told David that he would not be the one to build the Temple, however, David wanted to bring the ark of the covenant to Jerusalem with great celebration, because he wanted Mt. Zion to be God’s holy hill, and be the place where the people worshiped God until the time came for the Temple to be built.
14. **2 Samuel 6:1–11** – “*David again brought together out of Israel chosen men, thirty thousand in all. He and all his men set out from Baalah of Judah to bring up from there the ark of God, which is called by the Name, the name of the LORD Almighty, who is enthroned between the cherubim that are on the ark. They set the ark of God on a new cart and brought it from the house of Abinadab, which was on the hill. Uzzah and Ahio, sons of Abinadab, were guiding the new cart with the ark of God on it, and Ahio was walking in front of it. David and the whole house of Israel were celebrating with all their might before the LORD, with songs and with harps, lyres, tambourines, sistrums and cymbals. When they came to the threshing floor of Nacon, Uzzah reached out and took hold of the ark of God, because the oxen stumbled. The LORD’s anger burned against Uzzah because of his irreverent act; therefore God struck him down and he died there beside the ark of God. Then David was angry because the LORD’s wrath had broken out against Uzzah, and to this day that place is called Perez Uzzah. David was afraid of the LORD that day and said, ‘How can the ark of the LORD ever come to me?’ He was not willing to take the ark of the LORD to be with him inside the City of David. Instead, he took it aside to the house of Obed-Edom the Gittite. The ark of the LORD remained in the house of Obed-Edom the Gittite for three months, and the LORD blessed him and his entire household.”<sup>1</sup>
  - a. Abinadab’s house was about eight miles west of to Jerusalem.
  - b. In **Exodus 25:10–22**, we read about God’s instructions to Moses on how to build the ark.*

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<sup>1</sup> Perez Uzzah means, outbreak against Uzzah.

15. Jewish tradition maintains that during the three months the ark was at the home of Obed-Edom, David was trying to figure out what went wrong, and it was during this time that he wrote [Psalm 15](#).
16. David was full emotions, including fear and anger, concerning the fact that his attempt to do a God-honoring thing resulted in tragedy and death.
17. David came to understand that transporting the ark of the covenant on a cart drawn by oxen was not God's prescribed method!
18. The ark was to be transported by four priests, who carried the ark on poles on their shoulders.
19. God's way was a perfect visual of lifting God up and worshiping him!
20. The cart and oxen were a visual of dragging God along by farm animals!
21. When Uzzah, an unholy man, came into contact with a holy God, he was stricken dead.
22. In [1 Chronicles 15](#) we read the account of David and the Levites following God's way of transporting the ark of the covenant.
  - a. [1 Chronicles 15:10–15](#) – *“Then David summoned Zadok and Abiathar the priests, and Uriel, Asaiah, Joel, Shemaiah, Eliel and Amminadab the Levites. He said to them, ‘You are the heads of the Levitical families; you and your fellow Levites are to consecrate yourselves and bring up the ark of the LORD, the God of Israel, to the place I have prepared for it. It was because you, the Levites, did not bring it up the first time that the LORD our God broke out in anger against us. We did not inquire of him about how to do it in the prescribed way.’ So the priests and Levites consecrated themselves in order to bring up the ark of the LORD, the God of Israel. And the Levites carried the ark of God with the poles on their shoulders, as Moses had commanded in accordance with the word of the LORD.”*

### **Showing Reverence For God – Our Walk**

23. [Psalm 15:2](#) – *“He whose walk is blameless and who does what is righteous...”*
24. God demands right living from us, which is different from perfection.
25. The Hebrew word for blameless is tamim, which means having moral integrity.
26. When we will live this way, both publicly and privately, we will live a life of moral integrity.
27. [1 John 2:6](#) – *“Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did.*

28. **Proverbs 14:2** – *“He whose walk is upright fears the LORD, but he whose ways are devious despises him.”*
29. When we first come to faith in Christ, we need to remember that it takes time to learn to walk uprightly.
30. **Colossians 3:7–10** – *“You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived. But now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.”*

### Showing Reverence For God – Our Words

31. The person who shows reverence for God is the person -
- Psalm 15:2** – *“who speaks the truth from his heart and has no slander on his tongue...”*
  - Psalm 15:3** – *“[who] casts no slur on his fellow man...”*
  - Psalm 15:4** – *“who keeps his oath, even when it hurts...”*
32. God hears every word we speak, and every word we think!
33. Words matter!
34. **Titus 3:1–2** – *“Remind the people... to slander no one, to be peaceable and considerate, and to show true humility toward all men.”*
35. **1 Peter 2:1** – *“Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind.”*
36. We should never shame or disgrace others.
37. We should never say things that are racist or prejudicial.
38. We should avoid gossip.
39. The person who wants to honor God should keep his or her promises.
40. **Matthew 5:37** – *“[Jesus said,] Simply let your ‘Yes’ be ‘Yes,’ and your ‘No,’ ‘No’: anything beyond this comes from the evil one.”*
41. **Psalm 19:14** – *“May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, O LORD, my Rock and my Redeemer.”*

## Showing Reverence For God – Our Ways

42. The person who shows reverence for God is the person -
- Psalm 15:3** – *“who does his neighbor no wrong...”*
  - Psalm 15:4** – *“who despises a vile man but honors those who fear the LORD...”*
  - Psalm 15:5** – *“who lends his money without usury and does not accept a bribe against the innocent.”*

## The Sanctuary And The Holy Hill Of The Lord

43. In the context of **Psalm 15**, David was writing of Mt. Zion in Jerusalem.
44. The Temple of God is no longer in Jerusalem, having been destroyed by the Romans in AD 70.
45. All that David wrote about in **Psalm 15** speaks to us of a greater sanctuary, and greater holy hill.
46. **Hebrews 8:5** – *“[The priests] serve at a sanctuary that is a copy and a shadow of what is in heaven.”*
47. **Isaiah 66:1a** – *“This is what the LORD says: ‘Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool.’ ”*
48. **Acts 17:24** – *“The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by hands.”*
49. We can approach God’s sanctuary and holy hill by faith in what Jesus Christ did on the cross!
50. **1 Corinthians 1:30** – *“It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God – that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption.”*
51. **Jude 24–25** – *“To him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy – to the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen.”*

## Discussion Questions

1. Review the introduction to the study guide with your group to provide the appropriate background.
2. Read **Psalm 15** to provide the foundation for this study.
3. Why do you think there are more atheists and agnostics today?
4. Read and discuss **Psalm 14:1** and **Romans 1:20**.

5. Allow the people in your group to share their thoughts about the holiness of God and what that should mean to Christians.
6. Read and discuss [2 Samuel 6:1–11](#).
7. Do you think Uzzah deserved to die?
8. How does this incident make you feel about God?
9. Spend time talking about the God-prescribed way of transporting the ark of the covenant and the visual that it provides concerning lifting God up and worshiping him.
10. What are some of the ways you are lifting up the Lord and worshiping him?
11. What are some of the ways people demonstrate a form of godliness or a “religious” life, but the reality is they are just “dragging God along” in a man-made way or tradition?
  - a. [2 Timothy 3:5](#) – “... *having a form of godliness but denying its power.*”
12. Read and discuss [Colossians 3:7–10](#).
13. Share examples of the ways the Holy Spirit is changing you from the inside out, and in the process causing you to grow in your faith.
14. How are you using your words to be a blessing to others?
15. Read and discuss [Psalm 19:14](#).
16. Read and discuss [Jude 24–25](#).
17. Close your time in prayer as the Holy Spirit leads.

\* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New International Version (NIV 1984)



Psalm 16 is an outline of the path of life that, if followed, will give us a peace about life today, as well as a hope about eternal life. David wrote this psalm out of personal difficulty, but by the end of the psalm he expressed his hope and confidence about life here and life to come.

### Historical Background

1. This psalm is a *"miktam of David,"* and it's one of six that David wrote that have this subtitle.
  2. The Hebrew word miktam means, engraving or inscription.
  3. The ancient Rabbis also view miktams of David as being "the golden psalms."
- 
4. It is believed that David wrote this psalm early in his life – before he became king – when he was on the run from King Saul, who was jealous of David and who tried to kill him on several occasions.
  5. The word refuge is used forty-four times in the book of psalms, and it means to flee for protection or to find hope.
    - a. The KJV uses the word trust.
  6. If there has been a time in your life when you were anxious, troubled, or overwhelmed about something, and you found that you had nowhere else to turn but to God, then you know exactly what David was writing about.
    - a. **Psalm 9:9** – *"The Lord is a refuge for the oppressed, a stronghold in times of trouble."*
    - b. **Psalm 34:8** – *"Taste and see that the LORD is good; blessed is the man who takes refuge in him."*
    - c. **Psalm 46:1** – *"God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble."*
    - d. **Psalm 91:2** – *"I will say of the LORD, 'He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.'"*
  7. Pastor Gary said: "What [started] out as a plea for help, [ended] up a decree of hope. What [started] out as concern, [ended] up with confidence. What [started] out in the temporal, [ended] up with a perspective of the eternal."

### David Acknowledged That God Was His Lord

8. **Psalm 16:2-4** – *“I said to the LORD, ‘You are my Lord; apart from you I have no good thing.’ As for the saints who are in the land, they are the glorious ones in whom is all my delight. The sorrows of those will increase who run after other gods. I will not pour out their libations of blood or take up their names on my lips.”*
9. David was saying that God was the LORD, and that he recognized that the true and living God was his Lord, his Master, and his Sovereign Ruler!
10. Pastor Gary said: “We can’t lay claim to the peace of God unless we [first] make [him] Lord. Too many times in life people want God to rescue them, but they don’t want God to rule them.... If he rules you, he’s really Lord, and if you don’t submit to his rule, you’ve not made him your Lord. Sometimes we just want to approach God as a fix-all. Like [saying to] God, ‘Fix my mess, but I don’t really want you to be Lord of my life.’ ”
11. Pastor Gary said: “I’ve often found in my personal life, that when fear and worry creep in it’s really a Lordship issue... When I’ve tried to manage things on my own, [and] figure things out all by myself, or when something is out of my control and I begin to imagine the worst, [that’s] when fear and worry set in. But when I quiet myself and still my soul before the Lord, and I get on my face before God and I seek his face, and I acknowledge that he is my Lord and my Master and my Sovereign Ruler, [that’s when] his peace begins to spill over into my heart.”
12. **Philippians 4:6-7** – *“Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”*
13. **Psalm 46:1-3** – *“God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging.”*
14. David counted his blessings from the Lord!
15. Pastor Gary said: “Do not lose sight of the goodness of God in the midst of your difficulties.”
16. **James 1:17** – *“Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.”*
17. **Psalm 13:6** – *“I will sing to the Lord, for he has been good to me.”*

### **David Accepted The Lot God Had Assigned Him**

18. **Psalm 16:5-6** – *“LORD, you have assigned me my portion and my cup; you have made my lot secure. The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places; surely I have a delightful inheritance.”*

19. David in no way meant to indicate that his lot in life was a bad thing, rather, he used positive words like secure, pleasant, and delightful!
20. David praised the Lord for the blessing of a wonderful and full life, and he was content right where he was!
21. Sadly, many people today aren't content in life, so they routinely play the "I wish..." or the "If I only..." game.
22. Pastor Gary said: "I've come to learn over the years that until [people] can become content where [they] are, that often the change [in their situation or circumstance] doesn't come, [because] God is still trying to teach [them] right where [they] are. When [people] rest there and settle that in [their] heart and say, "Okay, Lord, this may not be where I want to be, but I'm content and I'm thankful for your goodness in my life. And surely I have a wonderful inheritance... Then it's up to God if he wants to change [their] circumstances. But [they] need to first rest and be content in all situations."
23. **Philippians 4:11–13** – *"... I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do everything through him who gives me strength."*

### **David Adored The God Who Counselled Him**

24. **Psalm 16:7–8** – *"I will praise the LORD, who counsels me; even at night my heart instructs me. I have set the LORD always before me. Because he is at my right hand, I will not be shaken."*
25. David was so immersed in God's Word during the day, that even at night, God instructed him while he was asleep!
26. It's okay to seek godly counselors from time to time, but human advice is no substitute for the wisdom and counsel of God!
27. **Isaiah 9:6b** – *"And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."*
28. **Psalm 119:24** – *"Your statutes are my delight; they are my counselors."*

### **David Anticipated What God Had In Store For Him**

29. **Psalm 16:9–11** – *“Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure, because you will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay. You have made known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.”*
30. David transitioned from the temporal to the eternal, because the Psalm concludes with his thankfulness over the eternal hope he had in the Lord.
31. David knew and understood that he wasn’t going to live forever, and the prophet Nathan, in a message to David from the Lord, told him that he was going to die someday.
  - a. **2 Samuel 7:12** – *“When your days are over and you rest with your fathers...”*
32. This Scripture is known as a Messianic reference, and the apostle Peter quoted these verses in **Acts 2:27**, on the Day of Pentecost.
33. David was writing about a time – approximately one thousand years into the future – when Jesus, the Holy One, would not be abandoned to the grave!
34. The doctrine of “Soul Sleep,” which is taught by Jehovah’s Witnesses, is a false doctrine.
35. The Bible makes it clear that this is a false teaching.
  - a. **2 Corinthians 5:6–8** – *“... we are always confident and know that as long as we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord... We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord”*
36. **John 11:25–26** – *“Jesus said to [Martha], ‘I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies [physical death]; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die [but will have spiritual life]...’ ”*

### Discussion Questions

1. Review the introduction to the study guide with your group to provide the appropriate background.
2. Read **Psalm 16** to provide the foundation for this study.
3. Share examples of times when the Lord was your refuge.
4. Read and discuss the Scriptures Pastor Gary shared. (See #6 above)
5. What are some of the ways you recognize that the Lord is your Master and Sovereign Ruler?
6. Spend time talking about Pastor Gary’s comments. (See #10 and #11 above)

7. Read and discuss [Philippians 4:6–7](#) and [Psalm 46: 1–3](#).
8. Allow the people in your group to share their experiences about the goodness and the rich blessing of God in their life.
9. Read and discuss [James 1:17](#) and [Psalm 13:6](#).
10. How content are you with the lot the Lord has assigned to you?
11. Spend time talking about Pastor Gary's comments regarding being content. (See #21 and #22 above)
12. Read and discuss [Philippians 4:11–13](#).
13. How do the Scriptures act as a counselor in your life? (See #24 - #28 above)
14. What are some of the ways you live that demonstrate that you are looking forward to all that the Lord has in store for you?
15. Close your time in prayer as the Holy Spirit leads.

\* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New International Version (NIV 1984)



Most of us know we *should* trust God, but how many of us actually *do* trust God when life gets challenging? The word "trust" appears more than two hundred times in the Bible, and more than fifty times in the book of Psalms. The theme of trusting God is a predominant one in Scripture, and it's the topic of today's study from Psalms 20 and 21. In Pastor Gary's message today, he reminds us that when we go through seasons of distress, that's the perfect time to *trust* God!

### Historical Background

1. **Psalm 20** is a petition from David to God, and **Psalm 21** is praise from David to God.
2. The tone of these psalms changes from worry, concern, and distress, to gratitude, thanksgiving, and praise.
3. The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines the word trust in this way: "The belief that someone or something is reliable, good, honest, or effective."
4. Pastor Gary changed the definition to redirect our thinking.
  - a. "Trust is the belief that God is reliable, good, honest, and effective."
5. **Psalm 20** is considered to be a national anthem of sorts, because David wrote it to encourage the people of Israel during a time of national distress.
  - a. Pastor Gary said the type of distress they were experiencing is not known.
6. The mention of Zion in **Psalm 20:2** is a reference to the hill of Jerusalem, and it was nearby that the Tabernacle and the ark of the covenant were located, and so it was that David encouraged the people to trust God.
7. In **Psalm 20:6–8**, David clearly indicated that the nation's strength was not to be found in the size or might of their army, but their faith, hope, and trust should be in God.
8. Pastor Gary said: "... the reason why David declares this, you see, is because he put his trust, his faith, his hope, his confidence... not in that which is seen, but in that which is unseen. In an invisible God David would run [to] and cling [to] and rely upon. [David's trust was] not in a visible army, but in an invisible God."
9. Like the people of David's time, we tend to rely upon things we can touch, see, and hear, because we live in a physical, tangible world.

10. **Psalm 40:4** – *“Blessed is the man who makes the LORD his trust, who does not look to the proud, to those who turn aside to false gods.”*
11. David understood the command God gave to Moses, approximately four hundred years before David was born!
- a. **Deuteronomy 17:16** – *“The king... must not acquire great numbers of horses for himself...”*
  - b. The command was given so that the king would not think that victory his simply because he had superior military strength.
  - c. In **1 Chronicles 18:1–4**, we see that David took this command seriously, because he hamstrung all but one hundred horses, which was a visible demonstration of the fact that he recognized that Israel’s strength was in God.
    - i. *“In the course of time, David defeated the Philistines [Gaza Strip along the Mediterranean Sea] and subdued them, and he took Gath and its surrounding villages from the control of the Philistines. David also defeated the Moabites [Jordan and Saudi Arabia], and they became subject to him and brought tribute. Moreover, David fought Hadadezer king of Zobah, as far as Hamath, when he went to establish his control along the Euphrates River [Iraq and Northern Syria]. David captured a thousand of his chariots, seven thousand charioteers and twenty thousand foot soldiers. He hamstrung all but a hundred of the chariot horses.”*
12. **Psalm 33:16–17, 20** – *“No king is saved by the size of his army; no warrior escapes by his great strength. A horse is a vain hope for deliverance; despite all its great strength it cannot save... We wait in hope for the LORD; he is our help and our shield.”*

### Three Examples Of Misplaced Trust

13. Misplaced Trust In Our Wealth.
- a. **Psalm 49:6** – *“those who trust in their wealth and boast of their great riches?”*
  - b. It’s important to remember that having money, possessions, and resources doesn’t guarantee that we won’t have any problems in life.
14. Misplaced Trust In Ourselves.
- a. **Psalm 49:13** – *“This is the fate of those who trust in themselves, and of their followers, who approve their sayings.”*
  - b. Pastor Gary said: “We esteem people who are fiercely independent, but the problem with being fiercely independent is that often we have no room for God. And, we’ve learned to be so stinking fiercely independent that we don’t know how to be dependent upon God. And, so, we think [to ourselves], “I’ll fix this, and it will be all up to me, and I’ll manage my life’s problems. I’ll take care of this. I’ll just do it myself. [That is] until [we] begin to realize that [we] simply can’t do it [ourselves]. [We] need God.”

15. Misplaced Trust In Others.

- a. **Psalm 146:3** – *“Do not put your trust in princes, in mortal men, who cannot save.”*
- b. We should trust people and give others the benefit of the doubt.
- c. We should believe in others and hope the best, however, there will be times when people betray us and lie to us, and in these times, if all our confidence is in others, we will be extremely disappointed.
- d. Pastor Gary said: “There is a difference between trusting people and putting your trust in people. Your trust needs to be in the Lord.”
- e. **Isaiah 26:3** – *“You will keep in perfect peace him whose mind is steadfast, because he trusts in you.”*
- f. **Proverbs 3:5–6** – *“Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.”*

### Trusting God

16. Who God Is.

- a. **Psalm 33:20–21** – *“We wait in hope for the LORD; he is our help and our shield. In him our hearts rejoice, for we trust in his holy name.”*
- b. Pastor Gary, stating the obvious, said, “You cannot trust someone you do not know!”
- c. In the Bible, God is known by more than nine hundred names and titles!
- d. We learn something about God’s character and nature in every name and title given to him in the Bible.
- e. **Psalm 8:1** – *“O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!”*
- f. Pastor Gary said: “The more you understand his name and the more you see how he is revealed throughout the pages of the Bible, the more you appreciate him. Because, to know him is to love him, and to know and love him is to trust him. The more you know him the more you will be able to trust him.”

17. What God Says.

- a. **Psalm 119:41–43** – *“May your unfailing love come to me, O LORD, your salvation according to your promise; then I will answer the one who taunts me, for I trust in your word. Do not snatch the word of truth from my mouth, for I have put my hope in your laws.”*
- b. **Psalm 145:13b** – *“The LORD is faithful to all his promises and loving toward all he has made.”*

18. How Much God Loves Us.

- a. **Psalm 13:5** – *“But I trust in your unfailing love; my heart rejoices in your salvation.”*
- b. **Psalm 52:8** – *“But I am like an olive tree flourishing in the house of God; I trust in God’s unfailing love for ever and ever.”*
- c. “God loves each of us as if there were only one of us.” – Augustine
- d. **Lamentations 3:22–23** – *“Because of the LORD’s great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.”*

- e. **Psalm 91:2** – “I will say of the LORD, ‘He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.’”

### Discussion Questions

1. Review the introduction to the study guide with your group to provide the appropriate background.
2. Read **Psalm 20–21** to provide the foundation for this study.
3. What are some examples of people or things you’ve relied upon?
4. Is there a difference between the people or things you’ve trusted before and after you became a Christian?
5. Share examples of times when people have disappointed you.
6. What does the Holy Spirit want you to “hamstring” so that you’ll move your trust away from people and/or things?
7. Share examples of times when you experienced the faithfulness of God.
8. Allow the people in your group the opportunity to share a specific situation they are dealing with right now that requires them to trust solely upon God.
9. Read and discuss **Isaiah 26:3** and focus on the peace that God promises to those who trust him.
10. Read and discuss **Proverbs 3:5–6**.
11. How is the Lord making “*your paths straight*” because of your trust in him?
12. Read and discuss **Psalm 33:20–21**.
13. Ask four people in your group to be ready to read and pray the Scriptures as the Holy Spirit leads.
  - a. **Psalm 13:5**
  - b. **Psalm 52:8**
  - c. **Psalm 91:2**
  - d. **Lamentations 3:22–23**

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Psalm 23 is probably the most familiar psalm in the Bible, and that's because most people have heard it read at a funeral. But Psalm 23 isn't about death; it's about life. It's about how we are like sheep and God is like a shepherd who lovingly, tenderly takes care of us. Today's message by Pastor Gary is the first in a three-part series on Psalm 23.

### Historical Background

1. David wrote this psalm about the ways the Lord restores, guides, leads, and comforts.
2. Since David was a shepherd long before he was a king, he was well acquainted with what the relationship between a shepherd and the sheep under his care looked like.
3. There are quite a few biblical references to people being like sheep, including:
  - a. **Isaiah 53:6** – *"We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way..."*
  - b. **Psalm 79:13** – *"Then we your people, the sheep of your pasture, will praise you forever..."*
  - c. **1 Peter 2:25** – *"For you were like sheep going astray, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls."*
  - d. **Hebrews 13:20-21** – *"May the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, equip you with everything good for doing his will..."*
  - e. **John 10:14-15** – Jesus said: *"I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me – just as the Father knows me and I know the Father – and I lay down my life for the sheep."*

### Facts About Sheep

4. Sheep Are Senseless.
  - a. Sheep get lost very easily, and they are one of only a few animals that have no internal compass.
  - b. Once lost, they have no clue as to where they are or how to find their way home.
  - c. Sheep don't know how to find food and water on their own!
  - d. Sheep travel in a group, and when one moves, they all move, which can sometimes spell disaster.
    - i. Pastor Gary referred to an incident in Turkey in which fifteen hundred sheep went over a cliff! <sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> [http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/news/offbeat/2005-07-08-sheep-suicide\\_x.htm](http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/news/offbeat/2005-07-08-sheep-suicide_x.htm)

5. Sheep Are Defenseless.
  - a. Some creatures can change colors, go under water, run fast, growl, or bare their teeth in order to put up a defense, so to speak, but sheep can't do any of these things, which renders them completely defenseless.
  - b. The only reaction sheep have to danger is to huddle together and bleat!
  - c. Sheep are extremely vulnerable to predatory animals.
  
6. Sheep Are Fearful.
  - a. Sheep have exceptional hearing, so faint or loud noises of every description cause them to be jittery all the time.
  - b. Sheep have remarkable peripheral vision, but they have poor depth perception, which makes them uncertain and fearful of what's in front of them.
  - c. One visible sign of their fearfulness is that they never walk in a straight line; they walk in a zigzag pattern, because they are constantly looking back to see if they are in danger from predators.
  
7. Sheep Are Dirty.
  - a. Sheep naturally secrete lanolin, which causes their wool to be like a magnet for dirt, debris of all kinds, etc.

### The Song Of A Shepherd

8. **Psalm 23:1a** – *“The Lord is **my** shepherd...”* NKJV (Emphasis added)
  - a. The Lord is not just a shepherd or one of many shepherds; David wrote that the Lord was his shepherd.
  - b. David had a personal relationship with the Lord, his shepherd.
  - c. We understand from this verse that we belong to the Lord, and he belongs to us.
    - i. **Song of Songs 6:3a** – *“I am my beloved's, And my beloved is mine...”* NKJV
  - d. **Luke 15:3** – *“Then Jesus told them this parable: ‘Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Does he not leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, ‘Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.’ I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent.”*
  - e. Pastor Gary said: “If you’ve ever felt like you were just a number [to] God [or] if you’ve ever felt like you were lost among [7.5] billion people on this planet, and [you wonder] how could God possibly care about me? If you’ve ever thought [this way], I want you to hear what Jesus [was] saying in this parable in Luke 15... [What Jesus was] communicating to us is that God, like a shepherd, loves us so much, and [he’s] so concerned about us individually [and] uniquely, that he will go to the ends of the earth, if necessary, to win us over... He

loves us and he knows us, and he knit us together in our mother's womb... He knows us by name and [he knows] every hair on our head. He is infinitely and intimately acquainted with [us]. And because David [understood this] he could say, 'The Lord is my shepherd.' "

- f. **Psalm 100:3** – *"Know that the LORD is God. It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, the sheep of his pasture."*

9. **Psalm 23:1b** – *"I shall not want."* NKJV

- a. **Psalm 34:10** – *"The lions may grow weak and hungry, but those who seek the LORD lack no good thing."*
- b. **Psalm 84:11** – *"For the LORD God is a sun and shield; the LORD bestows favor and honor; no good thing does he withhold from those whose walk is blameless."*
- c. **James 1:17** – *"Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows."*
- d. **Philippians 4:19** – *"And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus."*
- e. Pastor Gary said: "We need to get off the 'complain train' and start praising God for all that we have!"

10. **Psalm 23:2** – *"He makes me to lie down in green pastures; he leads me beside the still waters."* NKJV

- a. Sheep don't lie down of their own volition.
- b. Hungry sheep will never lie down, which means their shepherd must provide food and water in order to make it so they will be content.
- c. Fearful sheep will never lie down, which means their shepherd must bring them to a place of quiet, where the water is still, because running water makes sheep skittish.
- d. Agitated and distressed sheep will never lie down, which means the shepherd must create an environment that helps his sheep understand that he will take care of every need.

11. **Psalm 23:3a** – *"He restores my soul..."* NKJV

- a. Pastor Gary said: "God is the restorer of our souls. He takes broken people, [who] are worn out from life, and he breathes new life in [them], and he gives [them] a new chance... If you know Christ as your Savior, then you know what I'm talking about, because, apart from Christ, you will never find a satisfaction for the deepest longings of your soul. People will go in search of all kinds of things trying to satisfy the deepest longings of [their] soul, [but] I'm here to tell you [that] those things will only temporarily satisfy, and then they will show themselves to be insufficient. The only true satisfaction to the deepest longings of the human soul is a relationship with [Jesus, the] good Shepherd."

### Discussion Questions

- 1. Review the introduction to the study guide with your group to provide the appropriate background.

2. Read [Psalm 23](#) to provide the foundation for this study.
3. Read and discuss the Scriptures Pastor Gary shared regarding people being compared to sheep. (See #3 above)
4. Allow the people in your group to share experiences they've had when they recognized how much like sheep, they were regarding being directionless, defenseless, and fearful. (See #4 - #7 above)
5. Read and discuss Pastor Gary's comments about the way the Lord knows about, and cares for, every single person. (See #8e above)
6. What are some of the ways you've experienced the Lord's loving kindness and care, which demonstrate that he is your shepherd?
7. Read and discuss [James 1:7](#) and [Philippians 4:19](#).
8. Spend time talking about the remarks Pastor Gary made concerning a number of interesting facts about sheep and their inability to *"lie down in green pastures... beside still waters."* (See #10 above)
9. Read and discuss Pastor Gary's comments about the Lord being the restorer of our souls. (See #11 above)
10. Close your time in prayer as the Holy Spirit leads.

\* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New International Version (NIV 1984)

January 29, 2017

“The Song of a Shepherd”

Psalm 23:3–4

Pastor Gary Hamrick



In part two of our study through Psalm 23, Pastor Gary walks us through the verses about “*the paths of righteousness*” and “*the valley of the shadow of death.*” If you’ve ever felt like you were on the wrong path or in a dark valley, this passage will encourage you about how much our Good Shepherd cares about each of us.

### Part One – Review

1. Sheep are senseless, defenseless, and fearful, which creates a natural bond with their shepherd, because sheep are completely dependent upon the shepherd.
2. God wants to have this same kind of special bond and relationship with us, and he wants us to know how we are completely dependent upon him.
3. **Psalm 23:1–3a** – “*The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters. He restores my soul...*” (NKJV)

### The Song Of A Shepherd

4. **Psalm 23:3b** – “*He leads me in the paths of righteousness for his name’s sake.*”
5. Shepherds don’t lead sheep individually, they lead sheep as a whole or as a flock, but David personalized the relationship between himself and his Shepherd.
6. Shepherds don’t send sheep off in a random direction, they lead sheep in the right path, because sheep are senseless and have no way of understanding their surroundings regarding obstacles, debris, etc.
7. When we try to do life our way, like senseless, wandering sheep, we will oftentimes find ourselves on a harmful path because we have not followed the leading of the Good Shepherd.
8. Pastor Gary said: “God is going to lead us on the right path. It is a good path with God. It is a pleasant path with God. It is a straight path, in the sense that it is unencumbered by things that [would harm us].”
9. **Psalm 27:11** – “*Teach me your way, O LORD; lead me in a straight path...*”

10. **Psalm 143:10** – *“Teach me to do your will, for you are my God; may your good Spirit lead me on level ground.”*
11. **Isaiah 26:7** – *“The path of the righteous is level; O upright One, you make the way of the righteous smooth.”*
12. God is good to us, not because of our goodness, character, or reputation, but because of his goodness, his character, and his reputation!
13. Pastor Gary said: “We need to follow his lead. We need to get on God’s path. Some of you are on the wrong path, and you know it and God knows it, and it’s a miserable path that you’re on. But if you’ll turn to the Lord, and if you’ll put your faith and trust in Jesus, and you follow his lead, and you start to live your life according to his direction, friends, it will go far better for you than when you try to navigate the murky waters of life on your own.”
14. **John 10:27–28** – *“My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand.”*
15. The more you know the Lord the more you’ll be inclined to listen to his voice!
16. **Psalm 23:4a** – *“Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil...”*  
(NKJV)
17. Sheep are fearful creatures, and one of the things that they are most afraid of is being cast.
  - a. Being cast means that sheep have no way to get up when they are on their back.
  - b. “A heavy, fat, or long-fleeced sheep will lie down comfortably in some little hollow or depression in the ground. It may roll on its side slightly to stretch out or relax. Suddenly the center of gravity in the body shifts so that it turns on its back far enough that the feet no longer touch the ground. It may feel a sense of panic and start to paw frantically. Frequently this only makes things worse. It rolls over even further. Now it is quite impossible for it to regain its feet. As it lies there struggling, gases begin to build up in the rumen. As these expand, they tend to retard and cut off blood circulation to extremities of the body, especially the legs. If the weather is very hot and sunny, a cast sheep can die in a few hours. If it is cool and cloudy and rainy, it may survive in this position for several days.”<sup>1</sup>
18. When David wrote about the *“valley of the shadow of death,”* he was referring to a real and very dangerous place, which was the road from Jerusalem to Jericho.
  - a. It is believed that Jesus referred to this specific place in his parable about the Good Samaritan, which is found in **Luke 10:25–37**.
19. The point David was making was that no matter what kind of valley we are in (death, danger, grief, etc.), we have the assurance that the Lord is with us.

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<sup>1</sup> W. Phillip Keller, *A Shepherd Looks at Psalm 23* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2007), 71–72.

20. People, like sheep, have many different kinds of fears, which are evidenced by the fact that there are more than five hundred clinically defined phobias!
21. Pastor Gary said: “The greatest comfort to fearful sheep was to be in the presence of their shepherd. The thing that will bring the greatest comfort to you and me, in our times of fear, is to always remember that God is with us. The Bible says that he will never leave us nor forsake us; that he is our abiding Good Shepherd. You know, God is omnipresent, so he can be at all places at all times. And he can be with you as much as he is with me, as much as he is with somebody else, because God is with each of us, and cares for each of us, and it is his presence that we need to be reminded of when we are going through those valleys. When you are going through a valley, whatever particular valley it might be; some worried place, some dark place, some discouraging place, some fearful place, always remember, God is with you.”
22. David knew the valley of the fear of death.
- There was a period of about ten years when David was on the run because of the death threats of King Saul.
23. David knew the valley of rejection.
- The Lord told the prophet Samuel go to David’s father, Jesse, because one of Jesse’s eight sons was to be the new king of Israel.
  - Psalm 27:10** – *“Though my father and mother forsake me, the LORD will receive me.”*
  - In **1 Samuel 16:1–13**, we read that Jesse apparently thought so little of David that he didn’t even call him in from the field to present himself before Samuel; Jesse only presented David’s seven brothers.
24. David knew the valley of sin.
- One specific example would be the adulterous affair with Bathsheba, and the way David plotted to have her husband, Uriah, killed in battle.
  - Psalm 51:1–2** – *“Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions. Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin.”*
25. Pastor Gary said: “So, whatever valley you might be going through or have gone through or are presently going through, please never forget your Good Shepherd is with you, and he loves you. And he will see you through. God doesn’t promise us the mountaintop experiences for every day of our life, but what he does promise us is that when we are in the valleys, he’s with us.... [Those] who have gone through some very painful valleys in [life oftentimes] ... say, ‘Though I don’t want to go through it again, and though I don’t wish it on anyone else, I’m thankful I went through it.’ And why are they thankful they went through it? Because oftentimes in the valley is when that relationship with Christ becomes even more precious and even more real.”

26. It's interesting to note that in **Psalm 23:4**, the pronoun for God changes from "He" to "You," which demonstrates the personal nature of the relationship we can have with God.
27. **Psalm 23:4b** – *"For You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me."* (NKJV)
28. Some believe the rod was for correcting and the staff was for comforting, however, Pastor Gary said he does not believe this is the case, because the Scripture clearly says the rod and the staff are used to bring comfort.
- a. A shepherd's rod was used to defend and protect the sheep from predators.
  - b. A shepherd's staff was used to rescue sheep out of dangerous places with the crook of the staff, as well as being an instrument that was used to guide the sheep.
29. We should be thankful we have a Good Shepherd who rescues us!

### Discussion Questions

1. Review the introduction to the study guide with your group to provide the appropriate background.
2. Read **Psalm 23** to provide the foundation for this study.
3. What are some of the ways the Lord has led you in *"paths of righteousness"*?
4. Read and discuss **Psalm 27:11** and **Psalm 143:10**.
5. How is the Lord teaching you his will and his ways?
6. Allow the people in your group to share examples of their experiences about learning to listen to the Lord's voice.
7. Read and discuss Pastor Gary's comments about the comforting assurance of the presence of the Good Shepherd. (See #21 above)
8. Spend time talking about the specific valleys David experienced. (See #22, #23, and #24 above)
9. Read and discuss Pastor Gary's comments about the ways the Lord takes us through difficult times. (See #25 above)
10. Close your time in prayer as the Holy Spirit leads.

\* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New International Version (NIV 1984)

February 5, 2017

“The Song of a Shepherd”

Psalm 23:5–6

Pastor Gary Hamrick



In the concluding message of the three-part series in Psalm 23, Pastor Gary reminds us that we are like sheep and God is like a shepherd who loves us and cares for us. In the last two verses of this psalm, David expresses his heart about the God who protects us, comforts us, and wants us to spend eternity with him in heaven. David’s concluding words are about how he wanted to *“dwell in the house of the Lord forever.”* He had the assurance that when he died, he would go to be with the Lord in heaven. Do you have this same confidence that you would go to heaven when you die? Pastor Gary’s message will help you have that assurance!

### Part One and Part Two – Review

1. Sheep are senseless, defenseless, and fearful, which creates a natural bond with their shepherd, because sheep are completely dependent upon the shepherd.
2. God wants to have this same kind of special bond and relationship with us, and he wants us to know how we are completely dependent upon him.
3. **Psalm 23:1–3a** – *“The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters. He restores my soul...”* (NKJV)
4. When we try to do life our way, like senseless, wandering sheep, we will oftentimes find ourselves on a harmful path because we have not followed the leading of the Good Shepherd.
5. Pastor Gary said: “God is going to lead us on the right path. It is a good path with God. It is a pleasant path with God. It is a straight path, in the sense that it is unencumbered by things that [would harm us].
6. God is good to us, not because of our goodness, character, or reputation, but because of his goodness, his character, and his reputation!
7. Pastor Gary said: “The greatest comfort to fearful sheep was to be in the presence of their shepherd. The thing that will bring the greatest comfort to you and me, in our times of fear, is to always remember that God is with us. The Bible says that he will never leave us nor forsake us; that he is our abiding Good Shepherd. You know, God is omnipresent, so he can be at all places at all times. And he can be with you as much as he is with me, as much as he is with somebody else... Because God is with each of us, and cares for each of us, and it is his presence that we need to be reminded of when we are going through those valleys. When you are going through a valley, whatever particular valley it might be, some worried place, some dark place, some discouraging place, some fearful place, always remember, God is with you.”

8. Pastor Gary said: “So, whatever valley you might be going through or have gone through or are presently going through, please never forget your Good Shepherd is with you, and he loves you. And he will see you through. God doesn’t promise us the mountaintop experiences for every day of our life, but what he does promise us is that when we are in the valleys, he’s with us.... [Those] who have gone through some very painful valleys in [life oftentimes] ... say, ‘Though I don’t want to go through it again, and though I don’t wish it on anyone else, I’m thankful I went through it.’ And why are they thankful they went through it? Because oftentimes in the valley is when that relationship with Christ becomes even more precious and even more real.”

### The Song Of A Shepherd

9. **Psalm 23:5a** – *“You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies...”* (NKJV)
10. The word *“table”* is often misunderstood, because most people are unfamiliar with sheep and the life of a shepherd.
11. Pastor Gary said a plateau is what is being spoken of in this verse, because it would have literally been a grassy, hillside location in which the sheep could graze without fear of attack from predators.
12. *“In some of the finest sheep country in the world, especially in the western United States and southern Europe, the high plateaus of the sheep ranges are always referred to as ‘mesas’ – the Spanish word for ‘tables.’ ”*<sup>1</sup>
13. The three primary enemies of sheep are coyotes/jackals, wolves, and lions, and in the United States alone, predators accounted for 250,000 or 31 percent of sheep deaths annually.
14. What is being communicated in this verse is that the shepherd provided a peaceful grazing place for his sheep in the presence of their enemies, which caused the sheep to be at ease because they knew they would be protected.
15. The parallel between sheep and us is that we too have an enemy, the devil.
16. **1 Peter 5:8** – *“Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith...”*
17. Pastor Gary said: “Satan desires to devour you. He wants to destroy your life. He wants to destroy your marriage. He wants to destroy your kids. He wants to destroy everything about your life. He wants to destroy our church. He’s on the prowl *‘like a roaring lion.’* Now, that said, he’s a real enemy [and] he’s a formidable foe, but our Good Shepherd is stronger still! And even our strongest

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<sup>1</sup> W. Phillip Keller, *A Shepherd Looks at Psalm 23* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2007), 125.

enemy is no match for the power of God. And yet, the warning is that you have to be *'self-controlled and alert'* because you've got to be prepared; *Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith.'* So there is a responsibility that we have, but please know, that it is your Good Shepherd who is looking out for you. Jesus himself will protect you, and thus, he will *'prepare a table before you in the presence of your enemies.'* And you can rest in peace"

18. **Psalm 121:7-8** – *"The LORD will keep you from all harm – he will watch over your life; the LORD will watch over your coming and going both now and forevermore."*

19. **Psalm 23:5b** – *"You anoint my head with oil..."* (NKJV)

20. Flies and parasites torment sheep, so caring shepherds would apply olive oil to their nostrils, ears, and head, because it was a natural repellent.

21. The parallel for anointing oil is the Holy Spirit, because in the New Testament, oil is symbolic of the Holy Spirit.

22. In John Chapters 14, 15, and 16, the Holy Spirit is referred to as the Comforter.

23. Pastor Gary said: "In a similar way that a shepherd loves to anoint the head of the sheep to bring comfort and relief, God, by his Spirit has saturated us that we might experience relief and comfort for some of the most tormenting things that we experience in life. God longs to bring relief and comfort to our tormenting times... He is intimately acquainted with our suffering and our grief."

24. **Isaiah 53:4** – *"Surely He has borne our griefs And carried our sorrows..."* (NKJV)

25. **Isaiah 66:13** – *"As a mother comforts her child, so will I comfort you..."*

26. **2 Corinthians 1:3-4** – *"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles..."*

27. **Psalm 23:5c** – *"My cups runs over..."* (NKJV)

28. The imagery David is writing about is that with the Lord there is abundance, excess, and more than enough!

29. **Romans 15:13** – *"May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit."*

30. **Jude 2** – *"Mercy, peace and love be yours in abundance."*

31. In terms of what we possess, we experience the abundance that comes from the Lord.

- a. Earning an annual income of \$34,000.00 or more places you in the top 1 percent of the world's population!
- b. For those below the poverty level in the United States, 99 percent of these individuals/families have electricity, running water, flushing toilets, and a refrigerator, and 95 percent own a TV.

32. **Psalm 23:6a** – *“Surely goodness and mercy <sup>2</sup> shall follow me All the days of my life...”* (NKJV)

33. **Isaiah 30:18a** – *“... the LORD longs to be gracious to you; he rises to show you compassion.”*

34. **Lamentations 3:22–23** – *“Through the LORD’s mercies we are not consumed, Because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness.”* (NKJV)

35. The Hebrew word for “follow” is a military term that literally translates as chase or pursue, which brings a completely different understanding to this Scripture, because we might otherwise have thought that God’s mercy trails along behind us.

36. God’s goodness and mercy pursues us, which demonstrates his incredible love for us!

37. **Psalm 23:6b** – *“And I will dwell in the house of the LORD Forever.”* (NKJV)

38. David was not writing about living in the temple in Jerusalem for the rest of his earthly life; he was writing about heaven, which he was confident would be his eternal home.

39. **John 14:1–4** – *“[Jesus said,] Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. In my Father’s house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there 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. You know the way to the place where I am going.”*

40. **2 Corinthians 5:8** – *“We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord.”*

41. **John 10:11** – *“[Jesus said,] I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.”*

42. We can have the same assurance as David, because Jesus, in **John 5:24**, said: *“I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life.”*

### Discussion Questions

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<sup>2</sup> Some Bible translations use the word love, instead of mercy; however, the Hebrew word used in this Scripture is hesed, which means, mercy.

1. Review the introduction to the study guide with your group to provide the appropriate background.
2. Read **Psalm 23** to provide the foundation for this study.
3. Share experiences you've had concerning funeral services or sermons in which **Psalm 23:5a** has not been explained properly.
4. Read and discuss **1 Peter 5:8**, **Psalm 121:7–8**, and Pastor Gary's comments about our common enemy. (See #17 above)
5. Read and discuss Pastor Gary's comments concerning the Holy Spirit. (See #23 above)
6. Read and discuss **Isaiah 53:4**, **66:13**, and **2 Corinthians 1:3–4**.
7. Spend time talking about the ways you have been comforted in difficult times.
8. Allow the people in your group to share stories about the ways they have experienced abundance and blessing that came from the Lord.
9. Read and discuss **Psalm 23:6a**.
10. Read and discuss John 14:1–4.
11. How did you come to the place of having confidence and assurance that heaven would be your eternal home when you died?
12. Close your time in prayer as the Holy Spirit leads.

\* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New International Version (NIV 1984)



Have you ever been impatient about something because it wasn't happening fast enough or working quickly enough? Have you ever felt this way toward God because he wasn't making something happen soon enough for you? For most of us, patience is not a virtue we possess, and it doesn't help that we live in a very fast-paced world where technology makes everything lightning fast! Nevertheless, in Psalm 27 David tells us to take courage and wait for the Lord. God doesn't work on our timetable, and it's usually the case that he is much slower about making things happen than what we would prefer. God is not slow or fast. God is always right on time! In today's study, Pastor Gary encourages us to practice the discipline of waiting – learning how to trust God and lean on him when life seems to be "on pause."

### The Discipline Of Waiting

1. According to a 2013 article in *The Boston Globe*, a computer science professor at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, "examined the viewing habits of 6.7 million [Internet] users" to determine how long people would be willing to wait for a video to load, and the surprising answer was two seconds! <sup>1</sup>
  - a. After just five seconds, 25 percent of 6.7 million people abandoned the download!
  - b. After just ten seconds, 50 percent of the 6.7 million people abandoned the download!
2. Pastor Gary shared the results of a study McDonald's conducted regarding how long people in south Florida wanted to wait from the time they gave their drive-thru order until the time they completed the payment (actual time was 189.5 seconds), and they found out that people were only willing to wait 60 seconds, which became a nation-wide mandate!
3. The fast and furious pace of many things today distorts our perspective on God's timing, and the result is that we have lost the discipline of waiting, especially when it concerns how we relate to God.
4. The idea of waiting on the Lord is found throughout the pages of the Bible, and the book of psalms includes many references, including the following:
  - a. **Psalm 27:14** – "Wait for the Lord; be strong and take heart and wait for the Lord."
  - b. **Psalm 33:20** – "We wait in hope for the LORD; he is our help and our shield."
  - c. **Psalm 37:7** – "Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for him..."
  - d. **Psalm 37:34** – "Wait for the LORD and keep his way..."
  - e. **Psalm 38:15** – "I wait for you, O LORD; you will answer, O Lord my God."
  - f. **Psalm 40:1** – "I waited patiently for the LORD; he turned to me and heard my cry."

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.bostonglobe.com/lifestyle/style/2013/02/01/the-growing-culture-impatience-where-instant-gratification-makes-crave-more-instant-gratification/q8tWDNGeJB2mm45fQxtTQP/story.html>

- g. **Psalm 130:5–6** – *“I wait for the Lord, my soul waits, and in his word I put my hope. My soul waits for the Lord more than watchmen wait for the morning, more than watchmen wait for the morning.”*
5. There aren’t any verses in the Bible that tell us to hurry!
  6. A careful reading of this psalm indicates that David seems to be in some kind of trouble or distress, and he wrote with a fearful and anxious heart.
  7. David also wrote about his confidence in the Lord in times of trouble.
    - a. **Psalm 27:1** – *“The LORD is my light and my salvation – whom shall I fear? The LORD is the stronghold of my life – of whom shall I be afraid?”*
    - b. **Psalm 27:5** – *“For in the day of trouble he will keep me safe in his dwelling... and set me high upon a rock.”*
  8. **Psalm 27:5–6** was written in future tense, which helps us understand David’s plan concerning what he needed to do while he was waiting on God.

### **Waiting Is Doing**

9. One of David’s game plan checklist items included going to church!
  - a. **Psalm 27:6** – *“... at his tabernacle will I sacrifice with shouts of joy; I will sing and make music to the LORD.”*
10. Pastor Gary said: “David [didn’t] just sit back and expect that God [was] going to deal with whatever his situation [was], he actually [did] something... [He was saying,] ‘I’m going to worship the one on whom I’m waiting for my needs to be met...’ Don’t just sit at home and think that God is going to drop the answer in your lap... Please do not wait to worship God [until] after he has answered your prayers; worship God while you wait, and honor him in the waiting by acknowledging him as being good and faithful and loving in all his ways, even though [you don’t have all of the answers yet].”
11. “Waiting for God is not laziness. Waiting for God is not going to sleep. Waiting for God is not the abandonment of effort. Waiting for God means, first, activity under command; second, readiness for any new command that may come; third, the ability to do nothing until the command is given.” – G. Campbell Morgan <sup>2</sup>

### **Waiting Is Praying**

12. David prayed and asked for God’s mercy.

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.biblebaptistmont.org/BBC/library/Morgan/secret.html>

13. David prayed and asked God not to reject him.
14. **Psalm 27:7–10** – *“Hear my voice when I call, O LORD: be merciful to me and answer me. My heart says of you, ‘Seek his face!’ Your face, LORD, I will seek. Do not hide your face from me, do not turn your servant away in anger; you have been my helper. Do not reject me or forsake me, O God my Savior. Though my father and mother forsake me, the LORD will receive me.”*
15. Pastor Gary said: “If you’ve ever waited on the Lord for something, sometimes his silence can be interpreted as rejection. When you don’t receive the answer or the response or the reply that you want from God quickly enough, you can sometimes misinterpret the silence in the waiting, that God has forsaken you.”
16. David processed all the things he was going through, including some form of rejection by his mother and father, and he came to the conclusion that God would not reject him or forsake him.
17. Pastor Gary said: “I just want to say that if any of you are in a long period of waiting, and the longer you wait the more excruciating [things] can be, and you’re wondering, why doesn’t God answer my prayer, and why doesn’t God do this for me and do that for me? In that silence, please don’t think that God is rejecting you, because the Lord will receive you... His silence should not be misinterpreted as the absence of his love or his care. He is not rejecting you. He is not forsaking you. His timing is just perfect, and it doesn’t correspond necessarily to our timetable.”
18. **Psalm 27:8** – *“My heart says of you, ‘Seek his face!’ Your face, LORD, I will seek.”*
19. It’s interesting to note that David sought the face of God, not the hand of God.
20. Pastor Gary said: “God is our provider, but we have to resist the temptation to always go to God about what we [want]. David went to God about who he is. David [came to realize that he wanted to seek the face of God because he wanted to know him]. It’s more about knowing [God] than getting from [God]... In knowing God, that’s when he will satisfy [the] deepest longings of [our] heart. That’s when he will bear witness to [our souls] about just waiting and trusting him.”
21. We must be tuned in to God while we wait!

### **Waiting Is Learning**

22. **Psalm 27:11** – *“Teach me your way, O LORD; lead me in a straight path...”*
23. David realized that lessons needed to be learned while things were on pause.

24. Pastor Gary said: “All of us in a period of waiting need to ask ourselves: ‘What is God trying to teach me while I wait... How is God growing me in ways I otherwise probably would not have grown had God [done] what I wanted, when I wanted it?’ ”
25. Pastor Gary said: “I don’t believe God is going to answer our requests, even if it is according to his will, unless we first learn what he wants us learn while we wait. [God] wants to prepare us, and if we are not learning the lessons while we wait, then we will not be ready to receive what we want...”

### **Waiting Is Trusting God And His Timing**

26. **Psalm 27:13** – *“I am still confident of this: I will see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living.”*
27. David was confident that he would see the goodness of the Lord while he was living, even though he didn’t know when or how or what method.
28. The Bible tells the stories of many men and women who waited on the Lord’s timing.
- a. Abraham and Sarah waited twenty-five years before Isaac was born.
  - b. Jacob waited fourteen years for Rachel to be his wife.
  - c. Joseph, who was wrongly accused and wrongly imprisoned, waited thirteen years in jail until he was freed and God made him the Prime Minister of Egypt.
  - d. Moses waited forty years before it was the right time to lead the people of Israel out of slavery in Egypt.
  - e. David waited fifteen years from the time he was anointed to be the new king of Judah, until he actually assumed the throne after King Saul died, and it was another seven years before he became king over the entire nation of Israel.
  - f. Jesus waited thirty years from the time he was born until he began his public ministry.
29. If God is making you wait, then you’re in good company!
30. Jesus, upon hearing that his close friend, Lazarus, was sick and near death, waited until four days after his death to arrive at the home of Mary and Martha, Lazarus’s sisters!
31. The question about the account of Lazarus’s death that we need to ask ourselves is this: What is the bigger miracle, Jesus healing a sick friend, or Jesus raising a dead friend to life?
32. The reason Jesus waited four days was so that more glory would come to our heavenly Father!
33. Pastor Gary said: “If you and I are consumed with God meeting our expectations, why should he be obligated to exceed them? In other words, perhaps God wants to do even more than what we are asking, and he’s waiting because he has something even better in mind for you. Don’t settle for less. In your impatience don’t be hasty for something that is second best. You wait on the Lord,

because what you expect, he might want to exceed, but only in his timing will he bring those things to pass.”

34. **Isaiah 40:30-31** – *“Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall, but those who wait on the LORD Shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.”* (NKJV)

### Discussion Questions

1. Review the introduction to the study guide with your group to provide the appropriate background.
2. Read **Psalm 27** to provide the foundation for this study.
3. Allow the people in your group to share their experiences about waiting for goods and services.
4. Read and discuss the article from *The Boston Globe* and the McDonald’s surveys Pastor Gary shared in his message. (See #1 and #2 above)
5. Why does waiting create such high levels of stress, anger, anxiety, etc.?
6. Read and discuss the Scriptures Pastor Gary shared concerning waiting on the Lord. (See #4 above)
7. What does having confidence in the Lord look like when you experience difficult times?
8. How do you practice “waiting is doing”?
9. Read and discuss the G. Campbell Morgan quote Pastor Gary shared. (See #11 above)
10. Read and discuss **Psalm 27:7–10**.
11. Spend time talking about Pastor Gary’s remarks about God’s silence. (See #15 and #17 above)
12. Share specific examples of the lessons you’ve learned while waiting on the Lord.
13. Read and discuss Pastor Gary’s comments about our expectations. (See #33 above)
14. Close your time in prayer as the Holy Spirit leads.

\* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New International Version (NIV 1984)



There's some good news and some bad news. First, the bad news. We are all sinners. The Bible describes the human condition as sinful, in that none of us measures up to the perfect standard of God. But the good news is that there is forgiveness for all who will confess their sins to the Lord. But what do terms like sin, forgiveness, and confession mean? King David expressed these things in Psalm 32 when he wrote about his own failures. Pastor Gary explains it all in today's study entitled, "The Heart of Confession."

### Historical Background

1. Psalm 32 is a penitential psalm, which means that it includes expressions of regret, remorse, repentance, contrition, or sorrow.
2. The following list includes all seven of the penitential psalms in the Bible: Psalm 6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, and 143.
3. The title for **Psalm 51** reads: *"For the director of music. A psalm of David. When the prophet Nathan came to him after David had committed adultery with Bathsheba."*
4. **Psalm 51:1–2** – *"Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love: according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions. Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin."*
5. **Psalm 51:10–13** – *"Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me. Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will turn back to you."*
6. Pastor Gary said: "Most Bible scholars believe that Psalm 32 is a fulfillment of the promise David [made] in Psalm 51, when he said, 'One day I'm going to *teach transgressors your ways.*' Now, again, a lot of the Bible is not in chronological order, and this is probably one case, [so] Psalm 32 probably follows Psalm 51. Psalm 51 is [David expressing] raw emotion. He's been caught about his sin of adultery, so he [wrote] Psalm 51, [which] is a psalm of contrition [and] repentance... [David was saying,] 'One day I'm going to use my sin, my failure, [and] my mess to become a message, [and] my test will become a testimony. And one day, when I have it all together, I'm going to help other people understand how they can recover from their sin and be in a right relationship with [the Lord].'"

7. Most Bibles have a title for this psalm, which indicates that it is a maskil, meaning that it is an instructive song.
8. Pastor Gary said **Psalm 32:5** is a key verse: *“Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, ‘I will confess my transgressions to the LORD’ – and you forgave the guilt of my sin.”*
9. At the end of this verse is the word, *selah*, which means, to pause and contemplate.
10. Confession is the key to moving from being humiliated and broken, to being restored with God.

### **Unconfessed Sin Takes A Toll Emotionally**

11. **Psalm 32:1–2** – *“Blessed is he whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man whose sin the LORD does not count against him and in whose spirit is no deceit.”*
12. The Hebrew word for blessed is *esher*, which means, “Oh, how happy!”
13. Pastor Gary said: “Our world is obsessed with trying to discover true happiness, and I guarantee you, true happiness will never be discovered apart from understanding how to have a relationship with God that is open and right through confession of sin. You will never be happy in life until you get right with God and getting right with God starts with this whole concept of confession.”
14. Pastor Gary said: “A guilty conscience weighs us down. Our mind has no rest when we have harbored unconfessed sin.”

### **Unconfessed Sin Takes A Toll Physically**

15. **Psalm 32:3** – *“When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long.”*
16. **Psalm 38:3, 7** – *“Because of your wrath there is no health in my body; my bones have no soundness because of my sin... My back is filled with searing pain; there is no health in my body.”*
17. The more David hid his sin, the more he suffered physically.
18. Pastor Gary said: “I’m not suggesting, that if you’ve been diagnosed with something terrible that it must mean there is some unconfessed sin in your life. Good, godly people can still get sick, because... we live in a fallen world, and this fallen world is filled with... sickness and disease, and one day we will leave this fallen world, [and we’ll] go to be with the Lord where there is no more sorrow, no more sickness, and no more pain... In a broader sense, there is a correlation between sin and sickness, in some regard.”

19. **Proverbs 14:30** – *“A heart at peace gives life to the body, but envy [which is sin] rots the bones.”*

20. Some people have physical or mental illness that is directly related to a spiritual issue.

### **Unconfessed Sin Takes A Toll Spiritually**

21. **Psalm 32:4** – *“For day and night your hand was heavy upon me...”*

22. The *“heavy”* hand of God is a figurative reference to the pressure of God on his life.

23. *“The greatest of all afflictions is to be so heavily pressed with the hand of God...”*<sup>1</sup>

24. Sin, iniquity, and transgression are key words in this verse.

a. Sin is basically defined in the Bible as missing the mark or failing to attain the standards of God.

i. **Romans 3:23** – *“... for all have sinned and fall short of the glory [standard] of God...”*

b. The Hebrew word for iniquity is *avon*, which means, twisted or bent, and it is used to describe the twisted or bent character of a person, which leads to premeditated sin, and it also refers to the inherent moral perversity within each person.

c. Transgression literally means willful rebellion against God.

25. God is the only one by whom we will ultimately be measured.

26. **Romans 3:10** – *“As it is written: ‘There is no one righteous, not even one...’”*

27. **Romans 5:8** – *“But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”*

### **Confession Is Agreeing With God About Sin**

28. The Hebrew word for confess is *yada*, which means, to agree with God.

29. Pastor Gary said: *“God has a standard of right and wrong, and the Bible wants us to be honest about ourselves as the Bible is honest about ourselves. But the problem is that many of us are dishonest about ourselves and, therefore, we don’t like the honesty of the Bible. In fact, the honesty of the Bible can sometimes be a very uncomfortable experience when it confronts us about something that we don’t want to be confronted about. But this is what confession is all about. It is understanding what God’s standard is, [and] what does he say is right [and] what does he say is wrong and agreeing with that.”*

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.sacred-texts.com/chr/calvin/cc08/cc08037.htm>

### Confession Is Owning Your Sin

30. Owning your sin is accepting responsibility for your words and actions, instead of excusing it away or blaming your sin on someone else.
31. **2 Samuel 12:13** – *“Then David said to Nathan, ‘I have sinned against the LORD.’”*

### Confession Is Telling The Lord

32. **Psalm 32:5** *“Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, ‘I will confess my transgressions to the LORD’ – and you forgave the guilt of my sin.”*
33. **Hebrews 4:14–16** – *“Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are – yet was without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.”*
34. **Romans 8:34b** – *“Christ Jesus, who died – more than that, who was raised to life – is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.”*
35. **1 Timothy 2:5–6** – *“For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all men...”*

### Confession Is Keeping Things Right

36. Confession is not a “one and done” event; confession should be the general practice for every Christian.
37. It’s been rightly said that we should always keep short accounts with God.

### Confession Is Receiving God’s Forgiveness

38. **1 John 1:9** – *“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.”*

### Confession Brings Happiness

39. **Psalm 32:1–2** – *“Oh, how happy, is the man or woman whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Oh, how happy, is the man or woman whose sin the LORD does not count against them and in whose spirit is no deceit.”* (Paraphrase)
40. **Psalm 32:11** – *“Rejoice in the LORD and be glad, you righteous; sing, all you who are upright in heart!”*

### Discussion Questions

1. Review the introduction to the study guide with your group to provide the appropriate background.
2. Read **Psalm 32** to provide the foundation for this study.
3. Provide an overview of **Psalm 51** and **2 Samuel 11–12**, which provides the account of David’s sin, so the people in your group will be familiar with the connection with **Psalm 32**.
4. Read and discuss **Psalm 51:1–2, 10–13**.
5. Read and discuss Pastor Gary’s remarks concerning the world’s obsession with finding happiness. (See #13 above)
6. What are some of the ways you’ve experienced the physical and emotional toll that sin takes on the human body?
7. Read and discuss Pastor Gary’s comments about physical illness not necessarily being connected to sin. (See #18 above)
8. Read and discuss **Proverbs 14:30**.
9. Spend time talking about the definition of sin, iniquity, and transgression. (See #24 through #27 above)
10. Read and discuss Pastor Gary’s comments about God’s standard of right and wrong. (See #29 above)
11. Allow the people in your group to share examples of the ways they’ve experienced the forgiveness of the Lord when they’ve brought their sin to him. (See #30 - #35 above)
12. Spend time talking about Pastor Gary’s paraphrase of **Psalm 32:1–2**. (See #39 above)
13. Close your time in prayer as the Holy Spirit leads.

\* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New International Version (NIV 1984)

February 26, 2017

“God’s Mercy for our Mess”

Psalm 34

Pastor Gary Hamrick



You aren’t alone if you’ve ever gotten yourself into a terrible predicament and felt hopeless and desperate. In the Bible, David made some bad choices that were motivated by fear, and those decisions nearly resulted in his death, but God intervened on his behalf, as he often does for us. As a result, David wrote Psalm 34 as a song of thanksgiving to the Lord who rescues us from the messes we create. In Pastor Gary’s message we will learn from David’s story and be reminded of God’s mercy.

### Historical Background

1. Psalm 34 is an alphabetical acrostic, which means that the first word of each verse begins with a different Hebrew letter, which includes all twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet.
  - a. The list of alphabetical acrostic psalms includes the following: 9, 10, 25, 34, 37, 111, 112, 119, and 145.
2. This style of psalm/song was written to help with memorization.
3. David wrote Psalm 34 and Psalm 56 from the cave of Adullam.
4. Abimelech was not a proper name, but the royal title of King Achish.
5. The details for this event are found in [1 Samuel 21](#).
6. Saul was the first king of Israel, and by the time this event took place, he had been disobedient to the point that God had selected David as his replacement.
7. Samuel the prophet anointed David to be the new king when David was about fifteen years old, and it would be approximately another fifteen years before he would assume the throne.
8. David was a valiant hero who became very popular with the people of Israel, and the slaying of Goliath, the Philistine giant, was obviously a major reason.
9. Saul was jealous because David received the adulation of the people.
  - a. [1 Samuel 18:6–7](#) – *“When the men were returning home after David had killed the Philistine, the women came out from all the towns of Israel to meet King Saul with singing and dancing, with joyful songs and with tambourines and lutes. As they danced, they sang: ‘Saul has slain his thousands, and David his tens of thousands.’ ”*

10. Because of his anger and jealousy, as well as a tormenting spirit, King Saul had murderous intentions toward David.
11. David was on the run from King Saul for ten years, and the constant fear of death, as well as the physical and mental exhaustion of the life he was forced to live, had taken a toll on him.
12. In desperation, David made a foolish decision to go to Gath, Goliath's hometown, thinking that he would find refuge there because Saul would never think to look for him in the land of the Philistines.
13. Pastor Gary said: "[David] was in a desperate situation, and you know the saying: 'Desperate people sometimes do desperate things.' And usually the result is catastrophic."
14. **1 Samuel 21:10 – 1 Samuel 22:2** – *"That day David fled from Saul and went to Achish king of Gath. But the servants of Achish said to him, 'Isn't this David, the king of the land? Isn't he the one they sing about in their dances: 'Saul has slain his thousands, and David his tens of thousands?'' David took these words to heart and was very much afraid of Achish king of Gath. So he pretended to be insane in their presence; and while he was in their hands he acted like a madman, making marks on the doors of the gate and letting saliva run down his beard. Achish said to his servants, 'Look at the man! He is insane! Why bring him to me? Am I so short of madmen that you have to bring this fellow here to carry on like this in front of me? Must this man come into my house?'' David left Gath and escaped to the cave of Adullam. When his brothers and his father's household heard about it, they went down to him there. All those who were in distress or in debt or discontented gathered around him, and he became their leader. About four hundred men were with him."*
15. To give you some idea of how mixed-up David was at this time, he actually went to Gath with Goliath's sword strapped to his hip!
  - a. **1 Samuel 21:8–9** – *"David asked Ahimelech, 'Don't you have a spear or a sword here? I haven't brought my sword or any other weapon, because the king's business was urgent.' The priest replied, 'The sword of Goliath the Philistine, whom you killed in the Valley of Elah, is here; it is wrapped in a cloth behind the ephod. If you want it, take it; there is no sword here but that one.' David said, 'There is none like it; give it to me.'"*
16. When the servants of King Achish recognized him, David immediately became an award-winning actor who played the role of madman.
17. When David escaped and made his way to the cave of Adullam, he wrote Psalm 34 as a song of thanksgiving and gratitude, because God rescued him from what may very well have been a death sentence.
18. David wrote this psalm as an alphabetical acrostic because he wanted others to learn from his life.

19. Pastor Gary said: “David [wanted] the generations after him, including ours, – here we are three thousand years after David – to know and understand that God delivers undeserving people from the mess we create. That’s what this psalm is about, and David [knew] it first-hand... [David] would make other messes in his life; he’s in his early twenties here. His affair with Bathsheba happened when he was [about] fifty, so he’s going to make some other blunders, [sins and mistakes] in his life. [He wrote] Psalm 34 as a young man in his twenties, and he [basically says], ‘I just want everybody to understand, [that] God is a merciful God and he will deliver undeserving people from the messes we create.’ ”
20. David admitted that what got him into his mess was sin, and his sin was fear, because David seems to have feared Saul more than he trusted God.
21. Pastor Gary said: “Any time we fear something more than we trust God; [that] is sin... Whenever we fear something or someone more than we trust God, what we are saying, in effect, is that God is not able to handle the problems that I face; [Fear is when] you are so consumed and obsessed with your situation and your problem, not trusting God, but being so consumed with it that in essence what you are saying is, that God is not big enough to handle it, [but] I am. Whenever we think that, either subconsciously or consciously, what we end up doing is subordinate God below us... Anyone who subordinates God has then exalted themselves above God, and anything that exalts self above God is idolatry, and idolatry is sin.”

### **David’s Advice – Pray For God’s Deliverance**

22. **2 Timothy 1:7** – *“For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.”* (NKJV)
23. **1 John 4:18a** – *“There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment.”* (NKJV)
24. The Bible tells us that God is love, which means that fear is the antithesis, and therefore, fear and love cannot coexist.
25. **Psalm 34:4** – *“I sought the LORD, and he answered me; he delivered me from all my fears.”*
26. **Psalm 34:6** – *“This poor man called, and the LORD heard him; he saved him out of all his troubles.”*
- a. David recognized his spiritual poverty.
  - b. **Matthew 5:3** – *“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”*
27. **Psalm 56:3–4** – *“When I am afraid, I will trust in you. In God, whose word I praise, in God I trust; I will not be afraid. What can mortal man do to me?”*

## David's Advice – Experience God's Goodness

28. **Psalm 34:8** – *“Taste and see that the LORD is good; blessed is the man who takes refuge in him.”*
29. There are some things you'll never be able explain to others, because there are some things, they'll just have to experience for themselves.
30. Knowing Jesus and having a personal relationship with him is the way you experience his goodness.

## David's Advice – Fear God

31. **Psalm 34:9, 11** – *“Fear the LORD, you his saints, for those who fear him lack nothing... Come, my children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the LORD.”*
32. Pastor Gary said: “David [exchanged] a bad fear, which [was] not trusting God, with a good fear of God... standing in awe and reverence of a holy, and majestic, and perfect God. The fear of God goes a long way as a deterrent to sin. When you have an awesome reverence of a holy and righteous God, and you know how much he loves you, and you understand that he's merciful and forgiving, that love relationship motivates [you] to holy living.”
33. **Proverbs 16:6** – *“Through love and faithfulness sin is atoned for; through the fear of the LORD a man avoids evil.”*
34. **Deuteronomy 6:2** – *“... fear the LORD your God as long as you live by keeping all his decrees and commands... so that you may enjoy long life.”*
35. **Psalm 103:11** – *“For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him...”*
36. **Psalm 111:10a** – *“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; all who follow his precepts have good understanding.”*
37. **Psalm 128:1** – *“Blessed are all who fear the LORD, who walk in his ways.”*

## Discussion Questions

1. Review the introduction to the study guide with your group to provide the appropriate background.
2. Read **Psalm 34** to provide the foundation for this study.
3. Provide an overview of **1 Samuel 21**. (See #15 above)

4. Read and discuss Pastor Gary's comments about the ways God delivers undeserving people from the messes they create. (See #20 above)
5. Read and discuss Pastor Gary's comments about fear being sin. (See #22 above)
6. Allow the people in your group to share their experiences about times when the Lord rescued them from their mess in answer to prayer.
7. Read and discuss the Scriptures Pastor Gary shared regarding praying for God's deliverance. (See #23 - #28 above)
8. What are some of the ways you've experienced the goodness of the Lord? (See #29 above)
9. Read and discuss Pastor Gary's comments about having a healthy fear of God. (See #33 above)
10. Spend time talking about the Scriptures that encourage us to have a healthy fear of God. (See #32, and #34 - #38 above)
11. Close your time in prayer as the Holy Spirit leads.

\* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New International Version (NIV 1984)

March 5, 2017

“The Frailty and Brevity of Life”

Psalm 39

Pastor Gary Hamrick



We've been given just one life to live. How will you use the time God has given you? Have you prioritized your life properly? Are you prepared to face God when you die? These are the questions raised in this psalm, and this study will help us understand why we meditate on the frailty and brevity of life.

### Historical Background

1. This psalm was written for Jeduthun, and it was to be taught to a choir.
2. Jeduthun was appointed by King David to be a worship leader.
  - a. **1 Chronicles 16:41** – *“With them were Heman and Jeduthun and the rest of those chosen and designated by name to give thanks to the LORD...”*
  - b. Jeduthun is also mentioned in the subtitles of **Psalm 62** and **Psalm 77**.
3. David was obviously troubled about something.
  - a. **Psalm 39:2** – *“... my anguish increased.”*
  - b. **Psalm 39:3** – *“My heart grew hot within me, and as I meditated, the fire burned...”*
4. The “something” that caused David to feel this way was God’s discipline in his life.
  - a. **Psalm 39:10** – *“Remove your scourge from me; I am overcome by the blow of your hand.”*
  - b. **Psalm 39:11** – *“You rebuke and discipline men for their sin...”*
5. God, as a loving Father, disciplines us because he loves us.
6. **Hebrews 12:11** – *“No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.”*
7. It’s likely that David was frustrated because of his sin, as well as God’s discipline.
8. David did something right when he determined to refrain from saying anything in front of others that would ruin his testimony or misrepresent God.
  - a. **Psalm 39:1** – *“I said, ‘I will watch my ways and keep my tongue from sin; I will put a muzzle on my mouth as long as the wicked [unbelievers] are in my presence.’ ”*
  - b. **Psalm 141:3** – *“Set a guard over my mouth, O LORD; keep watch over the door of my lips.”*
9. Pastor Gary said: “From time to time you and I will experience frustrations in our spiritual lives. Sometimes we get angry with God. Sometimes we are frustrated with God. Sometimes we don’t understand a lot of things, and so it makes us upset. But what David [understood] was, ‘I have to

take that to God, I can't be mouthing off in front of a bunch of unbelievers because it could ruin my testimony and shame the name of God. I don't want to bring any shame to God's name, so I'm going to keep my frustrations to myself.' "

10. David wasn't encouraging suppressing our feelings or advocating never talking about what bothers us, but that we should take everything to God privately.

11. David's prayer to God is found in [Psalm 39:4-13](#).

### The Frailty Of Life

12. [Psalm 39:4-6](#) – *"Show me, O LORD, my life's end and the number of my days; let me know how fleeting is my life. You have made my days a mere handbreadth; the span of my years is as nothing before you. Each man's life is but a breath. Man is a mere phantom as he goes to and fro..."*

a. [Psalm 39:4b](#) – *"...let me know how frail I am..."* (NKJV)

13. Human life is frail, and no one is guaranteed tomorrow.

14. [1 Peter 1:24](#) – *"For, 'All men are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall...'"*

15. [Psalm 90:5-6](#) – *"You sweep men away in the sleep of death; they are like the new grass of the morning – though in the morning it springs up new, by evening it is dry and withered."*

### The Brevity Of Life

16. David used three terms that demonstrate the brevity of life:

a. [Psalm 39:5a](#) – *"a mere handbreadth"*

i. There are approximately ten different kinds of distance measurements, including:  
span – cubit – long cubit – fathom – reed – furlong – stadia – Sabbath's day journey  
– a day's journey.

1. A day's journey was the longest measurement, which would have been about twenty miles.

2. A handbreadth was the shortest measurement, and this would be the length of a person's four fingers across the palm, or about four inches.

b. [Psalm 39:5b](#) – *"life is but a breath [NKJV – vapor / KJV – vanity]"*

i. The Hebrew word is hevel, which means, breath or a gentle breeze.

ii. [James 4:14](#) – *"... you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes."*

c. [Psalm 39:6a](#) – *"man is a mere phantom [shadow]"*

17. David understood that since life was short, he needed to get his life in order and get right with the Lord.
18. **Psalm 39:6b** – *“He hustles about, but only in vain; he heaps up wealth, not knowing who will get it.”*
19. David’s observations, which were made nearly three thousand years ago, demonstrate how relevant the Bible is to our culture today, because far too many people are consumed by the busyness of life.
20. “Though professionals everywhere complain about lacking time, the gripes are loudest in America. This makes some sense: American workers toil some of the longest hours in the industrial world. Employers are not required to offer their employees proper holidays, but even when they do, their workers rarely use the lot. The average employee takes only half of what is allotted, and 15 percent don’t take any holiday at all, according to a survey from Glassdoor, a consultancy. Nowhere is the value of work higher and the value of leisure lower [than in America].” <sup>1</sup>
21. “Americans are ‘always in a hurry.’” – Alexis de Tocqueville <sup>2</sup>
22. Pastor Gary said: “The truth is, if we are honest with ourselves, we pride ourselves on how busy we are, but what is the quality of life? What impact are we making within our relationships and for the kingdom of God? What kind of balance do we have? What are our priorities? These are important questions to ask, because David [said], ‘Life is like a breath and then it’s gone.’ ”
23. **Psalm 39:7** – *“But now, Lord, what do I look for? My hope is in you.”*
24. Pastor Gary said: “When we make the Lord first in our lives, when he becomes the priority, then he will order our steps, and everything else will translate into the proper order of our lives, with eternal values in mind. Our main concern about life should not be how long we live, but how well we live... What are we doing with the life we’ve been given? Where will you spend eternity? And, when we realize the frailty and brevity of life [that] should cause us to have a great dependence on God and a great earnestness about life, because time is short.”
25. Pastor Gary said: “Don’t get so busy making a living that you neglect to make a life.”
26. Seek forgiveness from the Lord and others!
  - a. **Psalm 39:8** – *“Save me from all my transgressions...”*
27. Cry out to God for help!
  - a. **Psalm 39:12a** – *“Hear my prayer, O LORD, listen to my cry for help; be not deaf to my weeping.”*

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.economist.com/news/christmas-specials/21636612-time-poverty-problem-partly-perception-and-partly-distribution-why>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.economist.com/news/christmas-specials/21636612-time-poverty-problem-partly-perception-and-partly-distribution-why>

28. Pastor Gary read *The Dash*, written by Linda Ellis ©1996.

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### Discussion Questions

1. Review the introduction to the study guide with your group to provide the appropriate background.
2. Read **Psalm 39** to provide the foundation for this study.
3. Allow the people in your group to share experiences about times when they've said things that damaged their testimony or misrepresented God.
4. Read and discuss Pastor Gary's comments about frustrated or angry with God. (See #9 above)
5. What would your relationships with others be like if you were to apply **Psalm 141:3**?
6. Read and discuss **Psalm 39:4–6**.
7. Spend time talking about ways we experience and understand the brevity of life. (See #16 above)
8. Read and discuss the comments Pastor Gary made concerning the busyness of life and getting our priorities in the right order. (See #22 and #24 above)
9. Read and discuss the poem, *The Dash*, written by Linda Ellis.
10. Close your time in prayer as the Holy Spirit leads.

\* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New International Version (NIV 1984)

March 12, 2017

“Hurt and Betrayed”

Psalm 41

Pastor Gary Hamrick



If you've ever been hurt or betrayed by another person or if someone has ever gossiped about you, lied about you, or slandered you – welcome to the human race! In today's message, Pastor Gary will help us learn how to respond the way David did when he experienced mistreatment from others.

### Historical Background

1. David wrote about his personal experience when people had lied about him, slandered him, gossiped about him, and kicked him when he was down.
2. Pastor Gary said: “I don't want [us to have] a victim mentality, okay, lest any of us think we're as pure as the driven snow. The fact of the matter is all of us are probably guilty ourselves, at some point in our lives, either intentionally or unintentionally, of hurting someone by either what we've done or what we've said or how we've talked about them. So, there's plenty of blame to go around. [The] main point of this psalm is how to handle the hurt and betrayal of other people against [us].”
3. David was physically sick when he wrote this psalm.
  - a. **Psalm 41:3–4** – *“The LORD will sustain him on his sickbed and restore him from his bed of illness. I said, ‘O LORD, have mercy on me; heal me, for I have sinned against you.’”*
4. David wasn't sick because he had sinned, although there are times when sin causes physical illness.
5. David was physically sick, so he needed the Lord's healing touch, plus he had sinned, so he needed the Lord's mercy.
6. People who were David's “*enemies*” used his illness as an opportunity to talk about him and “pile on.”
7. **Psalm 41:5** – *“My enemies say of me in malice, ‘When will he die and his name perish?’”*
8. What started out as lies, slander, and gossip, escalated to the point that people wished David was dead!
9. **Psalm 41:6** – *“Whenever one comes to see me, he speaks falsely [lies], while his heart gathers slander; then he goes out and spreads it abroad [gossip].”*
10. Lies – Slander – Gossip
  - a. Lies – Saying things that are untrue.

- b. Slander – Making false statements or misrepresentations, which defame and damage someone’s reputation.
  - c. Gossip – Repeating personal or sensitive information about someone.
  - d. Lies, slander, and gossip are sins, and there are many biblical references to these sins, including:
    - i. **Colossians 3:9** – *“Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices...”*
    - ii. **1 Peter 2:1** – *“Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind.”*
    - iii. **Proverbs 20:19** – *“A gossip betrays a confidence; so avoid a man [or a woman] who talks too much.”*
11. **Psalm 41:7–8** – *“All my enemies whisper together against me; they imagine the worst for me, saying, ‘A vile disease has beset him; he will never get up from the place where he lies.’ ”*
12. Pastor Gary said: “Even though it hurts, you would actually somewhat expect lies, slander, [and] gossip, and all of this kind of stuff, even, unfortunately, death wishes, from people who hate your guts... That shouldn’t surprise us. If people dislike you intensely it should not really surprise [you] that they might lie about [you], slander [you], gossip about [you], and perhaps... in their heart... they might wish [you] dead... But you know what is worse than that? [It’s] when it comes from somebody you thought was a friend... who love you and you loved them.”
13. **Psalm 41:9** – *“Even my close friend, whom I trusted, he who shared my bread, has lifted up his heel against me.”*
- a. Jesus quoted this verse concerning Judas, the betrayer, at what is known as the Last Supper.
    - i. **John 13:18** – *“I am not referring to all of you; I know those I have chosen. But this is to fulfill the scripture: ‘He who shares my bread has lifted up his heel against me.’ ”*
    - ii. *“The kiss of the traitor wounded our Lord’s heart as much as the nail wounded his hand.”*<sup>1</sup>
14. Pastor Gary said: “Betrayal from a close friend or a trusted spouse is one of the most painful things a person can experience. It is much easier to deal with the hurt and pain inflicted by someone who doesn’t like you, but when it comes from a close friend or a family member, it is excruciatingly painful.”
15. Most Bible scholars believe Ahithophel was the *“close friend”* David referred to in Psalm 41 and Psalm 55.

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<sup>1</sup> *The Treasury of David*, by Charles Haddon Spurgeon.

[https://books.google.com/books?id=DByUCwAAQBAJ&pg=PT1446&lpg=PT1446&dq=charles+spurgeon+the+kiss+of+the+traitor+wounded+our+lord's+heart+as+much+as+the+nail+wounded+his+hand&source=bl&ots=RbyoNKBGZm&sig=\\_9ddjUj0T7kdA2fJv-T0kF3stE&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwjVi8n2m9vSAhXkrFQKHVF\\_BVoQ6AEIGjAA#v=onepage&q=charles%20spurgeon%20the%20kiss%20of%20the%20traitor%20wounded%20our%20lord's%20heart%20as%20much%20as%20the%20nail%20wounded%20his%20hand&f=false](https://books.google.com/books?id=DByUCwAAQBAJ&pg=PT1446&lpg=PT1446&dq=charles+spurgeon+the+kiss+of+the+traitor+wounded+our+lord's+heart+as+much+as+the+nail+wounded+his+hand&source=bl&ots=RbyoNKBGZm&sig=_9ddjUj0T7kdA2fJv-T0kF3stE&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwjVi8n2m9vSAhXkrFQKHVF_BVoQ6AEIGjAA#v=onepage&q=charles%20spurgeon%20the%20kiss%20of%20the%20traitor%20wounded%20our%20lord's%20heart%20as%20much%20as%20the%20nail%20wounded%20his%20hand&f=false)

- a. **Psalm 55:12–14** – *“If an enemy were insulting me, I could endure it; if a foe were raising himself against me, I could hide from him. But it is you [Ahithophel], a man like myself, my companion, my close friend, with whom I once enjoyed sweet fellowship as we walked with the throng at the house of God.”*
- b. Ahithophel was a personal advisor and close friend of David’s.
  - i. **2 Samuel 16:23** – *“Now in those days the advice Ahithophel gave was like that of one who inquires of God. That was how both David and Absalom regarded all of Ahithophel’s advice.”*
- c. Ahithophel joined a conspiracy with David’s son, Absalom, against David.
  - i. **2 Samuel 15:6** – *“... [Absalom] stole the hearts of the men of Israel.”*
  - ii. **2 Samuel 15:30–31** – *“But David continued up the Mount of Olives, weeping as he went; his head was covered and he was barefoot. All the people with him covered their heads too and were weeping as they went up. Now David had been told, ‘Ahithophel is among the conspirators with Absalom’ So David prayed, ‘O LORD, turn Ahithophel’s counsel into foolishness.’ ”*

### **How To Respond To Hurt And Betrayal – Pray For Mercy**

16. **Psalm 41:10** – *“But you, O LORD, have mercy on me...”*

17. Mercy is the aspect of God’s love that causes him to help the miserable.<sup>2</sup>

18. David also wrote about praying for mercy in other psalms, including:

- a. **Psalm 86:6** – *“Hear my prayer, O LORD; listen to my cry for mercy.”*
- b. **Psalm 116:1** – *“I love the LORD, for he heard my voice; he heard my cry for mercy.”*

19. Mercy is one of the essential characteristics of God.

- a. **Ephesians 2:4** – *“... God, who is rich in mercy...”*
- b. **James 5:11c** – *“The LORD is full of compassion and mercy.”*

20. **Matthew 5:7** – Jesus said, *“Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.”*

21. Pastor Gary said: “Forgiveness is absolutely essential, is absolutely essential for your healing whenever you’ve been wronged. I didn’t say it was easy. It’s not easy, but it is essential. Unforgiveness has made prisoners of free people... When you hold onto unforgiveness, you become captive to that, and it is bondage, and it is heavy... If you forgive someone that does not mean what [he or she] did to you was okay. Sometimes people mistakenly think that if they forgive someone [that] somehow means that the offense was no big deal. And so, the one offended holds onto the offense, so that the weight of the offense will never [go away]. All the while, you’re slowly dying, crushed by the weight of unforgiveness... [The] way to be free is to forgive.”

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<sup>2</sup> Paraphrase for the definition of mercy; Nelson’s Bible Dictionary.

## How To Respond To Hurt And Betrayal – Don't Retaliate

22. **Psalm 41:10** – *“... raise me up, that I may repay them.”*
23. Pastor Gary said: “There is a difference between raw emotion and right theology, and David [was] expressing raw emotion... Everything you read in the Bible is not necessarily true... Sometimes the Bible quotes dumb things that people say [or do]!”
- a. Pastor Gary referred to Noah getting drunk and naked, David dancing in his undergarments, and the disciples' request to call down fire from heaven to kill Samaritans, as examples of things that happened that aren't a pattern for us to live by!
24. **Romans 12:19** – *“Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: 'It is mine to avenge; I will repay,' says the Lord.”*
25. Pastor Gary said: “God reserves the exclusive right to deal with the ones who have wronged or offended us. As much as we want to retaliate or get even or make somebody pay for what they did, God says, ‘Vengeance is mine.’ It's not ours; it's Gods.”
26. **Psalm 103:10** – *“[God] does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities.”*

## How To Respond To Hurt And Betrayal – Walk With Integrity

27. **Psalm 41:12** – *“In my integrity you uphold me and set me in your presence forever.”*
28. Pastor Gary said: “When someone wrongs you, lies to you, slanders you, gossips about you, betrays you, be the bigger person. Walk with integrity. Rise up above the insults, lies, and gossip of other people. Don't stoop to their level or get caught up in their game, take the high road... It's amazing how when you are doing what is right and pleasing to [God, that] God will take care of you, and God will tell the true story, and God will reveal the real picture. You don't have to run around defending yourself. Take the high road. Keep your head high and walk with integrity, and allow God to defend you, and he will.”

## Discussion Questions

1. Review the introduction to the study guide with your group to provide the appropriate background.
2. Read **Psalm 41** to provide the foundation for this study.
3. Read and discuss Pastor Gary's comments about lies, slander, and gossip. (See #10 above)

4. Allow the people in your group to share their experiences about times when others mistreated them.
5. Provide a brief summary of Pastor Gary's comments about Ahithophel and his involvement with Absalom's conspiracy. (This message is in the Teaching Library – 17:20 to 21:50 – [http://cornerstonechapel.net/?page\\_id=418&i=1185](http://cornerstonechapel.net/?page_id=418&i=1185))
6. How has the Lord defended you in these situations?
7. How has the Lord extended mercy to you in answer to prayer?
8. Spend time talking about Pastor Gary's comments on forgiveness. (See #21 above)
9. Share experiences about times when you've allowed raw emotion to influence your words and actions in response to being mistreated by others.
10. How have you avoided the temptation to retaliate when someone has mistreated you?
11. Read and discuss **Romans 12:19**.
12. Read and discuss Pastor Gary's comments about walking with integrity. (See #28 above)
13. Spend time talking about Pastor Gary's comments about David's sin with Bathsheba and its effect on Ahithophel. (35:10 to 37:40)
14. Close your time in prayer as the Holy Spirit leads.

\* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New International Version (NIV 1984)

March 19, 2017

“Hope for the Downcast”

Psalm 42

Pastor Gary Hamrick



Life has its share of trials and tribulations. From time to time every person goes through seasons of discouragement, and it could be that you find yourself in such a season today. The psalmist wrote about being “downcast” and feeling like God had “forgotten” him, but he still held on to hope and he said that despite his circumstances, he would praise the Lord. The psalm writer shared some practical advice about how he got through his season of despair, which Pastor Gary will explain in a teaching he has entitled, “Hope for the Downcast.”

### Historical Background

1. Bible scholars aren’t sure why the five “books” of psalms were created.
  - a. Book 1 – Psalm 1 through 41
  - b. Book 2 – Psalm 42 through 72
  - c. Book 3 – Psalm 73 through 89
  - d. Book 4 – Psalm 90 through 106
  - e. Book 5 – Psalm 107 through 150
2. The earliest manuscripts for the book of Psalms were discovered in 1947 when the Dead Sea Scrolls were found in Qumran, Israel.
3. This psalm is a maskil, which means that it was written to teach others.
4. The subtitle of this psalm indicates that it was a maskil “*of the Sons of Korah.*”
  - a. The KJV indicates that this is a “*maskil for the Sons of Korah.*”
  - b. Bible scholars aren’t sure whether it should be “*of*” or “*for.*”
    - i. If it’s “*for,*” then someone else wrote the psalm for them.
    - ii. If it’s “*of,*” then the sons of Korah wrote the psalm.
    - iii. Some Bible scholars believe David wrote the psalm for the sons of Korah.
  - c. The sons of Korah were orchestra and choral leaders in the Tabernacle at the time of King David.
  - d. There are eleven psalms attributed to the sons of Korah.
  - e. The sons of Korah were descendants of Korah, who was of the tribe of Levi, and it’s this same Korah who led a rebellion against Moses and Aaron.
    - i. Korah incited Dathan and Abiram, along with 250 others, to join him, according to the account found in [Numbers 16](#).
5. The theme of this psalm is discouragement.

6. The word, “*downcast*,” is used three times in this psalm, and once in **Psalm 43**.<sup>1</sup>
  - a. The word, “*downcast*,” is only found eleven times in the Bible.
  - b. **Psalm 42:5a** – “*Why are you downcast, O my soul?*”
  - c. **Psalm 42:6** – “*My soul is downcast within me...*”
  - d. **Psalm 42:11a** – “*Why are you downcast, O my soul?*”
7. The Hebrew word for downcast is shakah, which means, to sink or depress, and the meaning carries the same connotation as **Psalm 23** regarding a sheep that is cast and not able to get up on its own.
8. The psalmist wrote about being discouraged to the point of feeling helpless, hopeless, overwhelmed, and completely unable to “get upright.”
9. There are times in our lives when discouragement settles in for a season.
10. The psalmist described his feelings in several different ways.
  - a. “I can’t stop crying”
    - i. **Psalm 42:3** – “*My tears have been my food day and night...*”
  - b. “I feel like I’m drowning”
    - i. **Psalm 42:7** – “*...all your waves and breakers have swept over me.*”
  - c. “I feel like God has forgotten me”
    - i. **Psalm 42:9** – “*I say to God my Rock, ‘Why have you forgotten me?’*”
  - d. “People are taunting me”
    - i. **Psalm 42:3** – “*... men say to me all day long, ‘Where is your God?’* ”
    - ii. **Psalm 42:10** – “*... my foes taunt me, saying to me all day long, ‘Where is your God?’* ”

### **He Did Not Surrender To The Emotions Of Discouragement**

11. Someone has said, “You’re either heading into a storm or you’re in a storm or you’re coming out of a storm.”
12. Pastor Gary said: “When you look at this [psalm] it is pretty clear... that he [had] a fighting spirit. [He didn’t] surrender to the emotion of discouragement. [He] pressed on and [he persevered]. He [determined] not to let his discouragement rule his heart or his head.”
13. **Psalm 42:5b** – “*Put your hope in God, for I will [still] praise him, my Savior and my God.*”
14. It’s as though he was saying: “This is how I feel, but I’m still going to praise God... I may not be in a good place right now, but I will still praise God.”
15. Paul and Silas praised God in their time of discouragement when they were imprisoned in Philippi.

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<sup>1</sup> **Psalm 43:5a** – “*Why are you downcast, O my soul?*”

- a. **Acts 16:25** – “About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them.”
16. **James 1:12** – “Blessed is the man [or woman] who **perseveres under trial**, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him.” (Emphasis added)
17. **Galatians 6:9** – “Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we **do not give up**.” (Emphasis added)

### He Remembered The Good Things

18. **Psalm 42:4** – “These things I remember as I pour out my soul: how I used to go with the multitude, leading the procession to the house of God, with shouts of joy and thanksgiving among the festive throng.”
19. The remembrance of gathering with God’s people in God’s house was a blessing.
20. The negative aspect of the writer’s remembrance is that it was the case that he “used to go... to the house of God.”
21. Pastor Gary said: “There is something transformational when God’s people get together in God’s house, and study God’s Word, and worship the King of the universe. There is just something that naturally happens to your soul and in mine to bring us out of despair and discouragement... It does the heart wonders, and it does the heart good... [If] you are local and watching [church services] online, you need to get to church, because there is no substitute [for] being among God’s people in God’s house worshipping God on his holy throne! Isolation breeds desolation. The more isolated you are, the more desperate you become. Fight through that, and don’t isolate yourself. Get to church... because it does something transformational in the heart of every person when we come into God’s house and spend time worshipping together.”
22. **Hebrews 10:25** – “Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another – and all the more as you see the Day [the return of the Lord] approaching.”
23. The Bible teaches us about the fact that the closer we come to the return of Christ, the worse things will be in our world, which means we need the community and fellowship of Believers!
24. The writer not only remembered the house of God; he remembered God too.
- a. **Psalm 42:6** – “... I will remember you from the land of the Jordan, the heights of Hermon- from Mount Mizar.”
    - i. Mount Hermon is the tallest mountain in Israel.
    - ii. Mount Mizar is a small hill in the vicinity of Mount Hermon.

- b. The psalmist was pointing out that he remembered God in the good times and the bad, as well as the high points and low points in his life.

### He Talked To Himself

25. The psalmist's faith reasoned with his fears – out loud.
26. **Psalm 42:5a** – *“Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me?”*
27. “Have you realized that most of your unhappiness in life is due to the fact that you are listening to yourself instead of talking to yourself? Take those thoughts that come to you the moment you wake up in the morning. You have not originated them, but they are talking to you, they bring back the problems of yesterday, etc. Somebody is talking. Who is talking to you? Your self is talking to you. Now this man's treatment [in Psalm 42] was this: instead of allowing this self to talk to him, he starts talking to himself. “Why art thou cast down, O my soul?” he asks. His soul had been depressing him, crushing him. So he stands up and says, “Self, listen for moment, I will speak to you.” – Martin Lloyd Jones <sup>2</sup>
28. Pastor Gary said: “We spend too much time listening to the nagging things that are reminding us of how bad our life is or was, or [how bad] the world is or was, instead of reminding ourselves about the truth of who God is and the strength that we find in him.”
29. In **Philippians 4:13**, Paul reminded himself of what we need to remind ourselves of, and that is that we find our strength in God.
30. It is through Christ, and Christ alone, that we have the ability to stand, even when the situations we face are dark and depressing.
31. **Philippians 4:13** – *“I can do everything through him who gives me strength.”*

### He Talked To God

32. **Psalm 42:7** – *“Deep calls to deep in the roar of your waterfalls; all your waves and breakers have swept over me.”*
- This verse is a visual, poetic description of despair.
  - When the snow on Mount Hermon melts in the spring, the water rushes like a torrent!
33. Pastor Gary said: “The psalmist [used] imagery to say, ‘I feel like I'm drowning, buried deep under my misery, but [in] the depth of my despair, God goes deeper still.’ ”

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<sup>2</sup> [https://www.goodreads.com/author/quotes/7810781.D\\_Martyn\\_Lloyd\\_Jones](https://www.goodreads.com/author/quotes/7810781.D_Martyn_Lloyd_Jones)

34. **Psalm 42:9a** – *“I say to God my Rock, ‘Why have you forgotten me?’ ”*

35. The writer wasn’t afraid to tell God that he felt like he had been forgotten, because God’s big enough to handle it.

36. **Hebrews 13:5** – *“... God has said, ‘Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.’ ”*

37. Even when the writer felt discouraged and forgotten, he recognized that God was his Rock.

### **He Thirsted For God**

38. **Psalm 42:1–2** – *“As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God?”*

39. Pastor Gary said: “Notice what he [didn’t] thirst for. [He] didn’t thirst for [his] problems to go away... [He] didn’t thirst for God to deal with his enemies... [He didn’t] thirst for a quick [resolution] to all of [the things going on in his life]... He [thirsted] for God. There is nothing quite as healing for [our] discouragement than getting into the presence of God, [and] finding the comfort and the help and the peace in the very presence of God.”

### **Discussion Questions**

1. Review the introduction to the study guide with your group to provide the appropriate background.
2. Read **Psalm 42** to provide the foundation for this study.
3. Allow the people in your group to share their experiences about seasons of discouragement.
4. How is discouragement different from depression?
5. Read and discuss the different ways the psalm writer describes his feelings. (See #10 above)
6. Read and discuss Pastor Gary’s comment about perseverance. (See #12 above)
7. What is the difference between perseverance in a biblical sense and a philosophy of “I’m going to pull myself up by my bootstraps”?
8. How have you, like Paul and Silas, praised the Lord in seasons of discouragement, etc.? (See #15 above)
9. Read and discuss **James 1:12** and **Galatians 6:9**.

10. What are some of the ways you intentionally remember the good things of God?
11. Read and discuss Pastor Gary's remarks about the life-changing aspects of being "in church." (See #21 above)
12. How would you describe your understanding of the importance of being with God's people in God's house?
13. Allow the people in your group to share their experiences about times when attending church services was moved down the list or removed from their list of priorities.
14. Read and discuss [Hebrews 10:25](#).
15. Read and discuss the Martin Lloyd Jones quote Pastor Gary shared. (See #27 above)
16. How have you been encouraged when you remember the promise of God found in [Hebrews 13:5](#)? (See #35 above)
17. Spend time talking about the psalmist's thirst for God, rather than "thirsting" after other things. (See #38 and #39 above)
18. Close your time in prayer as the Holy Spirit leads.

\* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New International Version (NIV 1984)



In this very vulnerable psalm, David wrote about his own sin and how he longed for God's forgiveness. David teaches us something important about the human condition in general, in that we are all sinners in need of God's forgiveness. David also teaches us about the remarkable fact that God is merciful, loving, and compassionate. If you are now or if you've ever been at a place where you long to be right with God and to know that all the wrong things you've ever said or done can be forgiven by God, then Pastor Gary's message will be particularly meaningful to you!

### Historical Background

1. Pastor Gary said: "... mankind has always had this innate, inherent realization that there is something bad or wrong or evil in [a person's] life, and then with that realization there is this longing for atonement for whatever this evil, wicked, bad thing is in [his or her] life. The Bible has a word for evil, bad, wicked things in our lives and the word in the Bible is sin, and that [is] really what Psalm 51 is about. David [was] aware of his sinfulness. He was aware of what [was] wrong, and evil, and bad in his life... and he desperately [wanted] to be right with God."
2. **Psalm 51:1-2** – *"Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions. Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin."* (Emphasis added)
  - a. The Hebrew word for sin is chatta' ah, which means, missing the mark; a failure to attain God's standard.
  - b. The Hebrew word for iniquity is avon, which means, twisted or bent, and it describes the bent or twisted character of an individual and inherent moral perversity.
    - i. **Jeremiah 17:9** – *"The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?"*
  - c. The Hebrew word for transgression is pasha, which means, willful rebellion.
3. Pastor Gary said: "God has a line... and the line that God draws is perfect. It is his standard. When we cross the line, that's transgression [because] we are willfully, deliberately doing something wrong... When we pervert the line or change it or redefine it that's iniquity. When we don't even measure up to the line, that's sin."
4. **Romans 2:15** – *"... the requirements of the law are written on [our] hearts, [and our] consciences also bearing witness..."*
5. We have an understanding about right and wrong because God has put that in the heart of every human being.

6. **Psalm 51:3–4** – *“For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me. Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you are proved right when you speak and justified when you judge.”*

### The Sin Condition

7. **Psalm 51:5** – *“Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.”*
8. **Psalm 58:3** – *“Even from birth the wicked go astray; from the womb they are wayward and speak lies.”*
9. **Ephesians 2:3b** – *“... we were by nature objects of wrath.”*
  - a. *“... [we] were by nature children of wrath...”* KJV
10. Everyone has an innate sinful nature.
11. When Adam rebelled against God in the Garden of Eden, he corrupted his nature, and that sinful nature was then passed on to every succeeding generation.
12. **Romans 3:23** – *“[For] all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God...”*
13. **Ecclesiastes 7:20** – *“There is not a righteous man on earth who does what is right and never sins.”*
14. **1 John 1:8** – *“If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.”*

### The Sin Deception

15. Pastor Gary said: *“Sin is pleasant for a season, but after it runs its course, it leaves you feeling empty and betrayed. Sin promises much, but delivers very little, and it usually comes with a cost. It deceives us because it never speaks of the consequences. Sin will never tell you the consequences up front; it will only speak of the pleasure. The problem is that the pleasure will only last for a short time, however, consequences can sometimes last for a lifetime. Sin is very deceptive.”*
16. **Hebrews 3:13** – *“But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin’s deceitfulness.”*
17. Pastor Gary said: *“There are many people hearing my voice right now who are living a lifetime of regrets because of decisions they have made. And I urge you and encourage you; if you are at a place right now where you are being stared down by temptation itself; run as fast as you can!”*

## The Sin Progression

18. **2 Samuel 11:2** – *“One evening David got up from his bed and walked around on the roof of the palace. From the roof he **saw** a woman bathing. The woman was very beautiful...”* (Emphasis added)
19. **2 Samuel 11:4a** – *“Then David **sent** messengers to get her. She came to him, and he **slept** with her.”*
20. The progression is obvious in these verses: saw, sent, and slept.
21. Pastor Gary said: “There was a way out for [David]. The same stairs that took him up to the roof of the palace were the same stairs that could take him down, but he chose not to... God will always provide us a way of escape.”
22. **1 Corinthians 10:13** – *“No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, **he will also provide a way out** so that you can stand up under it.”* (Emphasis added)
23. Temptation itself is not sin.
24. **James 1:13–15** – *“When tempted, no one should say, ‘God is tempting me,’ For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.”*
25. Pastor Gary said: “Look for the out. God has always provided it... take it as fast as you can!”

## The Sin Contrition

26. To be contrite is to feel sorry about bad behavior.
27. **Psalm 51:1–2** – *“Have **mercy** on me, O God, according to your unfailing **love**; according to your great **compassion** blot out my transgressions. Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin.”* (Emphasis added)
28. David appealed to the love, mercy, and compassion of the Lord.
29. **Psalm 51:9–12, 17** – *“Hide your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquity. Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to*

*sustain me... The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise."*

30. Pastor Gary said: "[God] loves broken people. [He loves] people who will come to the place of being contrite and just broken in heart and humble before [him]... [and] admit that [they] are wrong and [they] confess sins to [him]... All God wants... in regard to our sin, is brokenness."

### **The Sin Solution**

31. **Psalm 51:16** – *"You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it; you do not take pleasure in burnt offerings."*
32. David wrote about sacrifice and burnt offerings because the Old Testament sacrificial system that God established was still in place.
33. The sacrificial system temporarily appeased the wrath of God.
34. **Hebrews 10:4** – *"... it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins."*
35. David wanted more than God's wrath to be appeased; he wanted God to take away his sins and to cleanse him from within!
36. David wanted a permanent solution to the sin problem.
37. **Galatians 4:4-5** – *"But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son... to redeem [us]."*
38. When we come to God and seek his forgiveness for our sin, he expunges all record of our sin because of the sacrifice of his Son, Jesus, on the cross.
39. Someone has said that the definition of the word justified can be more easily understood as: "It's just as if I'd never sinned."
40. **Psalm 103:11-12** – *"For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us."*

### **Discussion Questions**

1. Review the introduction to the study guide with your group to provide the appropriate background.
2. Read **Psalm 51** to provide the foundation for this study.

3. How did the Holy Spirit convince you about, as well as convict you of, sin in your life?
4. Read and discuss Pastor Gary's comments about the definition of transgression, iniquity, and sin. (See #3 above)
5. Provide an overview of the Scriptures Pastor Gary mentioned concerning the sin condition. (See #7 - #14 above)
6. Share examples of the ways sin has deceived you.
7. How has the Holy Spirit helped you remember the consequences of sin?
8. Read and discuss [1 Corinthians 10:13](#) and [James 1:13–15](#).
9. Spend time talking about temptation
10. Allow the people in your group to share their experiences about times when they have sought the love, mercy, and compassion of the Lord concerning their desire to be forgiven for sin.
11. Read and discuss [Psalm 51:1–2; 9–12; 17](#).
12. Provide an overview of the comments and Scriptures Pastor Gary shared concerning the sin solution. (See #31 - #40 above)
13. Close your time in prayer as the Holy Spirit leads.

\* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New International Version (NIV 1984)

April 2, 2017

“The Refiner’s Fire”

Psalm 66

Pastor Gary Hamrick



The Bible often compares God to a “Refiner,” and us to “silver or gold.” Silver or gold cannot reach its optimum value without other byproducts (zinc, lead, copper, etc.) being burned away. The only way to remove these byproducts is to put the precious metal under intense heat in a furnace. In the process of refining silver, the intense heat will cause all the impurities (dross) to rise to the surface so they can be skimmed off and discarded. Sometimes God uses the intense heat of difficult life circumstances to cause impurities to rise to the surface so we can deal with those things that mar our lives. God wants to purify and perfect us to make us more into his image and likeness. Through the patience of our Good Refiner, we will be made into pure vessels for his use.

### Historical Background

1. A song is obviously something sung, and a psalm is a song accompanied by a stringed instrument.
2. The author of this psalm is not known, and it is counted among the fifty psalms (a third of the 150 psalms) referred to as “the orphan psalms,” because it isn’t attributed to a particular writer.
3. Pastor Gary said: “The theme of Psalm 66 is basically a psalm of praise for God’s awesome deeds and his refining work in our lives.”
4. **Psalm 66:8–12** mentions some kind of a hardship or trials the nation of Israel faced.
  - a. **Psalm 66:11** – *“You brought us into prison and laid burdens on our backs.”*
  - b. **Psalm 66:12** – *“You let men ride over our heads; we went through fire and water...”*
  - c. The writer may have been referring to the Israelites being in bondage in Egypt or the seventy years of exile in Babylon, under King Nebuchadnezzar.
5. Pastor Gary said: “Whatever this difficulty was, it served to test them and to refine them as the people of God. It was the process by which God would make them a better people.”
6. **Psalm 66:10** – *“For you, O God, tested us; you refined us like silver.”*
7. Pastor Gary said: “Before [we] can be refined, we first have to be mined... God goes after us and digs us out, and he takes us from the depths of some pit, and he mines us for his purposes. [This] reminds me of the parable of the [hidden treasure] that Jesus taught.”
  - a. **Matthew 13:44** – *“The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field.”*
  - b. Pastor Gary said: “You read almost any Bible commentary and there is almost [complete] agreement... that [the] treasure is Jesus, and [what we need to do] is find him and [give] up

all we have to secure Jesus. But I disagree with those commentaries. It doesn't make sense [regarding] the overall view of the Gospel, because... [I didn't find] Jesus; he found me! I was dead in my trespasses and sins, [and] I was as lost as lost can be! It was Jesus who found me! ... We didn't find him; he found us. We weren't even looking for him [but] he came in our direction and pursued us and found us for his glory!"

i. **Ephesians 2:1** – *“As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins...”*

c. *Victory in Jesus* – “He sought me and bought me with His redeeming blood... he loved me ere I knew him...”<sup>1</sup>

8. When we are “mined” we have a lot of blemishes, imperfections, dirt, and debris on us, which requires the refining work of God.
9. Pastor Gary said: “He mines us and then he refines us so we will be of greater worth and value, and more conformed to his likeness... Refining rock, metals, and minerals always involves some aspect of washing, cutting, breaking, [or] heating...”
10. Pastor Gary said: “God’s refining work can sometimes be very painful and very uncomfortable, because it is often through painful life experiences that God will do his refining work in our lives... God does his refining work in our lives to make our faith more genuine. Now, I don’t mean more genuine in the sense of sincere... I mean better quality.”
11. **1 Peter 1:6–7** – *“In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that your faith – of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire – may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.”*
12. Pastor Gary said: “... God takes us through the fire sometimes to burn away the impurities, and to bring to the surface some junk that we didn’t even know [existed] in our hearts... [and] junk that rises to the surface when the heat is turned up and metal is refined, is what silversmiths’ call [dross].”
13. The Bible includes a number of references to refining, including:
  - a. **Job 23:10** – *“But he knows the way that I take; when he has tested me, I will come forth as gold.”*
  - b. **Zechariah 13:9** – *“This third I will bring into the fire; I will refine them like silver and test them like gold. They will call on my name and I will answer them; I will say, ‘They are my people,’ and they will say, ‘The LORD is our God.’”*
  - c. **Isaiah 48:10** – *“See, I have refined you, though not [as severely] as silver; I have tested you in the furnace of affliction.”*
  - d. **Malachi 3:2–3** – *“But who can endure the day of his coming? Who can stand when he appears? For he will be like a refiner’s fire or a launderer’s soap. He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; he will purify the Levites and refine them like gold and silver...”*

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.popularhymns.com/victory\\_in\\_jesus.php](http://www.popularhymns.com/victory_in_jesus.php)

### **The Refiner Breaks Up The Ore**

14. In biblical times, a silversmith started the process of refining by using a hammer to break up the ore.
15. In a manner of speaking, God accomplishes this in us when his Word breaks our hearts.
16. **Jeremiah 23:29** – “*‘Is not my word like fire,’ declares the LORD, ‘and like a hammer that breaks a rock in pieces?’*”
17. When we come to faith in Christ for salvation, that’s when we have been “mined” by God, who then begins his refining work in our lives.

### **The Refiner Places It In The Crucible**

18. A crucible is a fireproof melting pot that is able to withstand extreme heat.
19. Pastor Gary said: “Our refiner God uses the heat of excruciating circumstances to purify our hearts and cleanse our character.”
20. **Proverbs 17:3** – “*The crucible for silver and the furnace for gold, but the LORD tests the heart.*”
21. **Romans 5:3b–5** – “*And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.*”

### **The Refiner Removes The Dross**

22. **Proverbs 25:4** – “*Remove the dross from the silver, and [the silversmith can produce a vessel].*”
23. In our lives, “dross” would be any motives, actions, words, or thoughts, which are unbecoming to God.

### **The Refiner Turns Up The Heat**

24. After the dross is removed, the refiner places the crucible of silver back into the furnace; as many as seven times, because certain impurities will only come out at certain temperatures!
25. **Psalm 12:6** – *“And the words of the LORD are flawless, like silver refined in a furnace of clay, purified seven times.”*
26. Pastor Gary said: “The only way that we can ultimately become pure and right and holy and useful as vessels is when God’s refining work has its way in our lives. And sometimes that process is repeated over and over again.”

### **The Refiner Sees His Reflection**

27. Each time a refiner repeats the process of placing the crucible of silver in the furnace, the refiner’s face is more clearly visible.
28. **Malachi 3:3** – *“[God] will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver...”*
29. Pastor Gary said: “When we more [resemble] his image; that’s when God knows that we are done... Life is going to be a process, [and we won’t be] completely done [in this life].”
30. **2 Corinthians 3:18** – *“And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.”*
31. God is not to be compared to a forest fire or an incinerator, but a refiner.
32. “When disappointments like these smash their way into your life, you may want to scream, ‘How could God let this happen?’ But what if God didn’t just ‘let it happen’? What if the things you call disappointments are really His appointments – events He is using to make you more like Christ? What if your circumstances are actually the flames of His grace, intended to melt and burn away the undesirable elements in your life, leaving you pure and radiant – like refined silver?” – Kay Arthur <sup>2</sup>
33. Pastor Gary said: “I don’t want [anyone] to misunderstand me. I’m not saying, and I don’t think Kay Arthur is saying, that God causes everything grief and every horrible loss in your life as some kind of a divine appointment. But what if through those things he wants to make us better people... give you a better marriage... a better family... to know him better and to reflect him better? [May our] difficult times serve to be a refiner’s fire in our lives to burn away all of the junk in our hearts that maybe we didn’t even know was there, so that other people will be more able to clearly see the Refiner in us.”

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.amazon.com/As-Silver-Refined-Answers-Disappointments/dp/1400073480>

## Discussion Questions

1. Review the introduction to the study guide with your group to provide the appropriate background.
2. Read [Psalm 66](#) to provide the foundation for this study.
3. What are some of the ways people try to understand and cope with difficult times in life and God's refining work?
4. Read and discuss Pastor Gary's comments about the God's mining process. (See #7 - #10 above)
5. Read and discuss [1 Peter 1:6-7](#).
6. What are some examples of the blemishes, imperfections, dirt, and debris that God has removed in your life?
7. How would you describe your experiences in the refiner's fire?
8. Allow the people in your group to share their experiences about times when the Word of God was used to break their heart? (See #14 - #16 above)
9. Read and discuss [Romans 5:3b-5](#).
10. Share examples of the motives, actions, words, or thoughts that have been burned away in the refiner's crucible.
11. How is the Lord making you into a useful vessel?
12. Read and discuss the Kay Arthur quote Pastor Gary shared. (See #32 above)
13. Read and discuss Pastor Gary's comments about God's desire to make us into his image. (See #33 above)
14. Close your time in prayer as the Holy Spirit leads.

\* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New International Version (NIV 1984)

April 23, 2017

“When Life Seems Unfair”

Psalm 73

Pastor Gary Hamrick



Have you ever felt that life seems to be unfair or that bad things happen to good people or that followers of the Lord don't seem to have it any better in life than those who don't know the Lord? You aren't alone if you've ever wondered about such things. A man in the Bible by the name of Asaph – an accomplished musician and priest in the Temple of God – thought about these things too, and we have a psalm he wrote that reveals his innermost struggles about how he wrestled with the justice of God and the apparent unfairness of life. A pivotal event happened in his life that helped him reconcile these things, and the lessons he learned are shared in this psalm. Pastor Gary's message will bring encouragement to everyone who has considered these questions.

### Historical Background

1. Asaph was a priest.
  - a. **1 Chronicles 15:17** – *“So the Levites appointed Heman son of Joel; from his brothers, Asaph son of Berekiah...”*
  - b. He also served under David's son, King Solomon.
2. Asaph was the chief musician appointed by King David to serve in the Temple.
  - a. **1 Chronicles 16:4–5** – *“[David] appointed some of the Levites to minister before the ark of the LORD, to make petition, to give thanks, and to praise the LORD, the God of Israel: Asaph was the chief, Zechariah second, then Jeiel...”*
3. Asaph was a seer (prophet).
  - a. **1 Chronicles 25:2** – *“... Asaph, who prophesied under the kings' supervision.”*
  - b. **2 Chronicles 29:30a** – *“... Asaph the seer.”*
4. Asaph wrote twelve psalms: **Psalm 50** and **Psalms 73–83**.
5. There are more writings in the Bible from Asaph than Jonah, Amos, Micah, Joel, Malachi, Zephaniah, Habakkuk, Nehum, Haggai, Obadiah, Peter, James, and Jude!
6. We need to understand that Asaph wasn't just some spiritually shallow guy who asked these questions; he was a pastor who led worship in the house of God!
7. This psalm is Asaph's testimony about his struggle with the “Why?” questions, and his perspective on things once he had come out on the other side, so to speak.
8. Asaph was troubled so deeply about the “Why?” questions that he almost lost his faith in God.

- a. **Psalm 73:2** – *“But as for me, my feet had almost slipped; I had nearly lost my foothold.”*

### Asaph’s Initial Observations About The Wicked

9. The wicked are financially prosperous.
- a. **Psalm 73:3** – *“For I envied the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.”*
10. The wicked are physically healthy.
- a. **Psalm 73:4–5** – *“They have no struggles; their bodies are healthy and strong. They are free from the burdens common to man; they are not plagued by human ills.”*
11. The wicked are morally corrupt.
- a. **Psalm 73:6–8** – *“Therefore **pride** is their necklace; they clothe themselves with **violence**. From their **callous hearts** comes **iniquity**; the **evil conceits** of their minds know no limits. They **scoff**, and speak with **malice**; in their **arrogance** they **threaten oppression**.”* (Emphasis added)
12. The wicked are verbally blasphemous.
- a. **Psalm 73:9–11** – *“Their mouths lay claim to heaven, and their tongues take possession of the earth. Therefore their people turn to them and drink up waters in abundance. They say, ‘How can God know? Does the Most High have knowledge?’ ”*

### Asaph’s Initial Conclusions

13. **Psalm 73:12** – *“This is what the wicked are like – always carefree, they increase in wealth.”*
- a. “Why are the wicked blessed by God; aren’t the wicked supposed to be punished at some point?”
14. **Psalm 73:13** – *“Surely in vain have I kept my heart pure; in vain have I washed my hands in innocence.”*
- a. “I guess I’ve been a good person for nothing!”
- b. Pastor Gary said: “There’s a lot of Christians who are tormented with [this] thought. [Christians] look around and they see people who are seemingly fine in their lives without God, and that causes [them] to question [their] faith and to wonder: ‘Maybe this whole Christianity thing and living for God is not all that it’s cracked up to be. Maybe I should be out having fun with all of my friends who don’t love God and don’t know God?’ ”
15. **Psalm 73:14** – *“All day long I have been plagued; I have been punished every morning.”*
- a. Pastor Gary said: “[Asaph’s saying], ‘I’ve got the problems. They don’t even seem to have the problems. I have the problems! Stuff isn’t always working right in my life. Why is this?’ ”

What's up with that, God? How come the wicked seem to have a carefree life and my life is plagued by problems?' "

16. **Psalm 73:15** – *"If I had said, 'I will speak thus,' I would have betrayed your children."*
- a. Pastor Gary said: "In other words, Asaph [was saying], 'If I had complained about this [and] if I had opened up my mouth about this and said, "This is not fair, this is not right, and I don't get it; God, why are you doing this? Why do allow this and not that?" 'If I had said this stuff out loud I would have caused your children [to] stumble. So I kept my mouth shut. But boy, I wanted to say something, because I don't like this.' "
  - b. Pastor Gary said: "Take note, [because] this is a wonderful point for us. When you think that God is not really doing what you want God to do, don't complain about it... Pray it; don't say it! Because you will eventually come through it like Asaph... But in the meantime, if you complain about [things] you're going to be a bad witness to other people who need to know that God is faithful... So, learn to guard your mouth and be careful when things are troubling in your life. You [should] pray it; don't say it. [Make] sure you don't set a bad example and dishonor the name of the Lord."
    - i. **Psalm 141:3** – *"Set a guard over my mouth, O Lord; keep watch over the door of my lips."*
17. **Psalm 73:16** – *"When I tried to understand all this, it was oppressive to me..."*
- a. NKJV – *"it was too painful for me..."*
  - b. ESV – *"it was a wearisome task..."*
  - c. The Hebrew word for oppressive is amal, which means, miserable, grievous, and burdensome.
  - d. Pastor Gary said: "If you try to always figure stuff out in this world, if you try to always make sense of the senseless stuff, you will torment yourself. [This will be] burdensome [to you]. There are some 'Whys?' in this life that will not be understood this side of heaven. Shame on any of us who try to do [this] on behalf of someone else. There are some things that just need to be left alone. [What we need to do] is look somebody in the eye and say, 'You know what, I don't know why this happened, but I'm so sorry, and I'll pray for you.' We need to stop giving answers for stuff that has no answers this side of heaven. Some stuff just does not make sense to us, and we need to recognize that, and we need to stop trying to make sense of everything. It is even more tormenting to try to explain the unexplainable."

### **Asaph Concludes: God Is Good**

18. **Psalm 73:1** – *"Surely God is good to Israel, to those who are pure in heart."*
- a. This verse was written in the present tense, while verse two forward was written in the past tense, until Asaph transitions to the future tense, after he gained a proper perspective about these things.
19. Asaph came to realize and understand that God is good.

20. Pastor Gary said: “Every crisis of faith, in terms of blaming God for something or becoming angry with God for something or believing that God is unfair about something... every crisis of faith is rooted in the [lie] that God is not good... This is a lie that is as old as the Garden of Eden. This was the lie that Satan perpetrated against Adam and Eve.”
21. Satan twisted what God said, which is always one of his major tactics, and he basically insinuated that God’s not good, because God wanted to keep something from them that would help them attain their full potential!
- a. **Genesis 2:16–17**– *“And the LORD God commanded the man, ‘You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die.’ ”*
  - b. **Genesis 3:1** – *“Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, ‘Did God really say, ‘You must not eat from any tree in the garden?’”*
22. Pastor Gary said: “Here’s something that [should] be a real caution... We can look at life [and our circumstances], and [then we] look at other people – here’s the danger – and we can think that other people have it better than we [do]. Translation: God’s not good to me... Stop comparing yourself to other people!”
23. **2 Corinthians 10:12** – *“We do not dare to classify or compare ourselves with some who commend themselves. When they measure themselves by themselves and compare themselves with themselves, they are not wise.”*
24. Pastor Gary said: “An inaccurate view of God will lead to an exaggerated view of people. When you don’t think God is good, you [will] end up exaggerating other people [and their circumstances]... [Asaph] came to understand that no matter what life [threw his] way, God is good all [of] the time. And he realized that [his] changing circumstances [aren’t] a reflection upon God’s unchanging nature. Life has unpredictable twists and turns. [There are] a lot of things we didn’t plan. [There are] some things we never imagined would happen [to us]. Those unpredictable, changing things are no reflection upon the unchanging nature of a good God. Don’t believe the lie of Satan.”
25. **Isaiah 41:10** – *“So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.”*
26. **Psalms 34:8** – *“Taste and see that the LORD is good; blessed is the man who takes refuge in him.”*

#### **Asaph Concludes: The Story Ends Differently For The Ungodly**

27. **Psalms 73:16–17** – *“When I tried to understand all this, It was oppressive to me **till I entered the sanctuary of God; then I understood their final destiny.**” (Emphasis added)*

28. When Asaph worshipped the Lord and engaged with the Word of God in the house of God, he was able to see things from an eternal perspective.
29. Pastor Gary said: “[Asaph came to understand that] life is more than just here and now. [He came] to realize that it doesn’t matter what other people have or don’t have; God [would] take care of him. [Asaph came to] realize that all the injustice and iniquity in the world [would] be punished in God’s time. [Asaph came to realize] that all the things that [seemed to be] unfair; that scale [would be] balanced in God’s time. [Asaph came to] realize that heaven [would] be a wonderful reunion with family and friends. [Asaph came to] realize that [he] could make it through another day, because God really does love me and care about me.”
30. Pastor Gary said: “Church is where we come together on our good days and our bad days... We are reminded about the love of God and the cross of Christ... We can be encouraged to face another day... Some of you have gone through some terrible, difficult things... It’s one day at a time, isn’t it? ... There’s something about coming into the house of God and letting our hearts be bathed in the worship [of] the Lord and hearing God’s Word that just stirs us again to remember: ‘Okay, God is good, despite my circumstances. There’s a good God on the throne, and when I come to church, and I gather with God’s people, [that will help me] to get an eternal perspective about life.”

### **Important Things To Remember When Life Seems Unfair**

31. We have limited understanding this side of heaven.
- a. **Psalm 73:22** – *“I was senseless and ignorant’ I was a brute beast before you.”*
32. God will never abandon us.
- a. **Psalm 73:23** – *“Yet I am always with you; you hold me by my right hand.”*
33. God will take us to heaven at the end of our days.
- a. **Psalm 73:24–25a** – *“You guide me with your counsel, and afterward you will take me into glory. Whom have I in heaven but you?”*
34. This world offers nothing to be desired compared to God.
- a. **Psalm 73:25b** – *“And earth has nothing I desire besides you.”*
35. God is forever our strength and everything we need.
- a. **Psalm 73:26** – *“My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.”*

### **Discussion Questions**

1. Review the introduction to the study guide with your group to provide the appropriate background.
2. Read **Psalm 73** to provide the foundation for this study.
3. Allow the people in your group to share their experiences about times when they've struggled with the "unfairness" of life.
4. What was your reaction to Pastor Gary's remarks about Asaph (who was a priest, prophet, and "worship pastor"), and his struggles with the "Why?" questions?
5. Share you your thoughts about times when you've looked at the lives of ungodly people and wondered why they seem to have it made or have it "all together"? (See #9 and #10 above)
6. Why does God withhold punishment for the ungodly who are morally corrupt and verbally blasphemous? (See #11 and #12 above)
7. Read and discuss Asaph's initial conclusions about the wicked. (See #13 through #15 above)
8. Read and discuss Pastor Gary's comments about refraining from saying something to another person that would be a bad witness and as well as bring dishonor to God. (See #16 above)
9. Read and discuss **Psalm 73:16**. (See #17 above)
10. Spend time talking about each of the points Pastor Gary made concerning Asaph's conclusion that God is good. (See #18 through #26 above)
11. What are some of the ways worshipping the Lord and listening to the Word of God being taught in a service at church helped you gain an eternal perspective?
12. Read and discuss the five points Pastor Gary made concerning things to remember when life seems to be unfair. (See #31 through #35 above)
13. Close your time in prayer as the Holy Spirit leads.

\* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New International Version (NIV 1984)

April 30, 2017

“When Life Is Good, Don’t Forget God”

Psalm 78

Pastor Gary Hamrick



A crisis usually drives us to God, and trouble in our lives tends to move us toward God. But what about when life is good? What happens when things are going well? Our natural tendency is to forget God when life is good. In fact, the good life is a threat to a godly life. But it doesn’t have to be that way. We can learn to enjoy the goodness and blessings of God and still live a godly life. In this message, Pastor Gary will help us learn from the mistakes of the Israelites.

### Historical Background

1. A maskil is a Hebrew term that means it was written to teach others.
2. God inspired this psalm, but it was written to the people of God.
3. **Psalm 119** is the longest psalm and **Psalm 78** is the second longest.
4. Loudoun County ranked first among the top ten happiest U.S. counties, according to a survey by Smartasset.com! <sup>1</sup>
5. Loudoun County ranked first among the top ten healthiest counties in the Commonwealth of Virginia! <sup>2</sup>
6. CNN Money ranked Leesburg number thirty-five of the best places to live in America! <sup>3</sup>
7. Pastor Gary said: “The good life is a threat to the godly life.”
8. **Hosea 13:6** – *“When I fed them, they were satisfied; when they were satisfied, they became proud; then they forgot me.”*
9. This psalm is a historical narrative of the nation of Israel, in which Asaph pointed out the cyclical nature of Israel’s relationship with God.
  - a. In **Psalm 78:32–39**, we see what happened: When God blessed them, they became comfortable; When they became comfortable, they forgot about God; When they forgot about God, they started sinning and rebelling; When they started sinning and rebelling, God punished and disciplined them; When God punished and disciplined them, they were sorry

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<sup>1</sup> <https://smartasset.com/mortgage/the-happiest-places-in-america-2016-edition>

<sup>2</sup> <http://loudounnow.com/2017/03/29/loudoun-ranks-healthiest-county-in-virginia-again/>

<sup>3</sup> <http://time.com/money/collection/best-places-to-live-2013/>

for their sin and rebellion and God forgave them; When God forgave them, life got better again.

10. This psalm is basically about the importance of keeping a consistent, vibrant walk with God when things are going relatively well.
11. Approximately 450 years before Asaph wrote this psalm – around 1450 BC – God drove out the people of Canaan, and God led the Israelites into the land of blessing.
12. Pastor Gary said: “Asaph [wrote] **Psalm 78** to his generation, and he [said], “... our forefathers forgot God, they enjoyed his blessing so much, [and] they got so comfortable [that] they didn’t see their need for him anymore. They abandoned him. Don’t let this happen to you!’ And Asaph [even] went [so far as] to say: ‘If you don’t get this, the very survival of the next generation hangs in the balance. If your kids don’t see you honoring God when times are good, as well as when times are bad, they will forget him just like you.’ [He warned them] about how this needs to be the disposition of every follower of God so that the next generation can know God too.”
13. **Psalm 78:4–8** – *“We will not hide them from their children; we will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the LORD, his power, and the wonders he has done. He decreed statutes for Jacob and established the law in Israel, which he commanded our forefathers to teach their children, so the next generation would know them, even the children yet to be born, and they in turn would tell their children. Then they would put their trust in God and would not forget his deeds but would keep his commands. They would not be like their forefathers – a stubborn and rebellious generation, whose hearts were not loyal to God, whose spirits were not faithful to him.”*

### **Guard Against Discontentment**

14. **Psalm 78:18–20** – *“They willfully put God to the test by demanding the food they craved. They spoke against God, saying, ‘Can God spread a table in the desert? When he struck the rock, water gushed out, and the streams flowed abundantly. But can he also give us food? Can he supply meat for his people?’ ”*
15. Pastor Gary said: “The problem with the Israelites... was that the goodness of God was just not good enough... They always wanted more, which led them to question whether God was even capable of giving them more... The faithfulness of God in times past did not translate in their minds, as it should [have], about the faithfulness of God for times future... They saw what God did but it just wasn’t good enough. Discontent breeds disbelief.”
16. **1 Timothy 6:6** – *“... godliness with contentment is great gain.”*
17. We need to remember what **Philippians 4:13** really has to say in context!

- a. **Philippians 4:12b–13** – *“I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do everything through him who gives me strength.”*

### **See The Hand Of God In All Aspects Of Life With Gratitude**

18. **Psalm 78:41–43** – *“Again and again they put God to the test; they vexed the Holy One of Israel. They did not remember his power – the day he redeemed them from the oppressor, the day he displayed his miraculous signs in Egypt, his wonders in the region of Zoan.”*
19. Asaph listed six of the ten plagues that God inflicted upon the Egyptians because they refused to let the Israelites go free.
20. **Psalm 78:52–53** – *“But he brought his people out like a flock; he led them like sheep through the desert. He guided them safely, so they were unafraid; but the sea engulfed their enemies.”*
21. The Israelites failed to remember the mighty hand of God moving on their behalf, and we should not fail to see the hand of God moving in our lives in big ways and little ways.
22. Pastor Gary said: “... God has two hands. Figuratively speaking, he has a visible hand that we call miracles, and he has an unseen hand that we call providence, where he works behind the scenes... God is always at work on your behalf, either visibly or invisibly, either miraculously or providentially. Don’t miss the hand of God. Begin to get eyes that see the many wonderful ways – in the big ways and the little ways of life – that God is blessing you and taking care of you and watching over you. Begin to get a sense for not just the big, amazing things, but in all of the everyday ways that God is taking care of you. Don’t miss the hand of God... We need to start to develop eyes that begin to recognize the goodness of God, even in the delays, even in the interruptions, even in the inconveniences, because it just might be that for your benefit... God was at work... I don’t want to miss God’s hand at work. I don’t want to attribute good things to good fortune; I want to attribute them to a good God. I want to recognize the miracles of God in the extraordinary and in the ordinary. I want to trust in the providence of God in the little ways and the big ways. And I believe that God is working on my behalf for my good, therefore, I can thank him in all things.”

### **Stay True To God By Staying True To His Word**

23. **Psalm 78:56–58** – *“But they put God to the test and rebelled against the Most High; they did not keep his statutes. Like their fathers they were disloyal and faithless, as unreliable as a faulty bow. They angered him with their high places; they aroused his jealousy with their idols.”*

24. The Israelites were supposed to tear down all the idols to pagan gods when they came to the Promised Land, but they were not faithful, and instead of being influencers of others, they were influenced by ungodly people.
25. The reason they didn't tear down the idols was because they didn't keep the statutes of God.
26. Pastor Gary said: "If you do not stay true to the Word of God, you will not stay true to the God of his Word. We must be people who understand the priority of Scripture, the commandments of God, the statutes of God, [and] the Law of God. It is important to recognize we need to stay true to God by staying true to his Word. The Bible is not something we should turn to when we are in a critical place. The Bible should be something we turn to when we are in a comfortable place... so [we] can guard [our] heart and [our] mind, so that [we] can be reminded of truth in a relative world. So that [we] can be strengthened against temptation. So that [we] can have the mind of Christ and know the love of God. So [we] can be prepared now for the storms that will come later, because [we] have filled up the reservoir of [our] soul. This is why we need to stay in God's Word."

### Discussion Questions

1. Review the introduction to the study guide with your group to provide the appropriate background.
2. Read [Psalm 78:1–8, 32–39](#) to provide the foundation for this study.
3. Read and discuss Pastor Gary's remarks concerning the reason Asaph wrote this psalm. (See #12 above)
4. What are some of the ways discontentment has affected your life?
5. How does the faithfulness of God in times past translate in your mind so that you can remember that God will be faithful in the future?
6. Read and discuss [Philippians 4:12b–13](#).
7. How would you rate yourself on a "gratitude scale"?
8. Read and discuss Pastor Gary's remarks about God's miracles and God's providence. (See #22 above)
9. Read and discuss Pastor Gary's remarks about staying true to God's Word. (See #26 above)
10. Close your time in prayer as the Holy Spirit leads.

\* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New International Version (NIV 1984)

May 7, 2017

“Journey through the Valley”

Psalm 84

Pastor Gary Hamrick



Life is a journey, and life will have its share of joys and sorrows along the way, until we all stand one day before God in heaven. In the meantime, Psalm 84 teaches us some life lessons about how to handle the dark valleys we will sometimes pass through. The psalmist pointed out three different principles, which, if practiced, will bring blessing from God. The word “*blessed*” is from a Hebrew word that means, “O, how happy!” God will turn our valleys into places where we experience his happiness if we would worship him, lean on him, and trust him.

### Historical Background

1. There are three psalms in the Bible that were written “*according to gittith.*”
  - a. Psalms 8, 81, and 84.
  - b. This term is difficult to interpret, and some Bible scholars believe it means, winepress, with the idea that this was sung while the grapes were being treaded in the winepress, but most believe it refers to the Gittite people, who lived in Gath, a city in the land of the Philistines.
    - i. This area today is located in what is known as the Gaza Strip.
  - c. The Jewish Targum indicates that a gittith was a musical instrument much like a harp.
2. The Sons of Korah were descendants of Korah, who led a rebellion against Moses.
  - a. The biblical account of Korah’s rebellion is found in [Numbers 16](#).
  - b. The descendants of Korah had become musicians and choral directors in the house of God.
3. This psalm is about a pilgrimage or journey to Jerusalem and to the Temple.
4. Every year, all Jewish men, twenty-one years of age and older, were required to go to Jerusalem for the celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles, the Feast of Passover, and the Feast of Pentecost.
5. It was unsafe to make the trip to Jerusalem because of robbers and bandits, so it would oftentimes be the case that people traveled in large groups.
  - a. Pastor Gary illustrated the concept of large groups of people journeying together to Jerusalem when he mentioned [Luke 2:39–52](#), and the account of the time when Joseph and Mary thought Jesus was traveling along with them in the crowds.
6. What is the difference between the Temple and a synagogue?
  - a. The Temple of God was a unique place that was located on Mount Moriah in Jerusalem.
  - b. A synagogue was essentially a house of assembly or what we might think of today as a community center.
  - c. Every town or village, in which there were more than ten men, would have a synagogue.

- d. People would gather at the synagogue on the Sabbath to read the Torah and pray, and some would go to the synagogue on daily basis.
  - e. The Temple was the only place that the sacrifices were made.
  - f. Priests were not on duty at synagogues.
  - g. The most important distinction of the Temple was that it was the place where God's Spirit dwelt, in the Holy of Holies.
  - h. **Psalm 80:1** – *“Hear us, O Shepherd of Israel, you who lead Joseph like a flock; you who sit enthroned between the cherubim...”*
  - i. God's presence was manifested in the interior of the Holy of Holies, between the two cherubim.
  - j. The High Priest was permitted to enter the Holy of Holies one time each year to offer the blood of the sacrifice for the sins of the people.
  - k. People who made pilgrimage would have understood how special and exciting it was to go to the Temple in Jerusalem.
  - l. **Psalm 84:1–2** – *“How lovely is your dwelling place, O LORD Almighty! My soul yearns, even faints, for the courts of the LORD: my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God.”*
7. The psalmist envied the sparrows and the birds because they had found a home at the Temple!
- a. **Psalm 84:3** – *“Even the sparrow has found a home, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may have her young – a place near your altar, O LORD Almighty, my King and my God.”*
8. The psalm writer delighted in the thought of spending just one day at the Temple!
- a. **Psalm 84:10** – *“Better is one day in your courts than a thousand elsewhere...”*
9. The writer considered it to be an honorable and worthy calling to be a doorkeeper at the Temple!
- a. **Psalm 84:10** – *“... I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of the wicked.”*
  - b. A doorkeeper stood at the threshold and looked into the Temple.
  - c. Pastor Gary spoke as though he were the psalmist expressing his desire to be a doorkeeper: “I'd rather be on the outside of God's house, wanting to get in, than [be] on the inside of anywhere else, wanting to get out!”
10. Pastor Gary said: “I want you to notice with me that it's in the middle of this chapter [that] the tone changes from all of [the] excitement [and] all of [the] exuberance; there's this kind of [a] reality check...”
- a. **Psalm 84:6–7** – *“As they pass through the Valley of Baca, they make it a place of springs; the autumn rains also cover it with pools. They go from strength to strength, till each appears before God in Zion.”*
  - b. The Valley of Baca is only mentioned in this verse, and it is commonly understood among Bible scholars that this is not a literal geographical location, because there are no biblical references or archeological evidence to demonstrate otherwise.

- c. Pastor Gary said: "... most Bible scholars believe... the psalmist is using literary, allegorical terms to communicate something bigger. It's a picture. The Valley of Baca represents something... In Hebrew, Baca (spelled Baka) [means], weeping, mourning, [or] grieving."
  - d. Sometimes on the journey to God, we will sometimes go through a valley of weeping, and there will be some hard days, dark valleys, and places of sorrow.
11. Pastor Gary said: "When I read Psalm 84, I see it as a parallel. Now, it's a literal story about a real pilgrimage among real people going to a real house of God in the real city of Jerusalem... [Often] the Bible gives a dual meaning to things, so that we can understand its application, not just its context... We are also on a journey. We are, if you will, making pilgrimage. Life is a journey, and there is an ultimate destination... [All] of us will one-day end [our] pilgrimage... standing before God, not in Zion, but in heaven... All of us will face God one day."
12. For all who have believed in Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of their sins, heaven will be their final destination!
- a. **John 5:24** – *"I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he [or she] has crossed over from death to life."*
  - b. **Romans 8:1–2** – *"Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death."*
  - c. There should be no fear of standing before God if you have put your trust *in* Christ! (Emphasis added)
13. Pastor Gary said: "In the meantime... we live out our life on earth, and there will be times when we pass through the Valley of Baca... I don't know if somebody told you that when you became a Christian you have no more problems and no more anything wrong; it's all going to be butterflies and rainbows! Let me tell you something, that's the gospel of the Candy Man not the gospel of Jesus Christ! When you become a Christian... you will know in whom you have hoped... [You] will know who will rescue [you], and be [your] strength and be [your] help... [There] will be Valleys of Baca along the way, and we need to prepare ourselves for this reality. The road of life is not always paved with ease and comfort. There will be times of weeping. There will be times of mourning. There will be times of grief... I don't care how much you have or how much you think you have your act together; the Valley of Baca is something all of us will have to pass through on [the] journey toward the destination of being with the Lord."
14. **Isaiah 53:3** – *"[Jesus] was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering."*
15. **John 16:33** – *"... In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."*

**We Will Not Be In The Valley Forever; We Will Get Through It**

16. **Psalm 84:5–6** – *“Blessed are those whose strength is in you, who have set their hearts on pilgrimage. As they **pass through** the Valley of Baca, they make it a place of springs [refreshing]...”* (Emphasis added)

### **We Bear Some Responsibility In Making Something Better Of Our Valley**

17. **Psalm 84:6** – *“... **they make it a place of springs [refreshing]...**”* (Emphasis added)
18. Pastor Gary said: “I want you to hear me because I want to say this with all gentleness, and I want to be careful how I say this. I don’t want anybody to ever think that I’m suggesting – and if anybody ever suggests this to you, shame on [him or her] – that you should just get over it! You know, when you are in a bad place the worst thing is when somebody says, ‘You just need to get over it...’ That’s not what I’m insinuating at all, but when I look at this verse and I see how it says *‘they pass through the Valley of Baca’* and *‘they make it a place of [refreshing]*, [the question is,] who is they? It’s the ones in the valley... We bear some responsibility in making something better of our valley. I say that with all gentleness and with respect... If we are not careful, we could grow accustomed to being in a bad place. It can almost seem normal to us. We can grow comfortable in our grief or our bitterness or our unforgiveness or our fear or our sorrow or whatever [the Baca valley represents]. It becomes so familiar to us that we don’t know anything else, because we’ve stayed there so long.”
19. The psalm writer mentioned three things we can do to make something better of our valley experience(s).
- a. The Hebrew word esher, is *“blessed”* in our English Bible, and it literally means, “O how happy!”
  - b. Worship the Lord
    - i. **Psalm 84:4** – *“Blessed are those who dwell in your house; they are ever praising you.”*
    - ii. It’s not easy, but we can worship our way out of the valley.
    - iii. Paul and Silas praised the Lord in jail!
      1. **Acts 16:25** – *“About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God...”*
    - iv. King Jehoshaphat went out to engage in battle with the Ammonites and the Moabites, and he sent the “worship team” out in front of the army to worship God!
      1. **2 Chronicles 20:20–21** – *“Early in the morning they left for the Desert of Tekoa. As they set out, Jehoshaphat stood and said, ‘Listen to me, Judah and people of Jerusalem! Have faith in the LORD your God and you will be upheld; have faith in his prophets and you will be successful.’ After consulting the people, Jehoshaphat appointed men to sing to the LORD and to praise him for the splendor of his holiness as they went out at the head of the army, saying: ‘Give thanks to the LORD, for his love endures forever.’”*
    - v. When David grieved the death of his child, he made a conscious decision to worship the Lord.

1. **2 Samuel 12:20** – *“Then David got up from the ground. After he had washed, put on lotions and changed his clothes, he went into the house of the LORD and worshiped. Then he went to his own house, and at his request they served him food, and he ate.”*
  2. Pastor Gary said: *“David knew that through worship, God [would] comfort [his] grief... You can worship your way out of the valley, because God [will show] up in a wonderful way when we lift our praise to heaven.”*
- c. Lean on the Lord
- i. **Psalm 84:5** – *“Blessed are those whose strength is in you...”*
  - ii. We may not have the strength needed to endure, so we must learn to lean on the Lord.
  - iii. **2 Corinthians 12:9–10** – *“But [God] said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.’ Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.”*
- d. Trust in the Lord
- i. **Psalm 84:12** – *“O LORD Almighty, blessed is the man who trusts in you.”*
  - ii. **Psalm 91:2** – *“I will say of the LORD, ‘He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.”*

### **God Will Help Us In Our Valley**

20. **Psalm 84:6c** – *“... the autumn rains also cover it with pools.”*
21. God is the one who brings the *“autumn rains”* of refreshing and he will be the one who helps us in our valley experiences.
22. **Psalm 46:1** – *“God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.”*
23. **Psalm 84:11** – *“For the Lord God is a sun and shield; the Lord bestows favor and honor; no good thing does he withhold from those whose walk is blameless.”*

### **Discussion Questions**

1. Review the introduction to the study guide with your group to provide the appropriate background.
2. Read **Psalm 84** to provide the foundation for this study.
3. Share experiences about times when you’ve longed to go to and be in the house of the Lord.

4. Spend time talking about Pastor Gary's illustration concerning the note Elvis Presley wrote in his room at the Las Vegas Hilton, in December 1976, when he was in the Valley of Baca. <sup>1</sup>
5. Allow the people in your group to tell their Valley of Baca experiences. (See #10 - #15 above)
6. How has the Lord been a help and a blessing to you as he helped you through the valley? (See #16 above)
7. Spend time talking about Pastor Gary's comments about staying in the Valley of Baca. (See #18 above)
8. What are some of the ways you have made your valley experience a time of refreshing?
9. How has worshiping the Lord helped you make something better of your valley experience? (See #19b above)
10. What are some specific examples of the ways you've leaned on the Lord to help you in your valley experience(s)? (See #19c above)
11. What are some specific examples of the ways you've trusted in the Lord? (See #19d above)
12. Close your time in prayer as the Holy Spirit leads.

\* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New International Version (NIV 1984)

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<sup>1</sup> <https://lindahoodsigmontruth.com/wayne-newtons-song-the-letter-was-inspired-by-a-note-written-by-elvis-elvis-handwritten-notes-a/>

May 14, 2017

“Angels on Assignment”

Psalm 91

Pastor Gary Hamrick



In Psalm 91, we read about how God dispatches angels on our behalf to protect and guard us from harm. Much has been written and discussed about angels over the centuries. Many people today, including people who would not profess to be a Christian, have a fascination with angels. We even have cakes and baseball teams named after them! But exactly who are angels? What are their duties? Angels are mentioned more than three hundred times in the Bible, and they present sometimes as warriors and sometimes as ordinary people. In this message Pastor Gary will help us learn more about angels regarding who they are and what God has assigned them to do.

### Historical Background

1. “This psalm is one of the greatest possessions of the saints.” – G. Campbell Morgan <sup>1</sup>
2. “In the whole collection there is not a more cheering psalm...” – Charles Haddon Spurgeon <sup>2</sup>
3. Not much is known about Psalm 91 regarding the author, but it’s clear that this psalm is about God’s protection, comfort, and care.
  - a. This psalm is included among the fifty psalms that are referred to as “the orphan psalms,” because there is no background, subtitle, or author’s name listed.
4. The writer portrays God like a mother bird that protects its young.
  - a. **Psalm 91:4** – *“He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart.”*
5. Jesus, when he lamented over Jerusalem, spoke of himself in the same way.
  - a. **Matthew 23:37** – *“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing.”*
6. Pastor Gary said: “The Bible presents God as masculine... He is God the Father. But, there is this maternal, nurturing aspect to the character of God, too. Where do you think that mom’s get that? They get it from God. That is God-given... I want you to understand in the picture of how God presents in some passages, like what I’ve just read... like a mother hen [loves and protects] her

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<sup>1</sup> *Exposition of the Whole Bible* by G. Campbell Morgan – [https://books.google.com/books?id=v3RMAwAAQBAJ&pg=PA255&lpg=PA255&dq=g.+campbell+morgan+-+psalm+91+one+of+the+greatest+possessions+of+the+saints&source=bl&ots=jpNzqFf4Jb&sig=ormoUfJhBCWaqdcQ7hNjO5PmawM&hl=en&a=X&ved=0ahUKewjK1\\_t9fbTAhXJ64MKHdWLA5cQ6AEIMTAC#v=onepage&q=g.%20campbell%20morgan%20-%20psalm%2091%20one%20of%20the%20greatest%20possessions%20of%20the%20saints&f=false](https://books.google.com/books?id=v3RMAwAAQBAJ&pg=PA255&lpg=PA255&dq=g.+campbell+morgan+-+psalm+91+one+of+the+greatest+possessions+of+the+saints&source=bl&ots=jpNzqFf4Jb&sig=ormoUfJhBCWaqdcQ7hNjO5PmawM&hl=en&a=X&ved=0ahUKewjK1_t9fbTAhXJ64MKHdWLA5cQ6AEIMTAC#v=onepage&q=g.%20campbell%20morgan%20-%20psalm%2091%20one%20of%20the%20greatest%20possessions%20of%20the%20saints&f=false)

<sup>2</sup> *The Treasury of David* by Charles Haddon Spurgeon – <http://www.spurgeon.org/treasury/ps091.php>

little chicks... Moms... don't undervalue your maternal, caring nature in loving and encouraging and protecting your children, because when you do that, you are actually representing Christ to them."

7. We learn from this psalm that God dispatches angels to protect us!
  - a. **Psalm 91:11–12** – *"For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways; they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone."*

### **The Description Of Angels**

8. Angels are seen as being either messengers or warriors.
9. Angels are seen as being either those who worship God or those who are in rebellion against God.
10. Angels sometimes appear in splendor and sometimes they appear to people in the form of ordinary human beings.
11. Pastor Gary said: "Our idea and our concept of angels is vast, and unfortunately, there is a lot of misinformation about angels. So much so, that Mormonism and Islam are founded on erroneous understandings of angels. For example, when it comes to Mormonism, in 1823, when Joseph Smith was 17 years of age, he said that an angel appeared to him. An angel by the name of Moroni. And, by the way, [Moroni] is not mentioned in the Bible... [He said] Moroni appeared to him and told him that the ancient Hebrews occupied America at one time, and that they actually recorded on golden tablets sacred texts in ancient Egyptian language, and that the [tablets] were hidden in the hills of New York... So, based on this vision or this appearance of an angel, so says Joseph Smith, four years later, he [said that he found] golden tablets in the hills of Palmyra, New York. No one has ever seen the golden tablets outside of Joseph Smith... And out of that he [said] that he got a special stone, called a seer stone, that had magical powers that helped him as he put it over the Egyptian language... helped him to translate it into English... Out of that came the Book of Mormon. And it was all inspired because he said that he had an encounter with this angel named Moroni... Islam [is] very similar. Mohammed, when he was four years of age – roughly AD 610 – [was] spending time in a cave in Hira, which is [in] Saudi Arabia... [He was told] the angel Gabriel appeared to him. The Koran has one author [and that is] Mohammed. But Mohammed was illiterate, he could not read or write. [Mohammed said] he received a vision, and he then dictated the vision to scribes who wrote it in perfect Arabic... But at first, Mohammed said that the visions he received were hallucinations... Then he said that the visions he received were actually the inspiration of jinn. Jinn [is an] Arabic [name] for demons. Other people said to him... it was the angel Gabriel who appeared to you... The angel Gabriel is mentioned in the Bible, but why is it that I say that Mormonism and Islam [are] founded on the erroneous view of angels? [It's] because Paul makes it clear in the Bible, in **Galatians 1:8**: *'But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned!'* "
12. The word "angel" in Greek is angelos, which means, "messenger."

13. Angels are “ministering spirits.”
- Hebrews 1:14** – “Are not all ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation?”
14. Angels are not glorified human beings, and they neither marry nor reproduce like humans.
- Matthew 22:30** – “At the resurrection people will neither marry nor be given in marriage; they will be like the angels in heaven.”
  - We do not start out as angels in heaven and then come to earth to be born, and when we die, we don’t go to heaven and become an angel.
  - Human beings are distinct from angelic beings.
15. Angels are immortal but not eternal since God created them.
- Psalms 148:2, 5** – “Praise him all his angels, praise him, all his heavenly hosts... Let them praise the name of the LORD, for he commanded and they were created.”
16. We know that God created angels before he created the heavens and the earth, because they were present with singing and rejoicing when he spoke the world into existence.
- Job 38:4–7** – “Where were you when I laid the earth’s foundation? Tell me, if you understand. Who marked off its dimensions? Surely you know! Who stretched a measuring line across it? On what were its footings set, or who laid its cornerstone – while the morning stars sang together and all the angels shouted for joy?”
17. Angels who once rebelled against God are known as fallen angels or demons.
- Jude 6** – “And the angels who did not keep their positions of authority but abandoned their own home – these he has kept in darkness, bound with everlasting chains for judgment on the great Day.”
  - 2 Peter 2:4** – “For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but sent them to hell, putting them into gloomy dungeons to be held for judgment...”
18. All angels in the Bible are presented as being masculine.
19. The Bible doesn’t tell us how many angels exist, but it’s clear that angels are very numerous:
- Hebrews 12:22** – “But you have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly...”
  - Matthew 26:53** – “Do you think I cannot call on my Father, and he will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions [12 x 6,000 = 72,000] of angels?”
  - Daniel 7:10b** – “Thousands upon thousands attended him; ten thousand times ten thousand [100 million] stood before him.”
20. Only three angels are named in the Bible:
- Gabriel is the messenger angel.
  - Michael is the archangel.

c. Lucifer is the fallen angel otherwise known as Satan.

21. There are different kinds of angels according to their differing roles, ranks, and duties:

- a. Seraphim <sup>3</sup>
- b. Cherubim are seen in the Bible as angels that guard sacred things. <sup>4</sup>
- c. Michael is the only archangel mentioned in the Bible. <sup>5</sup>

22. Angels are not to be worshiped.

- a. **Revelation 22:8–9** – *“I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. And when I had heard and seen them, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who had been showing them to me. But he said to me, ‘Do not do it! I am a fellow servant with you and with your brothers the prophets and of all who keep the words of this book. Worship God!’ ”*

23. In **Genesis 18**, we read an account of angels who came in human appearance.

24. Today, *“some people have entertained angels without knowing it.”*

- a. **Hebrews 13:2** – *“Do not forget to entertain strangers, for in so doing some people have entertained angels without knowing it.”*

### The Duties Of Angels

25. Worship God.

- a. **Isaiah 6:1–3** – *“In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of his robe filled the temple. Above him were seraphs, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. And they were calling to one another: ‘Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory.’ ”*

26. Execute God’s Judgment.

- a. **2 Kings 19**
- b. **2 Samuel 24:1–17**
- c. **Exodus 12:1–30**

27. Deliver Messages To People.

- a. **Luke 1:5–25**
- b. **Luke 1:26–38**

28. Strengthen And Encourage People.

- a. **Matthew 4:1–11**
- b. **Acts 5:17–42**

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<sup>3</sup> [https://www.blueletterbible.org/faq/don\\_stewart/don\\_stewart\\_31.cfm](https://www.blueletterbible.org/faq/don_stewart/don_stewart_31.cfm)

<sup>4</sup> [https://www.blueletterbible.org/faq/don\\_stewart/don\\_stewart\\_30.cfm](https://www.blueletterbible.org/faq/don_stewart/don_stewart_30.cfm)

<sup>5</sup> [https://www.blueletterbible.org/faq/don\\_stewart/don\\_stewart\\_24.cfm](https://www.blueletterbible.org/faq/don_stewart/don_stewart_24.cfm)

c. **Acts 27:13–26**

29. Care For People At Time Of Death.

- a. **Luke 16:22** – *“The time came when the beggar died and the angels carried him to Abraham’s side...”*
- b. Pastor Gary said: “I believe you can extrapolate... [that] when a Believer dies, God is true to his word that he will never leave us nor forsake us; even dispatching angels to escort us from this life to the presence of God... So that even in death we are not alone.”

30. Protect And Guard People.

- a. **Psalm 91:11–12** – *“For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways; they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.”*
- b. We read in **Luke 4:9–12**, that Satan used Scripture as part of his temptation of Christ.
- c. Angels rescued Daniel when he was thrust into the lions’ den.
  - i. **Daniel 6:22**: *“My God sent his angel, and he shut the mouths of the lions. They have not hurt me...”*
- d. The Bible tells us that we have guardian angels.
  - i. **Matthew 18:10b** – *“For I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father in heaven.”*
- e. Pastor Gary shared a remarkable example of the way angels protected and saved the lives of missionaries, Rev. John G. and Mrs. Paton, in the New Hebrides Islands, when they were in fear for their lives. <sup>6</sup>
- f. **Psalm 91:14–16** – *“ ‘Because he loves me,’ says the LORD, ‘I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name. He will call upon me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honor him. With long life will I satisfy him and show him my salvation.’ ”*

### Discussion Questions

1. Review the introduction to the study guide with your group to provide the appropriate background.
2. Read **Psalm 91** to provide the foundation for this study.
3. What are some of the indicators in this psalm that would help you see the reason why many refer to Psalm 91 as “The Soldier’s Psalm”?
4. Spend time talking about the remarks Pastor Gary made concerning Mormonism and Islam. (See #11 above)
5. Provide an overview of Pastor Gary’s comments about angels and allow the people in your group to talk about their understanding of angels. (See #6 - #10 and #12 - #23 above)

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<sup>6</sup> *Angels: God’s Secret Agents* by Billy Graham. <http://walkwithgodtoday.com/2011/06/27/angels-are-they-for-real/>

6. Read and discuss the six duties of angels in Pastor Gary's outline.
7. Allow the people in your group to share their experiences about times when they witnessed the ministry of angels at the time of death. (See #29 above)
8. Allow the people in your group to share their experiences about times when they believe they were guarded/protected by angels. (See #30 above)
9. Close your time in prayer as the Holy Spirit leads.

\* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New International Version (NIV 1984)

June 4, 2017

“A Blameless Life”

Psalm 101

Pastor Gary Hamrick



In this psalm David expressed his desire to lead a blameless life before God. But who can really lead a blameless life since no one is perfect? The Hebrew word can be translated as “sincere, complete, whole, with integrity.” What this means is that even though we have faults, we too can lead a blameless life before God as long as we are intentional about living a sincere, wholehearted life of integrity before God. Noah had his faults, as did Abraham, but both of these men were called “*blameless*” in the Bible. Pastor Gary’s message today will help us understand what it means to live a blameless life.

### **A Blameless Life – A Blameless Heart – A Blameless Walk**

1. David didn’t write about having a desire to live a successful life or a happy life or good life or a long life; his desire was to live a blameless life.
2. **Psalm 101:2a** – *“I will be careful to lead a blameless life.”*
3. **Psalm 101:2b** – *“I will walk in my house with blameless heart.”*
4. **Psalm 101:6** – *“My eyes will be on the faithful in the land, that they may dwell with me; he whose walk is blameless will minister to me.”*
5. The 1984 NIV uses the word “*blameless*,” but the NKJV and KJV use the word “*perfect*,” which really sets the bar high!
  - a. **Psalm 101:2a** – *“I will behave wisely in a perfect way.”* NKJV
  - b. **Psalm 101:2** – *“I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way... I will walk within my house with a perfect heart.”* KJV
6. **Romans 3:10a** – *“As it is written: ‘There is no one righteous, not even one...’ ”*
7. The Hebrew word for blameless is *tamiym*, which means, sincere, upright, whole, complete, having integrity.
8. *Tamiym* is not a word that’s used to describe those who have never made a mistake or those who have never sinned.
9. Pastor Gary referred to Noah and Abraham as two men who led a blameless life.
  - a. **Genesis 6:9b** – *“Noah was a righteous man, blameless among the people of his time, and he walked with God.”*

- b. **Genesis 17:1** – *“When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to him and said, ‘I am God Almighty; walk before me and be blameless.’ ”*
10. This theme is also found in the New Testament, and the Greek word is *anenkletos*, which means to be without accusation.
- a. **Ephesians 1:4a** – *“For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight.”*
  - b. **2 Peter 3:14** – *“So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this [the Second Coming of Christ], make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him.”*
  - c. **Titus 1:6–7** – *“An elder must be blameless, the husband of but one wife, a man whose children believe and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient. Since an overseer is entrusted with God’s work, he must be blameless...”*

### **Threats To Living A Blameless Life – What We Look At**

11. **Psalm 101:2b–3a** – *“I will walk in my house with blameless heart. I will set before my eyes no vile thing.”*
12. Bible scholars aren’t sure whether David wrote this psalm before or after his adulterous affair with Bathsheba, so he either failed to follow his own counsel or he wrote so that others would learn from his sinful actions.
13. Today, we are inundated with sexual images and pornography, which means we must be intentional in this area.
- a. Pastor Gary said: “Here is a staggering statistic: 90 percent of boys and 60 percent of girls have been exposed to pornography before the age of eighteen. And the [age] is getting younger and younger for first-time exposure to pornography. It is currently the age of eleven in our country. And most kids get exposed to pornography because they stumble upon it in an innocent Internet search. So, I ask you, if David (1,000 BC) says, ‘I need to be careful what I look at,’ how much more do we need to heed the advice of this verse? We are constantly exposed to it. It bombards us. It’s everywhere. And it’s not just sexually explicit things that we need to be careful about looking at; it’s things that are violent, and things that are disgraceful, things that are depressing or perverse or sacrilegious or things that mock Christianity and are ungodly.”

### **Threats To Living A Blameless Life – How We Respond To Our Culture**

14. **Psalm 101:3b–5** – *“The deeds of faithless men I hate; they will not cling to me. Men of perverse heart shall be far from me; I will have nothing to do with evil. Whoever slanders his neighbor in secret, him will I put to silence; whoever has haughty eyes and a proud heart, him will I not endure.”*

15. David's culture was not unlike ours, and he realized that it wasn't going to be possible to avoid contact with ungodly people.
16. David's desire was to make sure that he did not become like the ungodly.
17. David made it clear in this psalm that we would "call out" those who slandered others and he purposed in his heart to not allow the influence of the ungodly to change him.
18. Pastor Gary said: "Gentlemen! Be your own man before God! Ladies! Be your own woman before God! [The] danger is that the culture begins to change us rather than we [change] and [influence] our culture.
19. **Romans 12:2a** – *"Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind."*
  - a. *"Don't let the world around you squeeze you into its own mould, but let God re-mould your minds..."* – JB Phillips translation
20. The hope for our culture is the church, so Christians must be engaged with the culture.

#### **Threats To Living A Blameless Life – Who We Allow In Our "Inner Circle"**

21. **Psalm 101:6–7** – *"My eyes will be on the faithful in the land, that they may dwell with me; he whose walk is blameless will minister to me. No one who practices deceit will dwell in my house; no one who speaks falsely will stand in my presence."*
22. Your inner circle would include people who are your family members, friends, and advisors, but they would be few in number.
23. Pastor Gary said: "[I don't want anyone] to leave here [thinking] that I'm talking about being exclusivist Christians [who] never [associate] with non-Christians... The Bible teaches [us] to engage with the culture, [and] be salt and light... So, dialogue with [people], work with [people], socialize with [people], share Christ with [people], but do not let people who are ungodly have a seat at the table of your inner circle. Everyone that you choose to surround yourself with will impact your life; either positively or negatively. Your inner circle will be people that you influence [and people] who influence you. Be very, very wise about who you allow in that inner circle."
24. **1 Corinthians 15:33** – *"Do not be misled: 'Bad company corrupts good character.' "*
25. **Proverbs 11:20** – *"The LORD detests men of perverse heart but he delights in those whose ways are blameless."*
26. **Proverbs 20:7** – *"The righteous man leads a blameless life; blessed are his children after him."*

27. **Proverbs 28:18** – *“He whose walk is blameless is kept safe but he whose ways are perverse will suddenly fall.”*

28. **1 Thessalonians 3:13** – *“May he strengthen your hearts so that you will be blameless and holy in the presence of our God and Father when our Lord Jesus comes will all his holy ones.”*

### Discussion Questions

1. Review the introduction to the study guide with your group to provide the appropriate background.
2. Read **Psalm 101** to provide the foundation for this study.
3. Spend time talking about the Hebrew (tamiym) and Greek (anenkletos) words and their meaning. (See #7 - #10 above)
4. How would you describe the ways the Holy Spirit has helped you live a blameless life, with a blameless heart and a blameless walk?
5. Read and discuss Pastor Gary’s comments about pornography and the things we are exposed to that are threats to living a blameless life. (See #13 above)
6. What are some of the ways that the Lord is using you to respond to the culture in a Christ-like way?
7. What are some of the ways you are influenced by the culture?
8. Read and discuss Pastor Gary’s comments about no longer being conformed to *“the pattern of this world.”* (See #18 and #19 above)
9. Spend time talking about Pastor Gary’s comments about who we allow in our inner circle. (See #23 above)
10. Read and discuss the Scriptures (See #24 - #28 above)
11. Close your time in prayer as the Holy Spirit leads.

\* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New International Version (NIV 1984)

June 11, 2017

“God’s Faithfulness, Our Forgetfulness”

Psalm 106

Pastor Gary Hamrick



We can all be forgetful at times, but the most serious type of forgetfulness is when we forget God – how good he is and how mighty are his deeds. In Psalm 106 we see that the nation of Israel was guilty of forgetfulness. They were discontent, dissatisfied, and disobedient toward God, which are all forms of forgetfulness, but remarkably, God was merciful, loving, and compassionate toward them. He continued to pursue them, love them, care for them, and forgive them. We need this reminder in our own lives for times that we, like the Israelites, fail God.

### **The Israelites Were Discontent, Dissatisfied, And Disobedient**

1. **Psalm 106:7a** – “... they gave no thought to God’s miracles...”
2. **Psalm 106:7b** – “... they did not remember God’s many kindnesses...”
3. **Psalm 106:13** – “... they soon forgot what God had done...”
4. **Psalm 106:21** – “... they forgot the God who saved them...”
5. The psalm writer reviewed a lot of the history of the nation of Israel, and a lot of Psalm 106 is about their forty years of wilderness wandering.
  - a. The forty-year period in the wilderness started after the Israelites left Egypt and ended when the descendants of that generation entered the Promised Land.
6. The psalmist stated that the Israelites were guilty of sin because they were discontent, dissatisfied, and disobedient; all of which are forms of forgetfulness.
7. Pastor Gary said: “When you are discontent with your situation, you forget God. When you are dissatisfied with what you have or where you are, [you] forget God. When you are disobedient [toward God], [you forget] God.”
8. **Psalm 106:13–15** – “*But they soon forgot what he had done and did not wait for his counsel. In the desert they gave in to their craving; in the wasteland they put God to the test. So he gave them what they asked for, but sent a wasting disease upon them.*”
  - a. There were approximately two million men, women, and children that left Egypt, which means there was a big-time need for food and water.
  - b. God miraculously provided manna every morning, but they weren’t content with God’s provision!

9. **Psalm 106:19–22** – *“At Horeb they made a calf and worshiped an idol cast from metal. They exchanged their Glory for an image of a bull, which eats grass. They forgot the God who saved them, who had done great things in Egypt, miracles in the land of Ham and awesome deeds by the Red Sea.”*
- Aaron used a tool to fashion the calf, which he created based on his understanding of Apis, the Egyptian calf-god!
  - Pastor Gary said: “This is indicative of the human heart. Every human being has an innate need to worship. The question becomes who or what will we worship? All of us have an innate need to pay worth to something greater than ourselves. Now, hopefully, when [we] understand who God is and when [we] accept Christ as [our] Savior, then [we will] ascribe worth to God... The people here [were] so desperate to worship but [they] were unfamiliar with who God [was] at this point, and how to worship him, [and they ended] up stooping to a level of idolatry [that] they worshiped a golden calf... They quickly forgot the God who parted the Red Sea!”
10. **Psalm 106:24–25** – *“Then they despised the pleasant land [the Promised Land]; they did not believe his promise. They grumbled in their tents and did not obey the LORD.”*
- This is a reference to the report given by ten of the twelve spies Moses sent to explore the land, which is found in **Numbers 13**.
  - Only Joshua and Caleb were willing to believe God and trust him to help them conquer the giants in the land.
  - The people believed the bad report of the ten spies because they were dissatisfied and unwilling to believe God.
11. **Psalm 106:32–33** – *“By the waters of Meribah they angered the LORD, and trouble came to Moses because of them; for they rebelled against the Spirit of God, and rash words came from Moses’ lips.”*
- This is a reference to the miraculous work of God, who provided water from rocks, which is found in **Numbers 20**.
12. **Psalm 106:34–37** – *“They did not destroy the peoples as the LORD had commanded them, but they mingled with the nations and adopted their customs. They worshiped their idols, which became a snare to them. They sacrificed their sons and daughters to demons.”*
- This is primarily a reference to the time of King Solomon, when the nation of Israel, instead of displacing the pagans, blended in with them.
  - One of the customs of the pagans was to sacrifice their children to false gods.
  - Proverbs 6:16** – *“There are six things the LORD hates, seven that are detestable to him: ... hands that shed innocent blood...”*
13. This psalm lists a number of the crimes and offenses of the Israelites, which would be enough to make anyone say, “That’s it, I’ve had it with you!”

14. **Psalm 106:44–48** – *“But he took note of their distress when he heard their cry; for their sake he remembered his covenant and out of his great love he relented. He caused them to be pitied by all who held them captive. Save us, O LORD our God, and gather us from the nations, that we may give thanks to your holy name and glory in your praise. Praise be to the LORD, the God of Israel, from everlasting to everlasting. Let all the people say, ‘Amen!’ Praise the LORD.”*
  
15. Pastor Gary said: “We need to heed this because we can be just as guilty ourselves. It’s easy to forget God, [and] to forget how good he is, and his mighty deeds on our behalf... So, we become discontent, we become dissatisfied, and we become disobedient, and we do things in our lives too that show we forget God. We sin against him. We do terrible things... We are guilty of shedding innocent blood [reference to abortion] too... We can have a rap list a mile long, like Israel did, and time and time again God will forgive us, and God will love us, and God [will] care about us. That’s the God we serve.”
  
16. **Psalm 103:2–5** – *“Praise the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits – who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion, who satisfies your desires with good things...”*

### Discussion Questions

1. Review the introduction to the study guide with your group to provide the appropriate background.
2. Read **Psalm 106:1–13** to provide the foundation for this study.
3. Read and discuss each of the specific instances Pastor Gary shared that demonstrate how the Israelites expressed their discontentment and dissatisfaction with God. (See #8 - #12 above)
4. Read and discuss **Psalm 103:2–5**.
5. Read and discuss Pastor Gary’s remarks about how much we need to learn from the example of the Israelites and how thankful we should be for the Lord’s mercy and forgiveness. (See #15 above)
6. Close your time in prayer as the Holy Spirit leads and ask one of the people in your group to be prepared to read and pray **Psalm 103:2–5**.

\* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New International Version (NIV 1984)

June 18, 2017

“The Goodness and Love of God”

Psalm 107

Pastor Gary Hamrick



A big objection to Christianity that some people have concerns the goodness and love of God. Their skepticism is posed in a question like this: “How could a good and loving God allow such heartache and suffering in the world?” And yet, the psalmist tells us in Psalm 107 that *“the Lord is good; his love endures forever.”* How do we reconcile these things? In today’s message, Pastor Gary will help us learn about the goodness and love of God, and the wonderful ways he rescues those who cry out to him!

### Historical Background

1. **Psalm 101:1** – *“Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his love endures forever.”*
2. The Hebrew word *hesed*, means, love, mercy, or kindness.
3. Pastor Gary said: “The love of the Lord is eternal, because it *“endures forever.”* It is not restricted by space or time. It is not reserved for a select few people. God’s love is for all and for all time. It is eternal and infinite, and you cannot separate the goodness of God from the love of God, which is why these two go hand-in-hand. God is good because he’s loving; God is loving because he is good. And we need to understand and appreciate the love of God, which in some ways is really impossible in our human, finite minds, to grasp.”
4. **Ephesians 3:17–19** – *“And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge – that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.”*
5. The Church should be actively expressing and declaring the goodness and love of God in the world today.
  - a. **Psalm 107:2** – *“Let the redeemed of the LORD [declare the goodness and love of God].”*
6. There are many who have a major objection, and therefore, a major stumbling block, and they will question the goodness and love of God, particularly when they ask: “If God is so good and loving, how could he allow \_\_\_\_\_ (insert cancer, murder, etc., etc.)?”
7. Pastor Gary, speaking of people who don’t know Christ as their Savior, said: “Their perception of God is skewed because of the evil world in which we live. [Then] they disparage the character of God, because they look around their world and they see painful things, and they see death, and they see disease... [Then] they connect [these things] with a loving God and it’s a disconnect... [Don’t] let a good and loving God be disparaged because we live in a very bad and unloving world.

In fact, that's the very reason he sent Jesus to die on the cross for us, to rescue us from this wicked, fallen world... Whatever goes on in the world doesn't change the character of God. *'Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good and his love endures forever!'* "

8. The psalm writer described four groups of people who all experienced the goodness and love of God: the wanderers, the prisoners, the foolish, and the weary.
9. There are four things that are common to each group.
  - a. They all suffered from some kind of distress.
  - b. They all cried out to God in their distress.
  - c. They were all delivered by God from their distress.
  - d. They all gave thanks to God.

### **The Wanderers – Psalm 107:4–9**

10. Pastor Gary said: "These are people who seem to lack a sense of purpose or value. It's a picture of hopelessness, and aimlessness, [and] desperate conditions. Now, all of us can go through desert experiences from time to time. There's been a wasteland or two that you [have or] will encounter in the course of your lifetime. [There] are some people who just feel like they are stuck there, like they are living in a desert wasteland. When life seems so unfruitful or unfair... [These people] were going through the motions without the emotion. They longed for something more. They longed to be satisfied... In fact, [in] the Hebrew [language of the Old Testament], it says they experienced dryness of soul..."
11. Those who were experiencing dryness of soul cried out to God, and *"he delivered them from their distress."*
12. Pastor Gary said: "God is faithful to deliver us from our distress. I can't tell you how he will do that. I can't tell you when he will do that in your life. All I can tell you is that he will do that. And he will do that either by rescuing you from it or giving you the grace to go through it... Sometimes God is gracious enough to take whatever that trouble is [away], and other times he says, 'I'm going to be with you, and give you the strength and the grace that you need to get through it.' Whichever way he ends up helping us through our troubles, that's up to [the Lord]."
  - a. **2 Corinthians 12:8–9** – *"Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it [a reference to an unknown 'thorn in the flesh'] away from me. But he said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.' "*

### **The Prisoners – Psalm 107:10–16**

13. There are several words in these verses that help to paint a picture of these people, including: *"darkness, deepest gloom, prisoners, suffering,"* and *"no one to help."*

14. Pastor Gary said: “Some of you have felt those kinds of things. You have felt like you were in a dark place, a very gloomy place, [and there’s] no one who can help. Now, I don’t think he’s [being literal regarding] prisoners, like people who are stuck in a prison cell. Although God [can meet us] there too. I think [the psalmist was] speaking more figuratively here, because all of us are prisoners [in] some respect... We were all prisoners of our sin. Or maybe at times we are prisoners of suffering... The dark places that can sometimes overshadow our lives. [These times] can [even be] debilitating for some people.”
15. **Luke 4:17–19** – *“The scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to [Jesus]. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written: ‘The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed...’ ”*
16. Pastor Gary said: “God is the great bondage breaker, and whatever has taken you captive can be broken through the power and grace of our Lord Jesus Christ!”

#### **The Foolish – Psalm 107:17–22**

17. These people were regarded as being fools because of *“their rebellious ways”* and *“their iniquities.”*
18. These people had no one to blame for their troubles but themselves!
19. **Proverbs 13:15** – *“... the way of transgressors is hard.”* KJV
20. Even though these people sinned, which created the mess they were in, God heard their cry and he rescued them!
21. Pastor Gary said: “[The Lord] doesn’t just rescue the righteous. He rescues us when in our sinfulness, we cry out to him. When we acknowledge, ‘Lord, I’ve made a mess of my life; I’ve been a fool... rescue me!’ [And] God shows up!”

#### **The Weary – Psalm 107:23–32**

22. These people had an awareness of God, but they didn’t really know God.
23. These people were staggering from weariness, which came upon them because of the storms of life.
24. Like the people in the previous groups, they too were delivered by God!

## Discussion Questions

1. Review the introduction to the study guide with your group to provide the appropriate background.
2. Read [Psalm 107:1–6, 10–13, 17–19, 23–28, 43](#) to provide the foundation for this study.
3. What are some of the objections people have concerning Christianity?
4. Read and discuss Pastor Gary's comments about the love of God. (See #3, #6, and #7 above)
5. Read and discuss [Ephesians 3:17–19](#).
6. How would you describe your wandering experiences?
7. Read and discuss Pastor Gary's comments about wanderers. (See #10 and #12 above)
8. How would you describe your experiences of being a prisoner?
9. Read and discuss Pastor Gary's comments about being a prisoner. (See #14 and #16 above)
10. Read and discuss [Luke 4:17–19](#) and allow the people in your group to share their experience of being released and set free from their prison of sin or the prison of suffering.
11. How did your *"rebellious ways"* and your *"iniquities"* create a mess of your life?
12. Read and discuss Pastor Gary's comments about the Lord rescuing people when they cry out to him. (See #21 above)
13. How have the storms of life brought you into a season of weariness?
14. Spend time talking about the fact that all four groups of people were delivered by the Lord and allow the people in your group to declare the goodness and love of God!
15. Close your time in prayer as the Holy Spirit leads.

\* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New International Version (NIV 1984)

June 25, 2017

“Jesus the King, Priest, and Judge”

Psalm 110

Pastor Gary Hamrick



David wrote this psalm approximately one thousand years before Jesus Christ was born. He wrote prophetically about the Messiah—Jesus—who is King, Priest, and Judge. But how does this apply to us? In today’s message, Pastor Gary teaches about what it personally means for Jesus to be King, Priest, and Judge.

### Historical Background

1. **Luke 24:44** – “[Jesus] said to them, ‘This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.’ ”
  - a. When Jesus said this, he was referring to the entirety of the Old Testament.
  - b. There are 300+ prophecies in the Old Testament concerning the coming of Jesus, and Jesus fulfilled all 300+ prophecies!
  - c. The statistical improbability of one man fulfilling the 300+ biblical prophecies in the Old Testament about the Messiah is mind-boggling to say the least. Dr. Peter Stoner,<sup>1</sup> Professor Emeritus of Science at Westmont College in Santa Barbara, California, calculated that the likelihood of one person fulfilling 48 of the 300+ prophecies would be 1:10<sup>157</sup> (that’s an additional 157 zeros!).<sup>2</sup> How many people have lived on earth? The numbers vary widely, however, some have estimated that a good number would be 100 billion people. If you used this number for the prophecy fulfillment calculation, it would read 1:10<sup>11</sup> (that’s only 11 zeros). Practically speaking, mathematicians and scientists aren’t that concerned about a number that goes beyond 1:10<sup>50</sup>, so statistically, it’s not possible that anyone other than Jesus could be the Messiah, and that would just be the fulfillment of 48 of the 300+ Old Testament prophecies. Dr. Stoner said, “Any man who rejects Christ as the Son of God is rejecting a fact proved perhaps more absolutely than any other fact in the world.”
  - d. The New Testament teaches that Jesus is coming again, and there are more than three times the number of Old Testament prophecies that speak about his Second Coming.
2. Jesus, speaking about himself, quoted from Psalm 110, as a way to prove his identity and to help the Pharisees understand who the Messiah was.
  - a. **Matthew 22:41–45** – “While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, ‘What do you think about the Christ [Messiah]? Whose son is he?’ ‘The son of David,’ they replied. He said to them, ‘How is it then that David, speaking by the Spirit, calls him “Lord”? For he says, ‘The Lord said to my Lord: “Sit at my right hand until I put your enemies under your feet.” If then David calls him, “Lord,” How can he be his son?’ ”

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<sup>1</sup> Peter Stoner (Born June 16, 1888 – Died March 21, 1980) was Chairman of the Departments of Mathematics and Astronomy at Pasadena City College until 1953; Chairman of the science division, Westmont College, 1953-57; Professor Emeritus of Science, Westmont College; Professor Emeritus of Mathematics and Astronomy, Pasadena City College.

<sup>2</sup> For more information, use this link to access the book, *Science Speaks* by Dr. Peter Stoner. The specific information is found in the last part of chapter three. <http://sciencespeaks.dstoner.net>

- b. Jesus was stating that he was both, the Son of God, and a son of David, in the sense of his humanity, having descended from the line of David through his mother, Mary.

### Jesus As King

3. **Psalm 110:1-3** – *“The LORD says to my Lord; ‘Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.’ The LORD will extend your mighty **scepter** from Zion; you will **rule** in the midst of your enemies. Your troops will be willing on your day of battle. Arrayed in holy **majesty**, from the womb of the dawn you will receive the dew of your youth.”* (Emphasis added)
4. These words speak of a king and kingdoms, and the Bible teaches about earthly and heavenly kingdoms.
5. Every king will be deposed at some point, because they rule an earthly kingdom.
  - a. **Daniel 2:21** – *“[God] changes times and seasons; he sets up kings and deposes them...”*
6. **Isaiah 37:16** – *“O LORD Almighty, God of Israel, enthroned between the cherubim, you alone are God over all the kingdoms of the earth. You have made heaven and earth.”*
7. **Daniel 4:17** – *“... the Most High is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and gives them to anyone he wishes...”*
8. Pastor Gary said: “There are heavenly kingdoms. These are kingdoms that we cannot see. These are kingdoms that are very different, [and] there are two: there is the Kingdom of God and there’s the kingdom of Satan. There’s the Kingdom of light and there’s the kingdom of darkness.”
9. Jesus, when he stood before Pontius Pilate, just before he was crucified, stated that his kingdom was not an earthly kingdom.
  - a. **John 18:36** – *“Jesus said, ‘My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jews. But now my kingdom is from another place.’”*
10. Pastor Gary said: “God is on the throne of heaven. The kingdom of heaven is occupied, and God is seated majestically on the throne. He is Sovereign. He is Ruler. He is Lord over all. The kingdom of God is at hand, and God is Supreme and Sovereign, ruling in the heavens. Now, at the same time, however, he has allowed – for a season – the kingdom of darkness to exist... It is a very dark kingdom. It is a wicked kingdom. It is an evil kingdom, and Satan is the prince of this kingdom.”
11. **Ephesians 2:2** – *“... the ruler [a reference to Satan] of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient.”*
12. Pastor Gary said: “There are kingdoms, and the Bible teaches that until a person comes to know Christ as his or her personal Savior – hear me on this – until that time that you receive Christ as your personal Lord and Savior, you belong to the kingdom of darkness. Satan is your king. You say,

'I don't ever remember voting for Satan to be my king.' You didn't have to vote for him. You never vote for a king; you are born into a kingdom. And you and I were born into the kingdom of darkness, because we are sinners by nature, and by nature we sin... We are born by default into the kingdom of darkness... When you are born again and you receive Christ as your Savior, your citizenship is transferred to another kingdom!"

- a. **Colossians 1:13–14** – *“For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.”*

13. Eventually, every earthly kingdom will be overthrown, and the kingdom of darkness will be destroyed, and at that time Jesus will be the only king and his will be the only kingdom.

14. There will be a new heaven and a new earth when the one-thousand-year reign of Christ begins, and we will live with the Lord forever!

15. **Revelation 11:15** – *“The seventh angel sounded his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, which said: ‘The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign for ever and ever.’ ”*

16. **Psalm 145:13** – *“Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and your dominion endures through all generations.”*

17. Jesus has the authority to be the King!

18. Pastor Gary said: “Each of us needs to ask ourselves these questions: ‘Is Jesus my king? Does Jesus rule over my life? Have I surrendered to him? Have I surrendered to his authority? Is he in charge?’ ”

19. **Revelation 19:16** – *“On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.”*

### Jesus As Priest

20. **Psalm 110:4** – *“The LORD has sworn and will not change his mind; ‘You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek.’ ”*

21. Who is Melchizedek?

- a. He is mentioned three times in the Bible: **Genesis 14**, **Psalm 110**, and **Hebrews 5–7**.
- b. In Hebrew, his name comes from the combination of two words: melek, which means, king, and zedek, which means, righteousness.
- c. He was also the king of Salem, which is the ancient name for Jerusalem.

- d. Melchizedek was the king of Salem and a priest of the “most high God,” according to **Hebrews 7:1** (KJV), and he is the only person – other than Jesus - about which both of these are true.
    - i. According to **2 Chronicles 26:16–21**, King Uzziah tried to perform a priestly duty and was stricken with leprosy!
  - e. Melchizedek was a king of peace and a king of righteousness.
  - f. The Bible tells us that he had no father or mother, and therefore, no genealogy.
    - i. **Revelation 1:8** – “ ‘I am the Alpha and the Omega,’ says the Lord God, ‘who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty.’ ”
    - ii. **Micah 5:2** – “But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times.”
    - iii. **Genesis 14:18** – “... Melchizedek brought out bread and wine [the communion elements]. He was priest of God Most High, and he blessed Abram...”
      - 1. In response, according to **Genesis 14:20**, Abram “gave him a tenth [tithe] of everything.”
  - g. It is believed by many Bible scholars that Melchizedek was a Christophany, which basically means that he was Jesus appearing in the flesh in the Old Testament.
22. Jesus precedes the priesthood, which would not come until approximately five hundred years later, when Moses’ brother, Aaron, would become the first priest.
23. The purpose of the priest was the go-between/bridge, and he was to present man to God and God to man.
24. The Priesthood of Jesus, superior in every way, and his Priesthood precedes and supersedes any earthly priesthood.
25. Pastor Gary said: “I want you to hear me on this. And I say what I’m about to say with complete sincerity. I’m not trying to be cute or silly. But I want you Catholics, especially, to listen to me. Jesus is the only priest who can stand between a holy God and sinful humanity. He’s the only one. Jesus is the only one who can atone for our sins. Jesus is the only one who can pronounce forgiveness of sins. Jesus only, [and] no priest, no vicar, no other human being can ever hear my confession and absolve me of my sins except Jesus. Jesus only! [He is the only one who] has the right to [forgive sins]. I say that with all love and respect to my Catholic friends, because that’s either going to be offensive to you or that’s going to be liberating, and I pray that it is liberating to you.”
26. Through Jesus Christ and what he has done for us on the cross, we now have direct accessibility to God the Father!
27. **Romans 5:1–2a** – “Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand.”

28. **Hebrews 10:19–22** – *“Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith...”*

### Jesus As Judge

29. **Psalm 110:5–7** – *“The Lord is at your right hand; he will crush kings on the day of his wrath. He will judge the nations, heaping up the dead and crushing the rulers of the whole earth. He will drink from a brook beside the way; therefore he will lift up his head.”*

30. The first time Jesus came as Savior, but when he comes again, he will come as judge.

31. **2 Timothy 4:8** – *“Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day – and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.”*

32. **Acts 17:31** – *“For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising him [Jesus] from the dead.”*

33. **Revelation 19:11** – *“I [John] saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and makes war.”*

34. We are accountable to the Lord.

35. The question is: When you stand before Jesus, the righteous Judge, will you be found guilty or not guilty?

36. **Romans 14:10c** – *“For we will all stand before God’s judgment seat.”*

37. **Romans 14:12** – *“So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God.”*

38. It is only by faith in Jesus Christ that we will be able to stand before God!

39. **Jude 24–25** – *“To him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy – to the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen.”*

### Discussion Questions

1. Review the introduction to the study guide with your group to provide the appropriate background.
2. Read **Psalm 110** to provide the foundation for this study.
3. Read and discuss Pastor Gary's comments concerning Dr. Peter Stoner. (See #1c above)
4. Provide an overview of the Scriptures and comments Pastor Gary made before discussing what it means for Jesus to be King. (See #3 - #19 above)
5. Spend time talking about Pastor Gary's remarks about two kingdoms. (See #12 above)
6. Provide an overview of the Scriptures and comments Pastor Gary made concerning Melchizedek and Jesus before discussing what it means for Jesus to be Priest. (See #20 - #28 above)
7. Spend time talking about Pastor Gary's remarks about Jesus being the only mediator between God and man, which means that we now have direct access to God because of what Jesus has done for us. (See #25 above)
8. Provide an overview of the Scriptures and comments Pastor Gary made concerning what it means for Jesus to be Judge. (See #29 - #39 above)
9. Close your time in prayer as the Holy Spirit leads.

\* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New International Version (NIV 1984)

July 2, 2017

“The Blessings and Benefits of the Bible – Part 1/7”

Psalm 119 Introduction

Pastor Gary Hamrick



This is the first of a seven-part series on Psalm 119. This psalm is about God’s Word, the Bible. Psalm 119 happens to be the longest psalm in the book of psalms (176 verses), and the longest chapter in the Bible. Not that we should judge the importance of a chapter in the Bible based on how many verses it contains, but there is something to be said for the longest chapter in the Bible being about the Bible! Perhaps we should pay attention to what God emphasizes concerning Scripture and learn about the many blessings and benefits of applying God’s Word to our lives. In today’s introduction to Psalm 119, Pastor Gary shares about the importance of the Bible, and how it is inspired, inerrant, and infallible. In a time when many churches, Christian colleges, universities, and seminaries, no longer hold to the authority of God’s Word, let us capture a love for the Bible and hold it in high regard as the foundation for faith and practice.

### **Historical Background**

1. There are twenty-two sections in this psalm, and each section corresponds to the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet.
  - a. Each section has eight verses, and each verse is written in alphabetic acrostic form, meaning that every verse of that section begins with the same letter.
  - b. The reason the psalm was written this way was to aid in memorization, and to help in the development of a deep appreciation for Scripture.
  
2. Psalm 119 includes eight different terms or synonyms to refer to Scripture, and only 4 verses – out of 176 – don’t include one of these terms or synonyms, that means 172 out of 176 verses contain at least one of these terms or synonyms emphasizing the importance of Scripture in our lives.
  - a. Law(s) – 45
  - b. Statues – 23
  - c. Ways – 3
  - d. Precepts – 21
  - e. Decrees – 22
  - f. Commands – 22
  - g. Word(s) - 30
  - h. Promise(s) – 13
  
3. When we read God’s Word and apply it to our lives, we will receive the inherent blessings and benefits!

### **The Reliability And Relevance Of The Bible**

4. There are any number of questions people ask about the Bible, including: How can we trust that this book is true? How was it compiled? Did men write it or did God write it? Does it contain errors?
5. **Isaiah 40:6–8** – *“All men are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of the Lord stands forever.”*
6. The Bible is **the** handbook for life, and its truth applies to all aspects of life.
7. The Bible instructs us, encourages us, admonishes us, prepares us, equips us, and guides us.
8. The Bible is a love letter from God, which tells us about his love, mercy, grace, and forgiveness.
9. Pastor Gary said: “Let me tell you why we need to particularly understand the importance and significance of the Bible. [It’s] because we are living in a time right now when – sad to say – many... denominations, Christian universities, colleges, and seminaries, and Christians in general, no longer hold to the authority of the Word of God. It is tragic but it is true.”
  - a. Pastor Gary shared several important pieces of research data which prove his point. <sup>1</sup>
    - i. Only 34 percent of mainline Protestants and 26 percent of Catholics believe the Bible is totally accurate.
    - ii. America’s Research Group interviewed 312 administrators and professors from 200 different colleges and found that 98 percent believe in the inspiration of the Bible. <sup>2</sup>
      1. In the same survey, the belief in the inspiration of the Bible did not translate to the inerrancy of the Bible, because only 60 percent of the 312 believed the Genesis creation account of six 24-hour days.
      2. Only 58 percent of those interviewed believe the Flood was worldwide.
      3. And it’s beyond incredible that 31 percent of the religion departments at these institutions teach evolution as fact.
  - b. **2 Timothy 4:1–4** *“... I give you this charge: Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage – with great patience and careful instruction. For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths.”*

### **The Bible Is Inspired**

10. A good working definition of the inspiration of the Bible: God’s revelation expressed through men who were vessels of his thoughts and intentions.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.barna.com/research/barna-studies-the-research-offers-a-year-in-review-perspective/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://answersingenesis.org/college/many-christian-colleges-receive-a-failing-grade/>

11. **2 Timothy 3:16** – *“All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness...”*
12. **2 Peter 1:21** – *“For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.”*
13. Pastor Gary said: “Inspiration means that God so-directed the human writers of Scripture [using] their personalities, their cultural experiences, [and] their literary styles [in such a way that] his complete revelation for mankind was recorded.”

### **The Bible Is Inerrant**

14. A good working definition of the inerrancy of the Bible: Totally true; without contradiction or error in the original manuscripts.
15. The Bible is a remarkable book to say the least, especially when considering these facts:
  - a. The Bible has sixty-six books (thirty-nine in the Old Testament and twenty-seven in the New Testament).
  - b. The Bible was written by approximately forty human authors.
  - c. The Bible was written in three languages: Hebrew, Greek, and Aramaic.
  - d. The Bible was written on three different continents: Asia, Africa, and Europe.
  - e. The Bible was written over approximately sixteen hundred years.
16. The remarkable thing about the Bible is the magnitude of the miracle of God orchestrating the writing, and preserving it without error, when considering the aforementioned facts, and that it is harmonious, thoroughly consistent, without contradiction, and centers on one central theme: God loves mankind, and he has a redemptive plan through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.
17. **Matthew 5:18** – *“I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished.”*
  - a. The *“smallest letter,”* and *“the least stroke of a pen,”* refers to the Hebrew alphabet, and these marks, whether they are there or not, can change the entire meaning of a word!

### **The Bible Is Infallible**

18. A good working definition of the infallibility of the Bible: Accurate, reliable, and trustworthy for all matters of faith and practice.

19. Pastor Gary said: “You can trust and rely on the truth of the Bible for your life. There is nothing about it that will ever lead you astray. Nothing about it will ever deceive you... God’s promises are true, and his Word will never pass away.”

20. **Matthew 24:35** – *“Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.”*

21. How were the sixty-six books of the Bible determined?

- a. There hasn’t been much dispute about the thirty-nine books of the Old Testament (Genesis to Malachi), because ancient Jews understood that the ancient prophets were legitimate and God-sent.
- b. Concerning the twenty-seven books of the New Testament, early church fathers met to consider the writings that would be included: The Council of Hippo (AD 393 – City in North Africa) and the Council of Carthage (AD 397 – City in North Africa).
  - i. There were four criteria used when considering each letter/epistle: authorship, authority, accuracy, and acceptance.
  - ii. Authorship: Was the author a known and recognized prophet or apostle? Was the author someone who was substantiated by the spiritual community? If not, was he endorsed by a prophet or apostle, like Luke, whom Paul endorsed?
  - iii. Authority: Did the writing come with authority in it? Did the author speak on behalf of God?
  - iv. Accuracy: Did the writing contain accurate doctrine and orthodox teaching? Did the writing contain accurate details concerning people, events, and locations?
  - v. Acceptance: Was the writing widely accepted by the Church at large? Was it circulated and read? Did the early Church fathers quote from the writing?
- c. There are fourteen additional books known as The Apocrypha that aren’t included in the King James Bible and succeeding translations, because the Council of Hippo and the Council of Carthage determined that although they might have been historical, they weren’t reliable, and therefore, they did not pass the four criteria.
  - i. The Roman Catholic Church includes the Apocrypha in their translation because the Council of Trent, in the 1500’s, (eleven hundred years after this had been settled by the Council of Hippo and the Council of Carthage) determined that the writings of the Apocrypha would be included in the Roman Catholic translation.
  - ii. Jesus did not quote from these writings, nor did the prophets and apostles.
  - iii. These writings have many inaccuracies, especially related to geographical locations.

### **The Blessings And Benefits Of Reading The Bible**

22. **Psalm 119:105** – *“Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.”*

23. **Jeremiah 15:16** – *“When your words came, I ate them; they were my joy and my heart’s delight...”*

24. **Jeremiah 23:29** – “ ‘Is not my word like fire,’ declares the LORD, ‘and like a hammer that breaks a rock in pieces?’ ”

25. **1 Peter 2:2** – “Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk [God’s Word], so that by it you may grow up in your salvation.”

### **Discussion Questions**

1. Review the introduction to the study guide with your group to provide the appropriate background.
2. Read and discuss Pastor Gary's comments about the inspiration, inerrancy, and infallibility of Scripture.
3. Invite the people in your group to share the blessings and benefits they have experienced from reading the Bible.
4. Close your time in prayer as the Holy Spirit leads.

\* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New International Version (NIV 1984)

July 9, 2017

“The Blessings and Benefits of the Bible – Part 2/7”

Psalm 119:1-32

Pastor Gary Hamrick



In Pastor Gary’s series through Psalm 119, he drew out twenty-two blessings and benefits inherent to the Bible if we read and apply it to our lives. It’s no accident that the longest chapter in the Bible is about the Bible! In this message, Pastor Gary will take us through the first four sections of this chapter, sharing four things, one thing from each section, that God promises to everyone who takes his Word to heart.

### **The Bible Produces A Blessed Life – Psalm 119:1–8**

1. In this psalm, there are eight different terms for the Bible or the Scriptures in general, and seven are included in the first section, including: law, statutes, ways, precepts, decrees, commands, and righteous laws.
2. **Psalm 119:1–2** – *“Blessed are they whose ways are blameless, who walk according to the law of the LORD. Blessed are they who keep his statutes and seek him with all their heart.”*
3. We need to remember that material blessing from the Lord can be one way that he shows his goodness to us, but it’s not the only way.
4. The Hebrew word for *“blessed,”* is *esher*, which means, *“O how happy!”*
5. Pastor Gary said: *“In other words, the psalmist is saying that through simple obedience to God’s Word, you will live a happier, more content, [and] more satisfied life.”*
6. God’s Word steers us on the path that helps us avoid things that could bring shame and regret.
7. **Psalm 119:6** – *“Then I would not be put to shame when I consider all your commands.”*
8. Pastor Gary said: *“When we live outside the commands of God, we open ourselves to shame and regret in life. When we follow the commands of God, we reduce the likelihood that we are going to have shameful things that we regret. I have been in ministry 30 years, and I can tell you that I’ve had a lot of people who’ve had a lot of shame and regret about decisions [they’ve made] and paths that they’ve taken in their life. And I’ve spoken to a lot of people near the end of their life, and [they] talk about all the things that they did that they are ashamed of, [and] all the things they wished they hadn’t done, [and] all the things they wished they had said, or things they hadn’t said. [It’s] tragic to listen to people talk about their lives with regret. But, never once in thirty years of ministry have I ever spoken to anybody who has done their best to live according to the Word of God and then have regrets that they lived according to Scripture.”*

9. **Romans 10:11** – *“As the Scripture says, ‘Anyone who trusts in him will never be put to shame.’ ”*
10. The Bible is not only preemptive and preventive, when it comes to shame, the Scripture is also redemptive.

### **The Bible Produces A Clean Life – Psalm 119:9–16**

11. **Psalm 119:9, 11** – *“How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to your word... I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.”*
12. The Scripture naturally motivates us to holy living, and it helps us to avoid sinful behavior.
13. The promise of a clean life applies to everyone; however, the psalmist specifically refers to young men!
14. In a 2015 study, Dr. Philip Zimbardo, professor emeritus of psychology at Stanford University, found what he called a crisis of masculinity. <sup>1</sup>
- a. Dr. Zimbardo found that young men today are obsessed with video gaming and viewing pornography at alarming rates.
  - b. “It begins to change brain function. It begins to change the reward center of the brain, and it produces a kind of excitement and addiction. What I’m saying is – boys’ brains are becoming digitally rewired.” – Dr. Zimbardo <sup>2</sup>
15. Young men face many challenges concerning temptations and sexual desires, and they need the truth of the Bible in their lives to help them gain the victory through the power of the Holy Spirit and the truth of Scripture.

### **The Bible Shields Us Against Slander And Gossip From Others – Psalm 119:17–24**

16. **Psalm 119:23** – *“Though rulers sit together and slander me, your servant will meditate on your decrees.”*
17. The Lord’s promise to us is that when people slander us and speak against us, their injurious words won’t have the same effect on us, because the Word of God has shielded us.
18. The blessing and benefit of the Bible in this regard is that it helps us understand our real identity and who we are in Christ!

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.stanforddaily.com/2012/05/08/zimbardo/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/elitedeaddictionsservices/posts/863693273705340>

19. If you are able to easily deflect what others say about you, then you have been changed by the Scriptures, because it would be a natural reaction to take offense or to allow the comments of others to gnaw at you.
20. **Joshua 1:8** – *“Do not let the Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful.”*

### **The Bible Strengthens The Weary – Psalm 119:25–32**

21. **Psalm 119:25, 28** – *“I am laid low in the dust; preserve my life according to your word... My soul is weary with sorrow; strengthen me according to your word.”*
22. The psalm writer seems to have lost all strength for daily living, and it could be that he had even lost all hope of living.
23. The remedy for the psalmist was turning to the Scriptures for help and hope.

### **Discussion Questions**

1. Review the introduction to the study guide with your group to provide the appropriate background.
2. Read and discuss **Psalm 119:1-8**.
3. Read and discuss **Psalm 119:9-16**.
4. Read and discuss **Psalm 119:17-24**.
5. Read and discuss **Psalm 119:25-32**.
6. Invite the people in your group to share what the Bible has produced in them.
7. Invite the people in your group to share ways the Bible has shielded them.
8. Invite the people in your group to share ways the Bible has strengthened them.
9. Close your time in prayer as the Holy Spirit leads.

\* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New International Version (NIV 1984)

July 23, 2017

“The Blessings and Benefits of the Bible – Part 3/7”

Psalm 119:33-64

Pastor Gary Hamrick



In his ongoing series in Psalm 119, Pastor Gary examines four more areas of our lives that can be impacted in wonderful ways when we read the Bible and apply it to our lives. Have you ever struggled with shame and guilt? Have you ever felt like the Bible imposed a bunch of rules and regulations that restricted your life? Have you ever wondered why no one is able to adequately comfort you or bring you hope when you face the most trying times in your life? Have ever wanted to have true friends in your life? If you answered “Yes” to any of these questions, then this message will encourage you as you find out more about the inherent blessings and benefits in the Bible for those who read it and do what it says.

### **The Bible Takes Away Disgrace – Psalm 119:33–40**

1. **Psalm 119:39** – *“Take away the disgrace I dread...”*
  - a. The NKJV uses the word, *“reproach.”*
  - b. The Hebrew word is *cherpah*, which can mean, reproach, disgrace, or shame.
2. Disgrace and shame are horrible things to live with, but they are natural outcomes of sin.
3. Pastor Gary said: “We are all made in the image and likeness of God, and there is that God-consciousness that is placed in every human being, that even if we don’t know him in a personal way, we still understand when we violate things that are right and do things that are wrong, our conscience kicks in and we feel some amount of shame or disgrace or guilt. That’s [actually not] a bad thing. If you feel some amount of shame when you do something that is wrong, that means your conscience is working properly. It is when someone does something that is wrong and they feel no shame about it, [or] guilt, [or] remorse, [that’s] what psychologists call a sociopath. The Bible refers to that person as one [who has] a seared conscience. That’s a terrible place to be. When you do something wrong, and you don’t even have a check in your heart that it [was] wrong.”
4. People do all kinds of things to try to escape the weight of shame in their lives, including over-medicating themselves, and alcohol and/or drug addiction.
5. Receiving forgiveness for sin from the Lord is the only remedy for shame, disgrace, and guilt.
6. **Psalm 103:11–12** – *“For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us.”*
7. **Isaiah 25:8** – *“The Sovereign LORD will wipe away the tears from all faces; he will remove the disgrace of his people from all the earth...”*

8. **Romans 8:1** – *“Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus...”*
9. Pastor Gary said: “The Word reminds us of God’s grace, and that no matter how deeply we have sunk into sin; grace goes deeper still!”
10. **Isaiah 43:25** – *“I, even I, am he who blots out your transgressions, for my own sake, and remembers your sins no more.”*
11. **1 Peter 2:6** – *“See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone [a reference to Jesus], and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame.”*

### **The Bible Produces Freedom – Psalm 119:41–48**

12. **Psalm 119:45** – *“I will walk about in freedom, for I have sought out your precepts.”*
13. Pastor Gary said: “How is it that laws, generally [speaking], and God’s law, particularly, actually [bring] freedom into our lives? Why would the psalmist say this? Because human nature instinctively is to think of rules and laws as restrictive... If your definition of freedom is that you get to do whatever you want, whenever you want, however you want, [then] God’s Word is not going to be freeing to you... If [this] is your definition of freedom, you are living in world that doesn’t exist. If, on the other hand, your definition of freedom is to be able to live life to the fullest within certain boundaries that are for [your] good and the good of others, then absolutely, God’s Word will bring you freedom. Because God has set parameters and boundaries, and he has written out certain laws – [these] don’t save us – [that] if we do what those [laws and] commands say, we can enjoy life to the fullest.”
14. Pastor Gary said: “They [the commands and laws of God] are in place to help us, to protect us, [and] save our lives. Don’t look at the laws of God and think that they’re just a barrier between [you] and fun. No, they’re not. They are actually placed there so that you might enjoy life to the fullest, that you might experience the wonder of life and the beauty of life and the fullness of life, without which, left to ourselves we will enter into situations that are potentially dangerous, and destructive, and deadly. Embrace God’s law, [and the] commandments. [They are the] safeguard of our souls, that God has put in place because he loves us as our Father.”
15. “Mankind naturally rejects rules, and boundaries. However, some rules are necessary! Some are good for our well-being. In some cases, rules make us comfortable and secure.” – William M. Templeton
  - a. “The story is told of a pre-school built in an inner-city environment. The school was on a small parcel of land, and playground space and facilities were minimal. Right by the playground was a busy highway, where many cars and loud buses and trucks traveled constantly. When recess time would come, the small children were so frightened by the

noise and close proximity of the traffic, they would go to the other side of the playground and huddle up together against the building. They were fearful of the overwhelming traffic. The school officials decided to put up a fence. Of course, their intended purpose for the fence was to keep the children from getting into the street. However, upon the completion of the fence, the usefulness of the wire was very different. Now, with this barrier between the children and the busy street, they were not afraid. They began to play all around the playground, sometimes right up against the fence, which was only feet away from the edge of the road where the same noisy traffic was whizzing by. What was meant to be constraining was actually liberating. What was meant to be a barrier was in reality freeing.”<sup>1</sup>

### The Bible Is A Source Of Hope And Comfort – Psalm 119:49–56

16. **Psalm 119:49-50, 52** – *“Remember your word to your servant, for you have given me hope. My comfort in my suffering is this: Your promise preserves my life... I remember your ancient laws, O LORD, and I find comfort in them.”*
17. God’s Word will be a source of hope and comfort in the storms of life.
18. Pastor Gary said: “Have you ever noticed that when life is at its worst how it reduces men to be speechless or to come up with useless clichés and slogans that are really of no value?... When you are going through something, the last thing you need is some cheesy slogan! What we need is to know is [this]: Does God still care? Does God love me through this? Does he know what I’m going through? Can he feel what I’m going through? Will he deliver me from this? Will he help me through it if he doesn’t take me from it? Is there a purpose in all of this? The answers to those questions will not come through cheap slogans! [The answers] will only come because you take God’s Word, and you allow it to minister to your soul and allow it to bring hope and comfort to you in your darkest times... Allow the Word of God to begin to just bathe your heart and mind with his precious promises of hope and comfort.”
19. **Deuteronomy 31:8** – *“The LORD himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged.”*
20. **Psalm 23:4** – *“Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.”*
21. **Psalm 62:5** – *“Find rest, O my soul, in God alone; my hope comes through him.”*

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<sup>1</sup> *Understanding Genesis, A commentary of the Book of Genesis with life applications for modern man* by William M. Templeton, Xulon Press, © 2010, page 36.  
<https://books.google.com/books?id=BZYDN0I5wBUC&pg=PA36&lpg=PA36&dq=william+templeton+mankind+rejects+rules&source=bl&ots=Jn9B4XRDO0&sig=iS6NxWnnGUPL7P4t1fhsK5Lr-fY&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwinrZaZ26fVAhVLqVQKHc7AA6wQ6AEIJAA#v=onepage&q=william%20templeton%20mankind%20rejects%20rules&f=false>

22. **Romans 15:13** – *“May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.”*

### **The Bible Will Bless Me With Good Friends – Psalm 119:57–64**

23. The Bible will help us sift out the “not so hot” friends, and it will help us highlight the good friends.

#### 24. Characteristics Of Good Friends

- a. Someone who knows the Lord and follows his commands.
  - i. **Psalm 119:63** – *“I am a friend to all who fear you, to all who follow your precepts.”*
- b. Someone who loves at all times.
  - i. **Proverbs 17:17a** – *“A friend loves at all times...”*
- c. Someone who is there for you during adversity.
  - i. **Proverbs 17:17b** – *“... a brother is born for adversity.”*
- d. Someone who can keep a confidence.
  - i. **Proverbs 11:13** – *“A gossip betrays a confidence, but a trustworthy man keeps a secret.”*
- e. Someone who speaks the truth even when it hurts.
  - i. **Proverbs 27:5–6** – *“Better an open rebuke than hidden love. Wounds from a friend can be trusted, but an enemy multiplies kisses.”*

### **Discussion Questions**

1. Review the introduction to the study guide with your group to provide the appropriate background.
2. Read **Psalm 119:33-40**.
3. Invite the people in your group to share how the Bible took away disgrace in their life.
4. Read **Psalm 119:41-48**.
5. Invite the people in your group to share how the Bible produced freedom in their life.
6. Read **Psalm 119:49-56**.
7. Invite the people in your group to share how the Bible produced hope and comfort in their life.
8. Read **Psalm 119:57-64**.
9. Invite the people in your group to share how the Bible bless them with good friends.
10. Close your time in prayer as the Holy Spirit leads.

\* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New International Version (NIV 1984)

July 30, 2017

“The Blessings and Benefits of the Bible – Part 4/7”

Psalm 119:65–88

Pastor Gary Hamrick



In this teaching, Pastor Gary reminds us of three things: God’s love and compassion when he disciplines us, how the Bible gives us wisdom and discernment, and how we need to wait on God’s perfect timing in everything.

### The Bible Is A Rich Source Of Knowledge And Good Judgment – Psalm 119:65–72

1. **Psalm 119:66** – *“Teach me knowledge and good judgment, for I believe in your commands.”*
2. The Hebrew word for knowledge is *yada*, which can also mean, understanding and wisdom.
3. The Hebrew term for *“good judgment”* has to do with the ability to judge between right and wrong/good and evil, and discernment.
4. We need the wisdom and discernment of God every day because we make decisions every day that can be life altering!
5. Pastor Gary said: *“The worst time to make a decision is when you are down... because when you are down and you are discouraged and you are going through something, you don’t have clarity and you will often make an impulsive decision that you will regret later... [So] when you are down is [not the] time to make a major decision because you can’t trust your own judgment. But it is during those times that you can trust the judgment of God’s Word.”*
6. The psalm writer must have been in a *“down”* place in his life because twice he referred to being *“afflicted.”*
  - a. **Psalm 119:67** – *“Before I was afflicted I went astray...”*
  - b. **Psalm 119:71** – *“It was good for me to be afflicted...”*
7. In the process of being *“down,”* the psalm writer was driven to read the Word of God, because he needed wisdom and discernment for his situation.
8. Pastor Gary said: *“... [affliction, difficulties, trials], and different things we go through, will motivate us... to search out Scripture; to get the wisdom and discernment from God that we need for our particular situation... I can’t tell you the number of times that going to God’s Word has spared me greater affliction and has brought [me] wisdom and discernment that I didn’t have.”*
9. **Psalm 119:24** – *“Your statutes are my delight; they are my counselors.”*

10. Pastor Gary said: “The more you get God’s Word into your heart, the more you can pull it up on instant recall when you need it in those unexpected moments when wisdom and discernment are so critically important. What if we, by getting God’s Word into [our] everyday routine started making better, wiser, more discerning decisions? How might [reading the Bible] impact your life, your marriage, your business... your health, relationships, [and] eternity?”
11. **Proverbs 2:6** – *“For the LORD gives wisdom, and from his mouth come knowledge and understanding.”*

**The Bible Reminds Us Of God’s Unfailing Love And Compassion  
When He Disciplines Us – Psalm 119:73–80**

12. **Psalm 119:75** – *“I know, O LORD, that your laws are righteous, and in faithfulness you have afflicted me.”*
13. Pastor Gary said: “It would appear that there [was] something going in the psalmist’s life, perhaps some sin issue or some area of his life that [needed] to be surrendered, and the Lord [disciplined] him or [refined] him to make him a better man of God... Not every afflicting thing that happens to [you will be] the hand of God disciplining you... but if you’ve been a Christian long enough, you know the difference!”
14. **Psalm 119:76–77** – *“May your unfailing love be my comfort, according to your promise to your servant. Let your **compassion** come to me that I may live, for your law is my delight.”* (Emphasis added)
15. **Hebrews 12:6–11** – *“ ‘... the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son.’ Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father? If you are not disciplined (and everyone undergoes discipline), then you are illegitimate children and not true sons. Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of our spirits and live! Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness. No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.”*
16. God’s discipline means that he loves you.
  - a. Pastor Gary said: “The pain that God afflicts is out of love for the ones he accepts.”
17. God’s discipline means that he accepts you as his child.
  - a. God is our father, and we are his children, and all loving parents will discipline their children.
18. God’s discipline means that he wants to teach you something.

- a. Paideuo is the word used for discipline in the Greek translation of Psalm 119, and it means to train, teach, instruct, or educate.
19. God's discipline means that he wants you to be more holy and fruitful.
- a. **1 Peter 1:16** – "... it is written: 'Be holy, because I am holy.' "

### **The Bible Teaches Us To Wait On God's Perfect Timing – Psalm 119:81–88**

20. **Psalm 119:86–88** – "... men persecute me without cause. They almost wiped me from the earth... Preserve my life according to your love..."
21. The psalmist made complaints against God concerning what he perceived as God not seeing his need and helping him, but he turned to Scripture for strength and encouragement.
- a. **Psalm 119:81** – "... but I have put my hope in your word."
  - b. **Psalm 119:87** – "... but I have not forsaken your precepts."
22. Pastor Gary said: "When I read the Bible it helps to recalibrate my life... Generally speaking, I have wanted God to work faster than what he normally does... There are times that I have felt like I wished God had done this, wished God had done that, wished God had done the other, faster than what I would have preferred. Having come through it, [and now] looking back, I can see that God's timing was right... When I read the Bible, what happens is [that] I find in my soul... it just helps recalibrate my life so I'm more in step with God's timing and it just slows me down... The Bible, never once, gives a verse [that] exhorts us to hurry! But the Bible is replete with example after example that tell us to wait."
23. **Psalm 27:14** – "Wait for the LORD; be strong and take heart and wait for the LORD."
24. **Psalm 40:1** – "I waited patiently for the LORD; he turned to me and heard my cry."
25. **Psalm 130:5–6** – "I wait for the LORD, my soul waits, and in his word I put my hope. My soul waits for the Lord more than watchmen wait for the morning, more than watchmen wait for the morning."
26. Pastor Gary said: "God always shows up right on time. We have to yield to our concept to what timeliness is, and we have to trust the one [who] holds time in his hands. [He] will do things just at the right time."

### **Discussion Questions**

1. Review the introduction to the study guide with your group to provide the appropriate background.

2. Read **Psalm 119:65–72**.
3. Invite the people in your group to share their favorite nugget of wisdom from Scripture.
4. Read **Psalm 119:73-80**.
5. Invite the people in your group to share of times they recognized a time of God’s discipline and how it refined them.
6. Read **Psalm 119:81-88**.
7. Invite the people in your group to share of times they waited on God’s timing and the benefits of their experience.
8. Close your time in prayer as the Holy Spirit leads.

\* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New International Version (NIV 1984)

August 6, 2017

“The Blessings and Benefits of the Bible – Part 5/7”

Psalm 119:89–112

Pastor Gary Hamrick



In today’s message, Pastor Gary shares about the truth of the Scriptures, how to find peace of mind, and discerning God’s will, all of which are important topics for Christians. Many people today don’t believe there is such a thing as absolute truth, and it’s far too often the case that people have no real understanding about how to find direction in life. Because there are so many people living outside of the benefits and blessings of God as found in the Bible, many people have never experienced real peace of mind.

### **The Bible Provides An Eternal Source Of Truth That Was Settled In The Heavens – Psalm 119:89–96**

1. **Psalm 119:89** – *“Your word, O LORD, is eternal; it stands firm in the heavens.”*
2. Truth is *really* hard to find, and that’s particularly true in the time in which we live!
3. The Bible is the only source of consistent, reliable, and unchanging truth.
4. Pastor Gary said: “You cannot improve upon God’s Word. And, despite the uncertainty and insecurity of the world in which we live, I’m thankful that as a Christian, I’m part of a kingdom... that cannot be shaken... [It] cannot be shaken because the kingdom of God is established on the Word of God, which is his reliable [and] unchanging truth for the ages. Quite honestly, [and I say] this with all sincerity, I can only make sense of my life and of this world, by reading the Bible. [The Bible] keeps me centered. [The Bible] keeps me grounded in the truth. [The Bible] provides for me... a foundation from which... I can make right decisions and discern things correctly and evaluate things properly, [concerning] my life. I can respect the differences of opinions that are pervasive in our culture... I can love people who don’t share my values or views, but the Bible is my compass that tells me what is true north.”
  - a. **Hebrews 12:28** – *“Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful...”*
5. The Bible cannot be manipulated to say whatever we want it to say, which many people want to do to suit an ever-changing culture.
6. Pastor Gary said: “[Our] objective [should be] to honor God, honor his Word, and live according to the revealed, expressed, reliable truth of God’s Word. [This isn’t] always comfortable, and it certainly isn’t always popular. It isn’t convenient... But, it’s God’s best for [us]... If you start to live out this Word, as unpopular as it is, it will be counterculture, and you will have to realize that if you get serious about God and serious about God’s Word, when you start to live it, you will be more and more perceived by our culture to be out of step with mainstream thought and values.

Be prepared! If we live out the Bible as the standard-bearer for truth, we will be in conflict with the world in which we live. We may be accused of being stuck in the past... or accused of being out of touch or being regressive instead of progressive. People may say that we are haters because we object or disagree with certain lifestyles or behaviors. People may say that we are narrow minded because we believe absolute [truth] versus relative truth. People may patronize us or insult us or ridicule us for believing and living as we do. Well, so be it. So be it! Quite honestly, if I don't feel some sense of alienation or estrangement in this world... or feeling oddly out of place in this world... or experience some measure of persecution for my faith in Christ, then perhaps it should cause me to pause and wonder if I am actually and effectively, openly living my life for Christ, because some of those things are going to be naturally experienced if we really are who we say we are, and if we really believe what we say we believe. We shouldn't be surprised that the world will think oddly of us."

- a. **John 15:18–19** – *"If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you."*
- b. **Matthew 5:11–12** – *"Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you."*
- c. **Matthew 5: 13–14** – *"You are the salt of the earth... You are the light of the world..."*

#### **The Bible Provides A Safe Place For Us To Rest Our Mind – Psalm 119:97–104**

7. **Psalm 119:97, 99** – *"Oh, how I love your law! I meditate on it all day long... I meditate on your statutes."*
8. Since our minds are very fragile, and we don't have an "off button," we often experience anxious thoughts and restlessness.
9. The Bible is the only source of help because it provides us with a safe place to rest our mind.
10. Investing time reading the Word of God will bring rest and peace to weary, tired minds.

#### **The Bible Helps Us Discern God's Will and Direction In Life – Psalm 119:105–112**

11. **Psalm 119:105** – *"Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path."*
12. The Counsel of God's Word.
  - a. Scripture will either speak directly or indirectly to situations in our lives, and it's the Word of God that will help us discern his will.
  - b. **Psalm 32:8** – *"I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you and watch over you."*

- c. **Joshua 1:8** – *“Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful.”*

### 13. The Comfort of God’s Peace.

- a. **Colossians 3:15** – *“Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts...”*
- b. Pastor Gary said: “Never violate your peace! I don’t care how wonderful the opportunity is! I don’t care [if] it’s “once in a lifetime”! I don’t care how pretty she is or how charming he is! If you don’t have a peace, don’t go there!”

### 14. The Confirmation of God’s People.

- a. A “word from the Lord” should never be received as direction from the Lord, rather it should only serve as confirmation of what you believe to be the Lord’s will in a specific matter.
- b. One example of receiving a “word from the Lord” is found in the book of Acts, and it concerns the apostle Peter and Cornelius.
  - i. **Acts 10:4–5** – *“Cornelius stared at him in fear. ‘What is it, Lord?’ he asked. The angel answered, ‘Your prayers and gifts to the poor have come up as a memorial offering before God. Now send men to Joppa to bring back a man named Simon who is called Peter.’ ”*
- c. Pastor Gary said: “[When] the Lord begins to move in your life to direct you somewhere, wait on it, pause, pray about it, confirm it through Scripture, see if you have God’s peace, and sometimes God will bring confirmation through other people to help... solidify [what his will is].”

## Discussion Questions

1. Review the introduction to the study guide with your group to provide the appropriate background.
2. Read and discuss Psalm 119:89-96.
3. Read and discuss **Psalm 119:97-104**.
4. Read and discuss **Psalm 119:105-112**.
5. Invite the people in your group to share of times the Bible helped them discern God’s will and direction in their life.
6. Close your time in prayer as the Holy Spirit leads.

\* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New International Version (NIV 1984)

August 27, 2017

“The Blessings and Benefits of the Bible – Part 6/7”

Psalm 119:113-144

Pastor Gary Hamrick



In this message, Pastor Gary examines four new sections of Psalm 119, including: what it means to have a healthy fear of the Lord, hating wrong paths, gaining wisdom, and finding encouragement from God’s Word when we experience times of trouble and distress.

### **The Bible Produces a Healthy Fear of God in Us – Psalm 119:113–120**

1. **Psalm 119:120** – *“My flesh trembles in fear of you; I stand in awe of your laws.”*
2. Pastor Gary said: “There is a proper way to fear him with a holy reverence and respect and then there is an unhealthy fear of God, whereby some people view God as someone who is temperamental, usually angry, hard to please, [and] quick to punish. That is, sadly, the view that some of you have of God. It amazes me [that] over thirty years of ministry, as I talked to people and interacted with people, [that] some people have a proper view of God that he is Father God. Others of you have the view that he’s the godfather!”
3. **Psalm 103:13** – *“As a father has compassion on his children, so the LORD has compassion on those who fear him...”*
4. Pastor Gary said: “[God is] a loving Father. [And] because he’s our Father he is worthy of our honor, he is worthy of our respect, he is worthy of our adoration, and [he’s worthy] our love. He is our loving Father, but we must still fear him in a healthy way, because the same Father who loves us also happens to be the righteous judge of the universe. And if the church is to exist it must recapture a holy reverence for God. We’ve gotten too complacent with God. We are [now treating] him like he is our buddy instead of being our Savior. We treat him like he’s just the next-door neighbor, rather than being our Lord. He is creator! He is God! He is magnificent and majestic in all his ways, and he is to be revered in a holy and a healthy way.”
5. **Mark 4:41** – *“[The disciples] were terrified and asked each other, “Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!” ”*
  - a. **Mark 4:35–41** provides the account of Jesus calming the storm.
6. **Luke 23:39–41** – *“One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him: ‘Aren’t you the Christ? Save yourself and us!’ But the other criminal rebuked him. ‘Don’t you fear God,’ he said, ‘since you are under the same sentence? We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong.’ ”*
  - a. **Luke 23:26–43** provides the account of the crucifixion of Jesus, including the interaction between Jesus and the two thieves.

7. **Acts 5:11** – *“Great fear seized the whole church and all who heard about these events.”*
  - a. **Acts 5:1–11** provides the account of Ananias and his wife, Sapphira.
  
8. A healthy fear of God brings the blessing and benefit of:
  - a. A secure life.
    - i. **Proverbs 14:26** – *“He who fears the LORD has a secure fortress, and for his children it will be a refuge.”*
  - b. A restful life.
    - i. **Proverbs 19:23** – *“The fear of the LORD leads to life: Then one rests content, untouched by trouble.”*
  - c. A blessed life.
    - i. **Psalms 112:1** – *“Praise the LORD. Blessed is the man who fears the LORD, who finds great delight in his commands.”*
  - d. A long life.
    - i. **Proverbs 10:27** – *“The fear of the LORD adds length to life, but the years of the wicked are cut short.”*
  - e. A protected life.
    - i. **Psalms 34:7** – *“The angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear him, and he delivers them.”*

### **The Bible Teaches Us To Hate Wrong Paths – Psalm 119:121–128**

9. **Psalm 119:128** – *“Because I consider all your precepts right, I hate every wrong path.”*
  - a. The Hebrew word for hate is *sane*, which means, to have disgust or revulsion for something.
  - b. The Hebrew word for wrong is *shakir*, which means, untrue, false, lying or deceptive.
  - c. The Hebrew word for path or way is *orach*, which means, a well-trodden road.
    - i. By using this word, the psalmist is indicating that he recognized the vast number of people who are were on the paths of falsehood, lying, etc.
  
10. Pastor Gary said: *“I don’t think that he hates every wrong path because he’s on them; I think, quite to the contrary, he’s not on the wrong paths he’s on the right path because he understands what is right and true because he knows God’s Word. What he hates are all [of] these lying, deceptive paths that have the potential to lead so many people astray. He hates all of these well-traveled, popular roads... Please note the distinction! He does not hate the people; he hates the paths that people on are on. In fact, he loves people so much that’s why he hates the paths, because he sees so many people being deceived and being lied to. And there are a lot of well-traveled, popular roads that are leading many people astray, even in our own culture...”*
  - a. Pastor Gary shared the following examples of “popular roads” that have led many people astray: the lie of evolution, the lie that God makes mistakes in gender identity, <sup>1</sup> the lie of

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<sup>1</sup> The truth is found in **Psalm 139:14** and **Ephesians 2:10**.

sexual freedom that can and should be expressed outside of marriage between one man and one woman, the lie that it's perfectly normal to experiment with drugs and alcohol, the lie that all paths lead to God.<sup>2</sup>

- b. Pastor Gary said: "The truth is, that while those things [see #10a] may be pleasurable for a season, in the end, they [will] only lead to disappointment and emptiness, and they [will] rob you of ultimate fulfillment that can only be found in a relationship with Christ... Our world is full of well-traveled paths that are lying [to many people] and deceiving many people; promising much but delivering little; offering satisfaction but proving empty."

11. **Matthew 7:13–14** – *"Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it."*

### The Bible Makes The Simple Wise – Psalm 119:129–136

12. **Psalm 119:130** – *"The unfolding of your words gives light; it gives understanding to the simple."*
13. **Psalm 19:7** – *"The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul. The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy making wise the simple."*
14. The Hebrew word for simple is *pethi*, which can mean, someone who is young, inexperienced, uneducated, or one who lacks common sense.
15. Pastor Gary said: "Not all minds are the same... The wonderful thing about the Bible is that no matter what information you've been exposed to and no matter what kind of education you've been able to get, the Bible has this wonderful way of leveling the playing field, and making the simple wise... When you read the Bible, it helps you to be wise about things concerning life... Knowledge is the accumulation of information, [and] wisdom is the application [of information]."<sup>3</sup>
16. Pastor Gary shared a personal story about the blessing and benefit he received from Harry "Buck" Lewis, which was the result of the remarkable and radical transformation in his life when the Lord saved him and made him a new man.<sup>4</sup> Because "Buck" read the Bible and understood the deep yet simple truths of Scripture, a simple man became wise beyond his education and experience.<sup>5 6</sup>
17. **Acts 4:13** – *"When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus."*

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<sup>2</sup> The truth is found in **John 14:6**.

<sup>3</sup> See the 2017 11-19 study in the Teaching Library for more details in the Proverbs study on Wisdom.

<sup>4</sup> **2 Corinthians 5:17** – *"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!"*

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.legacy.com/obituaries/fredericknewspost/obituary.aspx?n=harry-lewis&pid=168373603&fhid=18394>

<sup>6</sup> Pastor Gary shared his story about "Buck" Lewis from 28:41 to 32:32. Use this link to watch the message:  
[https://cornerstonechapel.net/?page\\_id=418&i=1234](https://cornerstonechapel.net/?page_id=418&i=1234)

## The Bible Brings Delight To Our Trouble And Distress – Psalm 119:137–144

18. **Psalm 119:143** – *“Trouble and distress have come upon me, but your commands are my delight.”*
19. **John 16:33** – *“I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”*
20. Pastor Gary said: “Trouble and distress are the evil twin children of this world, and at some point, or another, you will meet them. Trouble and distress come in various degrees, [and] at various times, and our lives will be impacted in one way or another by a certain amount of trouble, by a certain amount of distress.”
21. The psalmist is not saying that the Lord would turn trouble and distress into delight, but that in the midst of trouble and distress, that reading Scripture would cheer him up, so to speak, and that Scripture would bring encouragement when the outlook was bleak.
22. Pastor Gary said: “If we ever lived in a day when we need a reliable source of encouragement it’s today. In the midst of our trouble, [and] in the midst of our distress, when [we] read God’s Word it will cheer [us] up and bring [us] encouragement. It won’t necessarily make trouble and distress go away, but it will make the trouble and distress more manageable, because the encouragement comes from God’s Word.”

### Discussion Questions

1. Review the introduction to the study guide with your group to provide the appropriate background.
2. Read and discuss **Psalm 119:113–120**.
3. Read and discuss **Psalm 119:121-128**.
4. Read and discuss **Psalm 119:129-136**.
5. Read and discuss **Psalm 119:137-144**.
6. Close your time in prayer as the Holy Spirit leads.

\* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New International Version (NIV 1984)

September 3, 2017

“The Blessings and Benefits of the Bible – Part 7/7”

Psalm 119:145–176

Pastor Gary Hamrick



This is the seventh and final message in Pastor Gary’s series in Psalm 119. In the last four sections of this psalm, we will learn about God’s nearness, God’s peace, God’s help for our speech, and God’s plan of salvation for humanity.

### The Bible Reminds Us Of The Nearness Of God – Psalm 119:145–152

1. **Psalm 119:151** – *“Yet you are near, O LORD, and all your commands are true.”*
2. Pastor Gary said: “When I read my Bible, it just reminds me that he is near. Sometimes it [feels like] God is distant, and sometimes he feels distant because he is unseen. God is Spirit and as such he is unseen... [When] someone is unseen and we aren’t able to engage our senses, we need some validation... reminder... assurance that, in fact, God is near, and the Bible becomes my eyes... The Bible helps me to understand, relative to my feelings [about] what is reality... [because] feelings are not reality [and they are] not reliable.”
3. Isaac experienced the nearness of God.
  - a. **Genesis 26:3** – *“Stay in this land for a while, and I will be with you and will bless you.”*
4. Moses experienced the nearness of God.
  - a. **Exodus 3:11–12a** – *“But Moses said to God, ‘Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?’ And God said, ‘I will be with you.’ ”*
5. Joshua experienced the nearness of God.
  - a. **Joshua 1:5b** – *“As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will never leave you nor forsake you.”*
6. The Israelites experienced the nearness of God.
  - a. **Deuteronomy 31:8** – *“The LORD himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged.”*
7. Christians experience the nearness of God.
  - a. **Matthew 28:20b** – *“And surely I [Jesus] am with you always, to the very end of the age.”*
8. Not only will Christians experience the nearness of God; they will also experience the indwelling of the Holy Spirit!

- a. **John 17:26** – *“I [Jesus] have made you known to them [the disciples], and will continue to make you known in order that the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them.”*
9. Pastor Gary said: “No other world religion makes that claim [indwelling Holy Spirit] ... Buddhism does not claim that Buddha... comes to live in you. Islam does not teach that Muslims have Allah in them. Hinduism does not teach Shiva or Vishnu or all [of] the multitudes of gods that Hindus worship [will] come in [them]. No, all other world religions present a distant god... an impersonal god, not someone who actually promises that upon relationship [will come] in an individual, but that’s what the Bible teaches regarding Christians.”
10. **John 14:16–17** – *“And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever – the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you.”*
11. Pastor Gary said: “This is a profound mystery that the Bible teaches, but it is powerful in all of its implications... The Bible teaches that every human being is made up of three components: [body, soul, and spirit.] Now, your body is the physical aspect of who you are; it’s the tangible flesh; it’s who you see... The soul and the spirit are inextricably linked. The soul is the seat of the mind, will, and emotion. It is that part of you that feels, and thinks, and reasons... And you retain that capacity to think, and to reason, and to feel, even after you die, because your soul is attached to your spirit... Spirit is the real essence of who you are... [and your spirit] will live on after your flesh dies and decomposes... Your spirit lives forever. The question is, ‘Where will your spirit live?’ If you have relationship with God, your spirit will live forever with the Lord. If you don’t, your spirit lives forever separated from the [Lord].”
12. A Christian’s spirit will bear likeness to their physical body.” <sup>1</sup>
13. **Romans 8:11** – *“And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you.”*
14. **Psalm 46:1** – *“God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.”*

### **The Bible Reveals God’s Plan Of Salvation – Psalm 119:153–160**

15. **Psalm 119:155** – *“Salvation is far from the wicked, for they do not seek out your decrees.”*
16. The implication is that if the wicked would seek out the Lord’s decrees, they would find salvation.

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<sup>1</sup> Use this link to access Pastor Gary’s message in the Teaching Library - [https://cornerstonechapel.net/?page\\_id=418&i=1236](https://cornerstonechapel.net/?page_id=418&i=1236). Go to 14:02 – 15:44 to listen to Pastor Gary’s comments about what Christians will experience in heaven regarding their spirit and being recognized as the person they were on earth.

17. The Bible is the handbook about God's plan of salvation.
18. The word salvation carries with it the understanding that we need to be rescued/saved.
19. Sin has plagued the human race since Adam rebelled and sinned against God in the Garden of Eden.
20. Pastor Gary said: "Sin is not only about [our] condition; it's about [our] conduct. It is [about] how [we] are born... with a sin nature, and because we have a sin nature, we sin. And we sin because we have a sin nature... There is no cure, humanly speaking, for this terminal disease. There is nothing I can do, or you can do to undo our terminal illness of this sin condition... You cannot try to compensate for bad behavior just by doing a lot of good things. Behavior modification, while noble, cannot save anyone from the underlying illness that is killing everyone... All of us need salvation... [And] salvation comes through a Savior, and his name is Jesus."
  - a. **Acts 4:12** – *"Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved."*
21. Salvation is the story of the great exchange, in that God's perfect son died on our behalf, so that, by faith, his righteousness would be imputed to us!
22. When we read the Bible, we understand our sin problem and God's solution.
  - a. **John 3:16–18** – *"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son."*
23. Pastor Gary said: "When you come to grips with your desperate condition, [and] when you realize the sin problem of your own heart, you will not balk at the idea that there is one way to get to heaven. You will rejoice and be grateful that God made a way to heaven and [he] invited you!"
24. **Acts 16:31** – *"... 'Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved...'"*

### **The Bible Brings Us Great Peace – Psalm 119:161–168**

25. **Psalm 119:165** – *"Great peace have they who love your law, and nothing can make them stumble."*
26. Pastor Gary said: "So many things in this life will rob us of our peace, [including]: conflict around the world; uncertainty about the future; bad health; loss of a job; death of a loved one; marital conflict; difficulties with children; loneliness; financial hardship; on and on, the list goes... So often we are doing all we can to keep our head above water, in terms of not wanting to give in to anxiety

and fear, but [anxiety and fear] usually is the default... and we lose our peace. We need to understand, first of all, that God is the source of peace. I mean the real peace that can wash over the human heart... The thing that combats anxiety and fear in my life is the Word of God, and when I read it, it's like medicine to [my] restless, anxious heart."

- a. **Isaiah 26:3** – *"You will keep in perfect peace him whose mind is steadfast, because he trusts in you."*
- b. **John 14:27** – *"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid."*

### **The Bible Trains Us For Proper Speech – Psalm 119:169–176**

27. **Psalm 119:171–172** – *"May my lips overflow with praise, for you teach me your decrees. May my tongue sing of your word, for all your commands are righteous."*
28. **Psalm 141:3** – *"Set a guard over my mouth, O LORD: keep watch over the door of my lips."*
29. If we have a problem with bad language, a critical or berating tongue, being quick to speak and slow to listen, lying, gossiping, or slandering others, then we need to read the Bible so we can receive training for proper, God-honoring speech.
  - a. **James 1:19** – *"My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak..."*
  - b. **Matthew 12:36** – *"But I [Jesus] tell you that men will have to give account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken."*
  - c. **Ephesians 4:29** – *"Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen."*
30. Reading the Bible will help us be edifying to others and glorifying to God!
31. **Psalm 19:14** – *"May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, O LORD, my Rock and my Redeemer."*

### **Discussion Questions**

1. Review the introduction to the study guide with your group to provide the appropriate background.
2. Read and discuss Psalm 119:145-152.
3. Read and discuss Psalm 119:153-160.
4. Read and discuss Psalm 119:161-168.

5. Close your time in prayer as the Holy Spirit leads.

\* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New International Version (NIV 1984)

September 10, 2017

“The Pilgrim’s Progress – Part 1/4”

Psalm 120–123

Pastor Gary Hamrick



Psalms 120–134 have the subtitle “Song of Ascents”, because these songs would have been sung by Jews as they made pilgrimage to Jerusalem three times a year for the major Jewish Feasts. These chapters were also referred to as the “Pilgrim Songs.” We are also on a pilgrimage, but it’s not to the earthly city of Jerusalem; it’s to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God.<sup>1</sup> In a new four-part series called “Pilgrim’s Progress,” Pastor Gary takes us through these psalms so that we can learn important principles in the journey of life until we reach our final destiny.

### Historical Background

1. There were two reasons people would always “ascend” to Jerusalem.
  - a. Elevation – It was a hilly place.
    - i. There are four main hills or mounts that surround Jerusalem: Mount Moriah, Mount of Olives, Mount Zion, and Mount Scopus.
      1. Jesus was crucified on Mount Moriah.
      2. Jesus ascended to heaven from the Mount of Olives, and Jesus’ return to earth will take place at the Mount of Olives.
      3. The palace of the king was built on Mount Zion.
      4. The average elevation is about twenty-six hundred feet above sea level.
      5. If you travel from Jerusalem to the Dead Sea, which is about eighteen miles south of the city, there is a drop of some four thousand feet!
    - b. Consecration – It was a holy place.
      - i. The Temple of the Lord was in Jerusalem.
      - ii. The Temple was destroyed by the Romans in AD 70, and it was never rebuilt.
  2. When families traveled to Jerusalem, they traveled in groups for fellowship and personal safety.
    - a. In **Psalm 23**, David wrote about the dangers of traveling the road to and from Jerusalem.
      - i. **Psalm 23:4** – “*Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death...*”
      - ii. According to **Luke 2:41–52**, Jesus, who at that time was only twelve years old, was left behind by Joseph and Mary when they returned home after having made pilgrimage to Jerusalem.
        1. The ancient historian, Josephus, wrote about the vast numbers of people who gathered in Jerusalem for the feasts, and he indicated that the number was somewhere between 2 million and 2.5 million, so it would have been easy to “lose” Jesus in the crowds.

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<sup>1</sup> **Hebrews 12:22a** – “*But you have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God.*”

3. The fact that Jesus sang these songs when he traveled to Jerusalem, makes these psalms even more remarkable.

## Psalm 120

### Exercise Endurance And Influence In This World

4. The psalm writer is in distress because he was conflicted by his culture, which was opposed to his values and his faith.
5. **Psalm 120:2** – *“Save me, O LORD, from **lying lips** and from **deceitful tongues.**”* (Emphasis added)
6. **Psalm 120:7** – *“I am a man of **peace**; but when I speak, they are for **war.**”* (Emphasis added)
7. When the psalmist wrote that he lived *“in Meshech,”* and that he lived in *“the tents of Kedar,”* he was indicating two geographical extremes, which would demonstrate the fact that the writer and his culture were “miles apart,” so to speak.
  - a. Meshech would be in what is modern-day Russia.
  - b. Kedar would be in what is modern-day Saudi Arabia.
8. Christians experience the same kind of conflicts as the psalmist because there are so many cultural changes that are immoral, unethical, and unbiblical.
9. The Lord’s answer to the writer was not to take him out of the culture, but to help him endure and influence the culture.
10. The Lord was encouraging the psalmist to represent him in the mission field, which was his culture.
11. Jesus made reference to the “occupy until I come” calling that Christians need to understand, in the parable he shared about the kingdom of God.
  - a. **Luke 19:11–13** – *“While they were listening to this, he went on to tell them a parable, because he was near Jerusalem and the people thought that the kingdom of God was going to appear at once. He said: ‘A man of noble birth went to a distant country to have himself appointed king and then to return. So he called ten of his servants and gave them ten minas. “Put this money to work,” he said, “until I come back.” ’ ”*
12. **1 Peter 2:11–12** – *“Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul. <sup>2</sup> Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.” <sup>3</sup>*

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<sup>2</sup> Pastor Gary said this was part of the call for Christians to endure.

<sup>3</sup> Pastor Gary said this was part of the call for Christians to influence.

13. Lot was a man who lived in a culture that conflicted with his faith in God.
- a. **2 Peter 2:7-8** – “... Lot, a righteous man, who was distressed by the filthy lives of lawless men (for that righteous man, living among them day after day, was tormented in his righteous soul by the lawless deeds he saw and heard)...”
14. We should be encouraged to know that the Holy Spirit will not only help us to endure, but he will also help us influence people too!

**Psalm 121**  
**Look To The Lord For Help**

15. **Psalm 121:2** – “My help comes from the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth.”
16. Pastor Gary said: “When we seek [help] from the Lord we must always remember... as Creator, the one who created the heavens and the earth in six days, [he] can probably handle one of [our] bad days!”
17. Pastor Gary said: “Please, friends, do not put your confidence and trust in a place or a thing [or] people. Put your ultimate, truest confidence and trust in the Lord! People, with all good intentions, will, from time to time, fail you, because no one is perfect, and people make mistakes. And if you hang all your confidence on another person, ... then when they fail, there goes your confidence, but the Lord will never fail you, and the Lord will never leave you, and the Lord will never forsake you.”
18. The watchful care of the Lord – day and night without distraction or sleep – as described in this psalm, is something that we should be eternally thankful and grateful for!
- a. **Psalm 121:6** – “[The] sun will not harm you by day, nor the moon by night.”

**Psalm 123**  
**Appeal To The Mercy Of God**

19. **Psalm 123:3** – “Have mercy on us, O LORD, have mercy on us, for we have endured much contempt.”
20. The Hebrew word for mercy is *chanan*, which means, to bestow favor and to bend or stoop in kindness to another, who would typically have been someone who was inferior.

21. The Lord shows his kindness, which we don't deserve, and he bestows favor on us that we didn't earn!
22. Pastor Gary said: "The only place that you will typically hear the word, mercy, outside of the church [or] outside of the Bible... is in a court of law... When [the] accused has... been found guilty of [a] crime, the one who has been convicted and found guilty, will sometimes ask the court for leniency. And the phrase that is used [by the guilt person] is that they 'throw themselves on the mercy of the court.' ... The one convicted of a crime is hoping [and] asking and appealing to the judge to go easy on them... [Even] though he or she deserves punishment, the request is, 'Please do not enforce the full punishment that I rightly deserve, and please show leniency!' "
23. **Ephesians 2:4-5** – *"But, because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions – it is by grace you have been saved."*
24. **Daniel 9:9** – *"The Lord our God is merciful and forgiving, even though we have rebelled against him..."*
25. **Micah 7:18** – *"Who is a god like you, who pardons sin and forgives... You do not stay angry forever but delight to show mercy."*
26. **James 5:11c** – *"The Lord is full of compassion and mercy."*
27. **Hebrews 4:16** – *"Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need."*
28. **Luke 1:50** – *"His mercy extends to those who fear him, from generation to generation."*
29. God is a merciful God, and we can always appeal to his mercy!

### Discussion Questions

1. Review the introduction to the study guide with your group to provide the appropriate background.
2. What are some of the ways worship music has been a blessing to you and a source of encouragement, either in a church service or Night of Worship at church, etc.?
3. Read **Psalms 120**.
4. What are some of the ways our culture is changing?
5. How are you dealing with these changes?

6. How should we pray and what should we do or say in response to the seemingly endless ways people are moving farther and farther away from the Lord, biblical principles, morality, etc.?
7. How would you describe the ways the Holy Spirit is helping you not only endure the culture, but influence the culture?
8. Read and discuss [1 Peter 2:11–12](#) and [2 Peter 2:7–8](#).
9. Read [Psalm 121](#).
10. Read and discuss Pastor Gary's remarks about placing our confidence in the Lord. (See #17 above)
11. Read [Psalm 123](#).
12. Read and discuss Pastor Gary's remarks about the mercy of the Lord. (See #22 above)
13. Read and discuss [Ephesians 2:4–5](#), [Daniel 9:9](#), [Micah 7:18](#), [James 5:11c](#), [Hebrews 4:16](#), and [Luke 1:50](#).
14. What are some of the ways you are personally experiencing the mercy of the Lord?
15. Close your time in prayer as the Holy Spirit leads.

\* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New International Version (NIV 1984)

September 24, 2017

“The Pilgrim’s Progress – Part 2/4”

Psalm 124-127

Pastor Gary Hamrick



In this message, Pastor Gary helps us understand how to maintain a heavenly perspective while we’re still living on earth, and since our citizenship is heaven, he encourages to remember that we are just passing through!

## Psalm 124

### God Is Our Great Defender And Deliverer

1. David described his enemy as being like a ferocious animal or a raging flood.
2. Bible scholars don’t know who David’s enemy was, but many Bible scholars believe the reference is to the Philistines, who were the perennial enemy of Israel.
3. This psalm is a reminder that when the enemy comes to attack, God will come to the rescue.
4. **1 Peter 5:8–9** – *“Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings.”* (Emphasis added)
5. There are four directives from the Lord that we need to be mindful of concerning our common enemy.
  - a. We need to be self-controlled.
    - i. **Proverbs 25:28** – *“Like a city whose walls are broken down is a man who lacks self-control.”*
    - ii. When we exercise self-control, we are like a fortified city, but a lack of self-control will put us in a dangerous position.
  - b. We need to be alert.
    - i. Christians must be vigilant in watching for the approach of the enemy.
    - ii. **Ephesians 4:27** – *“... do not give the devil a foothold.”*
    - iii. Pastor Gary said: “The enemy is constantly trying to work against us. Don’t give him [an] opportunity... [The] opportunity we give him comes when we compromise. When we compromise in our lives it’s like an open door [for] what Satan might want to do against us.”
  - c. We need to resist the enemy.
    - i. Pastor Gary said: “The Bible is your greatest defense against the attack of the enemy. Every single time Satan tried to tempt Jesus, Jesus hit him with the Word! Hit him with Scripture! Know your Bible!... The offensive weapon for every Christian is the sword of the Spirit... The rest of the armor is defensive weaponry.”

- ii. [Ephesians 6:17](#) – “... the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.”<sup>1</sup>
- d. We need to stand firm in the faith.
  - i. We should expect some level of spiritual warfare as being normal, but the directive from the Lord for us is to stand firm and he will help us.

### Psalm 126

#### God Welcomes Home Those Who Are Estranged From Him

6. This psalm refers to a dark time in Israel’s history, a time when they worshiped idols made of wood and stone.
7. The Lord’s patience ran out and he sent the Babylonians as an instrument of punishment, because he wanted to purge idolatry from the nation of Israel.
8. In 586 BC, Nebuchadnezzar besieged Jerusalem and took captive thousands of Jews who were taken back to Babylon.
9. After a period of about seventy years God raised up King Cyrus of Persia, who defeated the Babylonians.
10. God put it on King Cyrus’ heart to issue a decree that permitted the Jews to return to their homeland.
11. When the captives returned to Israel they rejoiced and were filled with joy, because the vast majority of the captives who returned to Israel had never seen their native land before!
12. Pastor Gary said: “This chapter is about people who were estranged from God and distant from him, [but] God brought them back. It’s about returning to the Lord and finding great joy in his presence. It’s a story of redemption and reconciliation and restoration... The fact of the matter is that there are probably some of you here who have also felt estranged from God, [and] there is a distance between you and God. Not a distance that he has created, but a distance that [you created]. Oftentimes I think that the distance... is attributed to three common things: 1) Sin in our own lives. When we disobey God and when we sin against him, a lot of times shame overwhelms us and shame whispers a lie to us, and the lie that shame whispers to us is, ‘You see what you’ve done? God could never take you back. See how ashamed you should feel? [See] how guilty you are? God would never love you and God would never take you back.’ Now, there is a reason we should feel shame and guilt and it’s called a conscience, and God has given it to us. And the Holy Spirit will convict us when we do wrong against the Lord. So, we should feel a measure of guilt, but that shame or guilt should never prevent us from running back to the loving arms of our Father... 2) I think another reason why we bring distance [to] our relationship with God is because, frankly, life disappoints us... Because life has not turned out the way we had hoped [it would] or some

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<sup>1</sup> Paul’s description of the “Armor of God” is found in [Ephesians 6:10–17](#).

things have happened in our lives... Disappointments of life begin to add up and tragedy takes its toll, and we get angry at God and we wonder where God was and we blame God... 3) I think another reason... is just plain neglect... [We] can just get so busy with life and we're doing our own thing... we forget God."

### Psalm 127

#### Remember That Children Are A Blessing From The Lord

13. The first section of this psalm is about doing things without the Lord that will end up being nothing more than a vain endeavor.
14. It should be understood that Solomon was writing about more than building a structure; he was also writing about building a life or a career or a business, etc.
15. Who better to know about vain endeavors than King Solomon, who wrote the book of Ecclesiastes, which is about how he accomplished great things, which ended up being meaningless because the Lord was not involved.
16. The second section of this psalm is about precious things.
17. **Psalm 127:3-5** – *"Sons are a heritage from the LORD, children a reward from him. Like arrows in the hands of a warrior are sons born in one's youth. Blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them. They will not be put to shame when they contend with their enemies in the gate."*
18. It's interesting to note that the Bible tells us that Solomon didn't have many children, even though he had one thousand women in his life.
  - a. **1 Kings 11:3** – *"He had seven hundred wives of royal birth and three hundred concubines, and his wives led him astray."*
  - b. The Bible records the names of two daughters named Taphath <sup>2</sup> and Basemath, <sup>3</sup> and one son, Rehoboam. <sup>4</sup>
19. Pastor Gary said: "The most precious blessings that God ever gives come in the form children. That's why they're singing this [song]... [However], we are living in a culture that doesn't value children... When we, as a nation, have aborted almost sixty million children since [the 1973] Roe v. Wade decision... Don't tell me our society values children... Of those sixty million children that have been aborted in our country, eight million have been aborted through Planned Parenthood... This is a tragedy." <sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> **1 Kings 4:11**

<sup>3</sup> **1 Kings 4:15**

<sup>4</sup> **1 Chronicles 3:10**

<sup>5</sup> Pastor Gary referenced a statistic that the sixty million aborted children in the United States since 1973 would roughly be the population of all of these states combined: Wisconsin, Illinois, Minnesota, Michigan, Indiana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Iowa, Nebraska, Kansas, and Virginia.

20. Pastor Gary, in a partial quote from an article that appeared *The Washington Post*, said: “God values life from the womb to the tomb, and we need to also protect life ourselves.”<sup>6</sup>
21. Pastor Gary said: “What [*The Washington Post*] didn’t quote, and I want to make sure that you hear the rest of it, if you read the article, [was this]: ‘When a society fails to stand up for those without a voice, it will be the end of that society.’ ... [It’s] true, and I don’t mean that [just] for the unborn, I mean that for the elderly, I mean that for the poor, [and] I mean that for the mentally disabled.”
22. Pastor Gary closed his message by reading a letter he received from a man whose family used to attend Cornerstone Chapel.<sup>7</sup>

### Discussion Questions

1. Read [Psalm 124](#).
2. Read and discuss [1 Peter 5:8–9](#).
3. Allow the people in your group to share their experiences about times when they weren’t alert and self-controlled, and how the enemy got the better of them.
4. Read and discuss Pastor Gary’s comments about being alert, resisting, and standing firm in the faith. (See #5 above)
5. What are some of the ways the Lord has come to your rescue?
6. Read [Psalm 126](#).
7. Read and discuss Pastor Gary’s comments about God’s willingness to welcome home those who are estranged from him. (See #12 above)
8. Read [Psalm 127](#).
9. Share examples of things you’ve done or experienced, without the Lord, that ended up being a vain endeavor, and compare/contrast those experiences with ones you've done or experienced when relying on the Lord.

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<sup>6</sup> [https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/virginia-politics/for-both-sides-of-abortion-debate-unusually-high-stakes-in-virginia-governors-race/2017/09/11/d651a198-787d-11e7-8839-ec48ec4cae25\\_story.html?utm\\_term=.b3ef29831222](https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/virginia-politics/for-both-sides-of-abortion-debate-unusually-high-stakes-in-virginia-governors-race/2017/09/11/d651a198-787d-11e7-8839-ec48ec4cae25_story.html?utm_term=.b3ef29831222)

<sup>7</sup> Pastor Gary starts reading at 42:12 and he ends at 46:57. Use this link to access the message in the Teaching Library: [https://cornerstonechapel.net/?page\\_id=418&i=1242](https://cornerstonechapel.net/?page_id=418&i=1242)

10. Spend time talking about the statistics Pastor Gary shared concerning abortion in the United States since the 1973 Roe v. Wade decision. (See #19 above)
11. How has the Lord changed your perspective concerning abortion?
12. What should Christians do to stand up for the right to life for the unborn and others? (See #21 above)
13. Allow the people in your group to share their thoughts and feelings about the letter Pastor Gary read at the end of the teaching. (See #22 above)
14. Close your time in prayer as the Holy Spirit leads.

\* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New International Version (NIV 1984)

October 1, 2017

“The Pilgrim’s Progress – Part 3/4”

Psalm 128-130

Pastor Gary Hamrick



In his continuing series through the Pilgrim Psalms, Pastor Gary provides specific biblical encouragement for every Believer in their journey of faith: God is a giver of many blessings, he heals us from our past, and he forgives our sins.

## Psalm 128

### Be Thankful for God’s Blessings

1. A good working definition of God’s blessing would be: God’s underserved favor and goodness that he freely bestows upon us.
2. Pastor Gary said: “Please note that [God’s] favor and goodness can take many different forms... I emphasize that because, unfortunately, in the modern American church, at least, there have been [two] opposite [and] extreme views that have emerged. And unfortunately, both of these [opposing and] extreme views have kind of relegated God’s blessing to solely be about material things... So, on the one end of the extreme, when some talk about God’s blessing, it comes through what has been termed the prosperity gospel. Again, the emphasis being that it’s mainly about material things and tangible things... It’s all about [the Lord] blessing your life with divine health, with success, with a great job, with a perfect spouse, with perfect kids, with everything just perfectly lined up in your life, because after all, God’s favor and blessing is upon you so long as you are walking in faith, all of this abundance will be yours. But the problem with that is that you can have some good, godly people looking at their lives and really realizing that they have a not so perfect health, and a not so perfect job... [a] not so perfect bank account, and certainly [a] not so perfect spouse, and not so perfect kids. And then you can look at your not so perfect life and think: ‘What’s wrong with me? What have I done wrong that God has not blessed me?’<sup>1</sup> ... Frankly, the other extreme is just as devastating and that extreme is the opposite view, which is the poverty gospel... [It’s] the idea that God... keeps us stripped from anything, and that what God really wants is for us to stay poor, because if we stay poor we [will] stay humble... And if we ever have stuff we [will] become corrupt. And so, it’s kind of this Puritan mindset that somehow happiness and holiness don’t go together. [Meaning] that if you’re holy you must not be happy, because that’s not a good thing. And, if you’re happy, you’re certainly not holy. [It’s] the idea that success and sanctification can’t go together... [God] wants to make sure we have little to nothing, because poverty equals purity... The problem with [the] second extreme view is [that] you have Christians who look at their lives and... they [see that they] are kind of successful, [their] bank account is pretty full, [they] have a sweet family, [and] life has been good, and so, the poverty gospel [makes them] feel like it’s wrong to have these things and to enjoy a good life.”

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<sup>1</sup> Pastor Gary shared the example of Job’s friends, who basically told Job that the reason all of the tragic things that happened to Job and his family came as the judgment for sin in his life.

3. The Bible does teach that God gives us the ability to produce wealth.
  - a. **Deuteronomy 8:18** – *“But remember the LORD your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth...”*
  
4. Many people in the Bible were richly blessed by the Lord, and the list includes men like Abraham, Job, David, and Solomon.
  
5. **Proverbs 10:22** – *“The blessing of the LORD brings wealth...”*
  
6. The Bible also warns against greed and the love of money.
  - a. **1 Timothy 6:10** – *“For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.”*
  - b. **Matthew 6:24** – *“No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money.”*
  
7. Pastor Gary said: “The Bible never condemns wealth, nor does it uphold poverty as the pathway to righteousness... I want to make this clear so I just want to state this as plainly as I can. It is not wrong to have or desire nice things. The danger is found when the desire and pursuit after those things, and happiness itself, because of those things, become a greater ambition in life than holiness found in a relationship with Christ.”
  
8. Pastor Gary shared a number of Scriptures from the Old Testament and the New Testament to help bring clarity to a biblical understanding of God’s blessing.
  - a. **Genesis 1:22** – *“God blessed them and said, ‘Be fruitful and increase in number...”*
  - b. **Genesis 9:1** – *“Then God blessed Noah and his sons, saying to them, ‘Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the earth.’ ”*
  - c. **Genesis 12:2–3** – *“I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.”*
  - d. **Psalm 32:1–2** – *“Blessed is he whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man whose sin the LORD does not count against him and in whose spirit is no deceit.”*
  - e. **Psalm 40:4** – *“Blessed is the man who makes the LORD his trust, who does not look to the proud, to those who turn aside to false gods.”*
  - f. **Psalm 84:5** – *“Blessed are those whose strength is in you...”*
  - g. **Psalm 94:12** – *“Blessed is the man you discipline, O LORD, the man you teach from your law...”*
  - h. **Matthew 5:1–11** – Jesus made references to the blessings of God in the Sermon on the Mount.
  - i. **Mark 10:16** – *“And [Jesus] took the children in his arms, put his hands on them and blessed them.”*

- j. **Luke 11:28** – “[Jesus] replied, ‘Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it.’”
  - k. **Ephesians 1:3** – “Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.”
  - l. **James 1:12** – “Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial...”
9. The Bible makes it clear that God blesses us in big ways and little ways; in visible ways and invisible ways; in tangible and intangible ways; in good times and bad times.
10. **Philippians 4:11–12** – “... I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want.”
11. God’s blessings are for those who fear him.
- a. **Psalm 128:1, 4** – “Blessed are all who fear [this means to have a deep, reverential respect] the LORD, who walk in his ways... Thus is the man blessed who fears the LORD.”
12. God’s blessings are given to us so that we can be a blessing to others.
- a. **Genesis 12:2–3** – “I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.”
  - b. Pastor Gary said: “God blesses us, not so we can be a bucket, but so we can be a funnel!”

### Psalm 129

#### Persevere Through Tough Times And Trust God With The Outcome

13. **Psalm 129:1–2** – “They have greatly oppressed me from my youth – let Israel say – they have greatly oppressed me from my youth, but they have not gained the victory over me.”
14. Most Bible scholars believe this psalm was written about the four hundred years the nation of Israel were slaves in Egypt.
15. A quick overview of the history of Israel includes the following periods of slavery, captivity, oppression, and slaughter:
- a. 400 years in Egypt
  - b. 70 years in Babylon
  - c. More than 400 years under the Romans
  - d. Approximately 250 years under the rule of the Byzantine Empire
  - e. More than 400 years under the Muslim caliphates
  - f. Approximately 200 years during the time of the Catholic crusaders
  - g. Approximately 200 years under the Egyptian mamelukes
  - h. Approximately 400 years under the Ottoman Turks

- i. They were under British rule from 1917 to 1948
  - j. They suffered terribly during the rule of the Nazis during WW2
  - k. The Jews understand slavery and oppression, perhaps more than any other people group!
16. The resolve of the psalmist is noteworthy, in that he wrote that *“they have not gained the victory over me... because [the Lord] has cut me free from the cords of the wicked.”*
17. Pastor Gary said: “Listen to me on this! There might be some times in your life, in this journey between here and heaven, when people will oppress you, when people will insult you, when people will mistreat you or harm you, or betray you... It’s sin... but because sinful people occupy this world, sinful people will do sinful things to other people, and if somebody does something to you [that] is sinful, okay, give them to God and move on! But do not let what people do to you to rob you of your future because of what they’ve done to you in your past... The Christian life is about persevering and it’s about trusting God with the outcome.”
18. **2 Corinthians 4:8–10** – *“We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body.”*
19. The psalmist asks the Lord to do what needs to be done!
- a. **Psalm 129:5–7** – *“May all who hate Zion be turned back in shame. May they be like grass on the roof, which withers before it can grow...”*

### Psalm 130

#### Remember That Forgiveness Is Only A Prayer Away

20. This psalm is counted among the seven psalms that are known as penitential psalms.
- a. **Psalms 6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, and 143.**
  - b. These psalms are about confession, repentance, and forgiveness.
21. The writer was in the depths of despair over his own sin, and his cry is for the mercy of the Lord.
- a. **Psalm 130:2** – *“O Lord, hear my voice. Let your ears be attentive to my cry for mercy.”*
  - b. The Hebrew word for mercy is *hanan*, which means, to stoop down and show kindness to another.
22. David understood the filthiness of his sin and he cried out for God’s mercy after he sinned against God in the adulterous affair he had with Bathsheba.
- a. **Psalm 51:1** – *“Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions.”*
23. **Psalm 130:3–4** – *“If you, O LORD, kept a record of sins, O Lord, who could stand? But with you there is forgiveness...”*

24. Horatio Spafford wrote the famous hymn *It Is Well With My Soul*, and he made reference to sin and forgiveness in the third stanza: "My sin oh, the bliss of this glorious thought! My sin, not in part, but the whole, is nailed to the cross, and I bear it no more; praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul!" <sup>2</sup>

### Discussion Questions

1. Read [Psalm 128](#).
2. What are some of the ways you've experienced the undeserved favor and goodness of the Lord in your life?
3. Read and discuss Pastor Gary's remarks concerning the two extreme views of God's blessing. (See #2 above)
4. Spend time talking about the Scriptures that warn about greed and the love of money. (See #6 above)
5. Read and discuss the lyrics to the hymn *Count Your Blessings*, written by Johnson Oatman, Jr., in 1897. <sup>3</sup>

When upon life's billows you are tempest-tossed,  
When you are discouraged, thinking all is lost,  
Count your many blessings, name them one by one,  
And it will surprise you what the Lord has done.

*Refrain:*

Count your blessings, name them one by one,  
Count your blessings, see what God has done!  
Count your blessings, name them one by one,  
Count your many blessings, see what God has done.

Are you ever burdened with a load of care?  
Does the cross seem heavy you are called to bear?  
Count your many blessings, every doubt will fly,  
And you will keep singing as the days go by.

When you look at others with their lands and gold,  
Think that Christ has promised you His wealth untold;  
Count your many blessings money cannot buy  
Your reward in heaven, nor your home on high.

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<sup>2</sup> [http://hymnary.org/text/when\\_peace\\_like\\_a\\_river\\_attendeth\\_my\\_way](http://hymnary.org/text/when_peace_like_a_river_attendeth_my_way)

<sup>3</sup> [http://hymnary.org/text/when\\_upon\\_lifes\\_billows\\_you\\_are\\_tempest](http://hymnary.org/text/when_upon_lifes_billows_you_are_tempest)

So, amid the conflict whether great or small,  
Do not be discouraged, God is over all;  
Count your many blessings, angels will attend,  
Help and comfort give you to your journey's end.

6. Either read each Scripture or select several to provide an overview of what the Bible has to say about God's blessing. (See #8 above)
7. Read and discuss [Philippians 4:11–12](#).
8. Allow the people in your group to talk about the ways the Lord is helping them to live a contented life.
9. How has the Lord blessed you for the purpose of being a blessing to others?
10. Read [Psalm 129](#).
11. Spend time talking about Pastor Gary's remarks about persevering in tough times. (See #17 above)
12. Read and discuss [2 Corinthians 4:8–10](#).
13. Read [Psalm 130](#).
14. Spend time talking about what it means to receive forgiveness from the Lord.
15. Close your time in prayer as the Holy Spirit leads.

\* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New International Version (NIV 1984)

October 8, 2017

“The Pilgrim’s Progress – Part 4/4”

Psalm 120–138

Pastor Gary Hamrick



Today’s message is Pastor Gary’s fourth and final teaching in the Pilgrim’s Progress series, and he teaches on the following themes: finding satisfaction and contentment, worshiping the Lord, and keeping unity in the church.

### Psalm 131

#### Find Your Satisfaction And Contentment In The Lord

1. Pastor Gary referred to a recent global study, which indicates that if a person has a roof over their head and at least one meal a day, that person would be wealthier than 93 percent of the world’s population, and if a person has one pair of shoes, they would be better off than 75 percent of the world’s population!
2. Today, the average American household has approximately \$16,000.00 of credit card debt, which is one way of demonstrating the fact that many people live discontented lives, because they have to buy the latest and greatest thing with the hope that their purchase will make them happy.
3. Pastor Gary said: “[The] fact of the matter is that the greatest satisfaction and contentment in our lives will not come from power, prestige, or even people, but it will come from a personal relationship with the Lord... [The] deepest longings of our souls will only be ultimately and completely fulfilled by the Lord.”
4. **Psalm 131:2** – *“... I have stilled and quieted my soul; like a weaned child with its mother, like a weaned child is my soul within me.”*
  - a. The Bible clearly teaches that God has no gender, being neither male nor female.
  - b. The Bible teaches that God is seen as father, however, there are a few Scriptural references in which God is seen as having characteristics like a mother, in that he was loving, caring and nurturing.
  - c. Pastor Gary said: “A nursing child wants mommy for food and comfort, but a weaned child wants mommy just for who she is, for her love and closeness. And that’s what David [was] saying: ‘I don’t want God for what he can give to me; I have found a place in my heart where I love God just for who [he] is.’ ”
5. **Psalm 46:10** – *“Be still and know that I am God...”*
6. **Psalm 34:8** – *“Taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the man who takes refuge in him.”*
7. **Psalm 37:7** – *“Be still before the LORD...”*

## Psalm 132

### Make The Worship Of The Lord Central To Your Life

8. Many Bible scholars believe that Solomon wrote this psalm, because Solomon quoted from this psalm when he dedicated the Temple. <sup>1</sup>
9. Pastor Gary said: “Whoever was inspired by the Spirit to write this, one thing is clear, it expresses about David his heart for the worship of God. David loved to worship the Lord, and he made it his undying goal to [build the] Temple of God; a dwelling place for the Lord.”
10. **Psalm 132:3–5** – *“I will not enter my house or go to my bed – I will allow no sleep to my eyes, no slumber to my eyelids, till I find a place for the LORD, a dwelling for the Mighty One of Jacob.”*
11. Pastor Gary said: “David was a shepherd, a warrior, and a king, but David was always a worshiper... He had it in his heart to always exalt God and to praise his name and to make sure that God was not only personally exalted but nationally exalted. When he became king, he made it a part of the national disposition of Israel; we will worship God, we will give him glory, we will exalt his name.”
12. The Bible teaches us that there are three primary ways we can worship God.
  - a. Singing.
    - i. **Psalm 132:9** – *“... may your saints sing for joy.”*
    - ii. Worshiping and singing praise to the Lord is not the “warm-up act,” that precedes the teaching time; it’s an important time to get our heart right before we can understand and receive the Word of God!
    - iii. **Psalm 134:2** – *“Lift up your hands in the sanctuary and praise the LORD.”*
    - iv. **Psalm 96:1–2** – *“Sing to the LORD a new song; sing to the LORD, all the earth. Sing to the LORD, praise his name; proclaim his salvation day after day.”*
    - v. **Psalm 47:6** – *“Sing praises to God, sing praises; sing praises to our King, sing praises.”*
    - vi. There are more than four hundred references in the Bible concerning singing to God, and fifty of those references are direct commands to sing to God!
    - vii. **Psalm 98:4** – *“Make a joyful noise unto the LORD, all the earth: make a loud noise, and rejoice, and sing praise.”* (KJV – King James Version)
  - b. Living.
    - i. **Romans 12:1** – *“Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God – this is your spiritual act of worship.”*
    - ii. **Romans 6:13** – *“Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness.”*

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<sup>1</sup> **2 Chronicles 6:12–42**

- iii. Pastor Gary said: "In other words, when you and I live lives of purity and holiness before God; it brings worship to God."
- c. Giving.
  - i. **Philippians 4:18–19** – *"I have received full payment and even more; I am amply supplied, now that I have received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent. They are a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God. And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus."*
  - ii. Pastor Gary said: "You see, one of the qualities and characteristics of God is that he's generous... And, to the degree that we are generous, we actually then show ourselves in the same character and nature as the Lord... You can't out give God. God's people will never [beg] for bread. <sup>2</sup> God always takes care of us, and [he] will meet all of our needs. The Bible teaches the principle of tithing, which is to give a tenth [of our gross income] ... It's an opportunity of grace... It is better in my life... when I give God a tenth, I am better off living off the 90 percent, than when I keep 100 percent and try to do it all myself."

### Psalm 133

#### Keep The Unity Of The Spirit In The Church

- 13. The theme of this psalm is unity.
- 14. **Ephesians 4:3** – *"Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace."*
- 15. Pastor Gary said: "A spirit of unity comes from God. He gives us unity, but we must keep what he has given us. [Keeping unity] is on us... Why is that he commands us in this way? ... Because what it implies to us is that unity does not come naturally [nor] does it come comfortably. We have to work at this. And why do we have to work at this? Because we have a lot of differences among us, [but] the differences among us add to the richness of the body of Christ [i.e. the Church] ... But because of the diversity we have to make sure we maintain unity. Because don't you know that Satan loves to bring division [into] the body of Christ, and he will exploit our differences to his advantage wherever and whenever possible. Be they differences along gender lines or racial lines or economic lines or education lines or [denominational] lines... [Satan] knows that we are less capable of advancing the Kingdom [of God] when we are divided than when we are united."
- 16. **Luke 11:17** – *"Jesus knew their thoughts and said to them: 'Any kingdom divided against itself will be ruined, and a house divided against itself will fall.' "*
- 17. **Galatians 3:28** – *"There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus."*

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<sup>2</sup> **Psalm 37:25** – *"I [David] was young and now I am old, yet I have never seen the righteous forsaken or their children begging for bread."*

18. Pastor Gary said: “[Unfortunately], there is this big ecumenical movement today, which wants to unite everybody and everything under one banner; the banner of love... I’m not about that. There are some churches and some organizations that I can’t link arms with because of their unbiblical stance on matters that are important.”
19. “It’s better to be divided by the truth than to be united in error.” – Charles H. Spurgeon
20. Pastor Gary said: “What I am talking about is [that] we need to put aside our petty differences, and our racial prejudices, and our selfish preferences. And we need to do [all of that] for the sake of unity in the church and [for] the advancement of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.”
21. David’s reference to *“oil running down on the beard, running down on Aaron’s beard, down upon the collar of his robes,”* indicates the saturating effect of unity.
22. **Romans 12:18** – *“If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.”*
23. David’s reference to the *“dew of [Mount] Hermon... falling on Mount Zion,”* indicates the far-reaching nature of unity, because Mount Zion (approximately twenty-six hundred feet) and Mount Hermon (in Northern Israel past the Golan Heights, is the highest mountain in Israel) are separated by a distance of nearly two hundred miles!
24. **John 17:23b** – *“May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.”*
25. Pastor Gary said: “Unity is not something we need to keep just for the sake of Cornerstone Chapel, [even] though that’s important; unity is something that we need to keep for the sake of the Gospel that advances around the world. Because the Gospel needs to be advanced [by] people who are unified around the central person of Jesus Christ. [We] need to testify of Jesus, and if we are bickering, and if we’re fighting, and we are backstabbing and backbiting, and all of this kind of stuff, how in the world can we testify of Christ? So, unity is important because it is far reaching... May our unity have a global impact because people can see Jesus Christ in us.”
26. **John 13:35** – *“By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”*

### Discussion Questions

1. Read **Psalm 131**.
2. Read and discuss Pastor Gary’s remarks about satisfaction and contentment. (See #3 above)
3. What are some of the ways your relationship with the Lord has changed your perspective on living a content life?

4. Read and discuss **Psalm 34:8**.
5. Read **Psalm 132**.
6. Spend time reading the Scriptures and talking about the three ways we worship God. (See #12 above)
7. How would you describe your level of actively worshiping the Lord in singing?
8. What are some of the ways the Holy Spirit has changed you so that you are now living a life that is more Christ-like in holiness and purity?
9. Share examples of the ways the Holy Spirit has led you to be a generous person?
10. Read Psalm **133**.
11. Read and discuss Pastor Gary's remarks about the importance of maintaining unity in the church. (See #15 above)
12. How would you describe unity in our church and unity among local churches?
13. Read Psalm **134** and close your time in prayer as the Holy Spirit leads.

\* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New International Version (NIV 1984)

October 29, 2017

“The Divine Attributes of a Personal God”

Psalm 139

Pastor Gary Hamrick



Psalm 139 is an intensely personal song David wrote to his father in heaven. Even though this psalm was not intended to be a theological discourse, David did express God’s divine attributes as he described his relationship with God. Pastor Gary’s message today will help us understand more about the kind of personal relationship we can have with God.

### Historical Background

1. David did not write theoretically about God; he wrote this psalm based on his personal experience and his personal relationship with God.
2. Pastor Gary said: “David [fought] many battles, and he won and lost a lot, [both] on and off the battlefield. David [was] a man who experienced tremendous success and tremendous sin. He [was] a man who enjoyed tremendous victory and tremendous loss. David, in the course of his lifetime, experienced conflict in his home and conflict in his own heart, and yet, he [looked] back over the course of his life and he [wrote] Psalm 139 from the perspective of his personal knowledge and understanding of God, as God [had] revealed himself [throughout] his lifetime... We are going to look at this [psalm] through the lens of David, as in, how is it that God personally is all-knowing in [our lives]? How is it that God is personally ever-present in [our lives]? How is it that God is all-powerful personally in [our lives]? How is it that [God] is all-holy [our lives], as it concerns us?”

### Psalm 139:1–6 The Omniscience Of God

3. God is all-knowing, so he fully knows every person.
4. **Psalm 139:1** – *“O LORD, you have searched me and you know me.”*
5. The Hebrew word for search, means to mine or dig deep, as though digging for minerals in the earth.
6. Pastor Gary said: “God is familiar with every intimate detail of [our lives]. Nothing escapes his knowledge. He knows everything about us... He is intimately acquainted with us, and he is familiar with us in all our ways.”
  - a. **Hebrews 4:13** – *“Nothing in all creation is hidden from God’s sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.”*

7. It's interesting to note that the King James Version (KJV) does not include the word "me" at the end of verse one.
8. We should read this verse with the understanding that God has searched us, and **he knows!** (Emphasis added)
9. God knows when we are at leisure and when we are at work.
  - a. **Psalm 139:2** – *"You know when I sit [at leisure] and when I rise [at work] ..."*
10. God knows **all** of our thoughts! (Emphasis added)
  - a. **Psalm 139:2** – *"... you perceive my thoughts from afar."*
  - b. Pastor Gary encouraged us to be concerned about guarding our thought life!
11. God knows about our public life and our private life.
  - a. **Psalm 139:3** – *"You discern my going out [public life] and my lying down [private life]; you are familiar with all my ways."*
  - b. **Job 31:4** – *"Does he not see my ways and count my every step?"*
12. God knows what we are going to say before we say it!
  - a. **Psalm 139:4** – *"Before a word is on my tongue you know it completely, O LORD."*
  - b. **1 Corinthians 13:12b** – *"Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known."*
13. Pastor Gary said: "God knows everything about us. He knows what we've done. He knows every place we've gone. He knows every idea we have thought. He knows every word we formulate before it even rolls off our tongue. And yet, he still loves us. This is why, in part, I'm convinced that David [wrote that] *'Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain.'* ... This transcends any human relationship. No other person on the planet knows [us] like God knows [us]... God knows us better than we know ourselves!"
  - a. **Psalm 139:6** – *"Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain."*

### **Psalm 139:7–12 The Omnipresence Of God**

14. God is ever-present, so he is always with every person.
15. **Psalm 139:7–8** – *"Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presences? If I go up to the heavens [north], you are there; if I make my bed in the depths [south], you are there."*
  - a. The Hebrew word for depths is *sheol*, which is the ancient word for hell.

16. **Psalm 139:9–10** – *“If I rise on the wings of the dawn [east], if I settle on the far side of the sea [west]...”*
17. Wherever we are God will never forsake or abandon us!
18. God is there when we experience times of spiritual darkness, and he is the one who can bring us out!
- a. **John 8:12** – *“When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, ‘I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.’”*
19. God is there when we experience times of emotional darkness, and he is the one who can bring us out!
- a. **Psalm 107:10–14** – *“Some sat in darkness and the deepest gloom... Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble, and he saved them from their distress. He brought them out of darkness and the deepest gloom and broke away their chains.”*

### **Psalm 139:13–18 The Omnipotence Of God**

20. God is all-powerful, and he has wonderfully created every person.
- a. **Psalm 139:13–14** – *“For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.”*
- b. Pastor Gary shared an overview of the amazing complexity and intricacy of the human body.
- i. To watch this portion of the message, go to the Teaching Library, select this teaching, go to minute 24:40 to 26:42.
21. **Jeremiah 1:5** – *“Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart...”*
22. Every human life matters to God, both inside and outside the womb!
23. Pastor Gary said: “God has knowledge of us even before we’re conceived. Listen, friends, you can’t read Psalm 139 without understanding that every human life matters to God, [both] inside and outside the womb! God cherishes human life. If he knows our unformed body even before we are conceived, [and] if he knit us together in our mother’s womb, then he has created us with purpose and intention and value! That’s what we need to understand about how we are wonderfully created... The human life is an expression of his divine power. [Life] is not a mistake. Your life is not an accident, and life is certainly not a blob of tissue in a mother’s womb! ... On the authority of Psalm 139 alone, I can declare to you that God is pro-life and so should every Christian be!”

## Psalm 139:19–24 The Omnirighteousness Of God

24. God is all-holy, and he is constantly working on every person.
25. Pastor Gary said: “We think of hate and love as opposite extremes, but in biblical terms, they were not necessarily meant as opposites, but [were] sometimes used as comparative statements. So, when David [wrote] about hating the wicked, what he [was really writing about was comparative] to the holiness of God... He [was] not expressing personal vengeance. He [was] expressing a moral repugnance. He was [writing] about the wickedness of the world, and how it [was] morally repugnant to him. Even Jesus used the word hate in [Luke 14:26](#)... Now, [Jesus] didn’t mean that you should have disdain for the people that you love or disdain for your own life. He used [the word hate] in a biblical, ancient sense... [meaning that we need] to love [Jesus] more than anyone else... But lest you think that David [was] making a proud statement [about his own righteousness], he actually asked [God] to search his own heart for wickedness.”
  - a. [Luke 14:26](#) – *“If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters – yes, even his own life – he cannot be my disciple.”*
  - b. [Psalm 139:23–24](#) – *“Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive [KJV – wicked] way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.”*

### Discussion Questions

1. Read [Psalm 139:1–6](#).
2. How would you describe your relationship with the Lord?
3. How has your relationship with the Lord changed/grown in the past year?
4. Read and discuss Pastor Gary’s remarks about the Lord searching us and the fact that **he knows**. (See #7 and #8 above)
5. What are some of the ways you intentionally guard your thought life?
6. Read and discuss Pastor Gary’s comments about the wonder of God being intimately acquainted with every person. (See #13 above)
7. Read [Psalm 139:7–12](#).
8. Allow the people in your group to share their experiences about the ways the Lord has brought them out of spiritual and/or emotional darkness. (See #18 and #19 above)
9. Read [Psalm 139:13–18](#).

10. Provide an overview of Pastor Gary's remarks about the complexity and intricacy of the human body. (See #20b above)
11. Read and discuss Pastor Gary's remarks on the fact that God is pro-life. (See #23 above)
12. What should we do and how should we respond to a culture/society that has, in many ways, rejected the historical Judeo-Christian worldview that every person's life should be valued and protected, both inside and outside the womb?
13. Read [Psalm 139:19–24](#).
14. Read and discuss Pastor Gary's remarks about the biblical understanding of hate and love. (See #25)
15. Allow the people in your group to share their experiences about the times they have asked the Lord to search them to see if there was wickedness and sin in their heart that needed to be dealt with.
16. Close your time in prayer as the Holy Spirit leads.

\* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New International Version (NIV 1984)

November 5, 2017

“Ways to Praise”

Psalm 140–150

Pastor Gary Hamrick



In today’s teaching, Pastor Gary answers four questions on the topic of praising God: What is praise to God; Who should praise God; Why should we praise God; and How should we praise God? We might be surprised to learn how much this topic affects all aspects of our lives. Praising God helps us to “verticalize” our lives instead of always looking at the horizontal. Praising God also helps us to center our lives, in that praise helps us focus our priorities and gives us the right perspective on life.

### “Verticalize” And Focus On The Lord

1. Pastor Gary encouraged us to reshape our thinking so that we “verticalize” ourselves instead primarily being concerned about the horizontal (the things of this world and this life).
2. **2 Corinthians 4:18** – “So we **fix our eyes** not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.” (Emphasis added)
3. **Hebrews 3:1** – “Therefore, holy brothers, who share in the heavenly calling, **fix your thoughts** on Jesus, the apostle and high priest whom we confess.” (Emphasis added)
4. Pastor Gary said: “The [reason] this topic is important is because it helps get the right perspective and priority on life. You see, when my focus is on the Lord there’s this wonderful thing that happens in praising him, where the greatness of God begins to make me realize the smallness of my problems. [I realize the] smallness of my anxieties or my fears or my worries. When [I] begin to just focus on the greatness of God, everything else dwarfs in comparison, and [my heart gets] aligned with him, and I begin to get the right perspective, and get the right priorities in my life.”

### What Is Praise To God? – Psalm 145

5. The Hebrew word for praise is *hallel*, which is used in the English word, hallelujah, which means praise the Lord!
6. Psalms 146 through 150 are known as the hallelujah psalms, because each psalm begins and ends with, “Praise the Lord.”

7. When we praise the Lord, we are ascribing value to him, in the same way that an appraiser would value a home or property.
8. **Psalm 145:3** – *“Great is the LORD and most worthy of praise; his greatness no one can fathom.”*
9. “If God were small enough to be understood, He would not be big enough to be worshiped.” – Evelyn Underhill <sup>1</sup>
  - a. “If God was small enough for us to figure out, He wouldn’t be big enough for us to worship.” – J.B. Phillips <sup>2</sup>

### Who Should Praise God? – Psalm 148

10. This psalm helps us understand who and what should praise the Lord.
  - a. **Psalm 148:2** – Angels
  - b. **Psalm 148:3** – Solar system
  - c. **Psalm 148:4** – Atmosphere
  - d. **Psalm 148:7** – Land and sea creatures
  - e. **Psalm 148:8** – Weather
  - f. **Psalm 148:9** – Plant kingdom
  - g. **Psalm 148:10** – Animal kingdom
  - h. **Psalm 148:11** – Rulers of government
  - i. **Psalm 148:12** – Men, women, and children
11. Pastor Gary said: “In other words, let the “crea-tion” and the “crea-ted” worship the “Crea-tor.”
12. Pastor Gary said: “Creation is actually in a fixed state of glorifying God... [He] has displayed himself in the beauty and the wonder and the complexity of the universe. And that with an intelligent examination of the data one can see that there is a Divine Creator behind all of this wonder and complexity of our universe. And so, creation stands in a constant fixed state of praising God by virtue of its design, which testifies to God as Creator... So, God tells us in his Word that his handiwork is constantly testifying [about him] and glorifying him.”
  - a. **Romans 1:20** – *“For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities – his eternal power and divine nature – have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made...”*
  - b. **Psalm 19:1–2** – *“The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they display knowledge.”*
13. Everyone who knows the Lord personally will have a natural desire to praise and worship the Lord.

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.beliefnet.com/quotes/christian/e/evelyn-underhill/if-god-were-small-enough-to-be-understood-he-woul.aspx>

<sup>2</sup> [https://books.google.com/books?id=Lcvk9j2s0oIC&pg=PT1217&lpg=PT1217&dq=j.b.+phillips+quote+if+god+were+small+enough&source=bl&ots=EhJUlxr6KF&sig=cjqKuJ7DbjccUGz83Ezh6XMUfw&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKewi71fHs6q\\_XAhVKjVQKHVjhBmMQ6AEIPDAE#v=onepage&q=j.b.%20phillips%20quote%20if%20god%20were%20small%20enough&f=false](https://books.google.com/books?id=Lcvk9j2s0oIC&pg=PT1217&lpg=PT1217&dq=j.b.+phillips+quote+if+god+were+small+enough&source=bl&ots=EhJUlxr6KF&sig=cjqKuJ7DbjccUGz83Ezh6XMUfw&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKewi71fHs6q_XAhVKjVQKHVjhBmMQ6AEIPDAE#v=onepage&q=j.b.%20phillips%20quote%20if%20god%20were%20small%20enough&f=false)

- a. Pastor Gary gave an overview of [Luke 7:36–50](#), concerning the account of the female prostitute who wiped her tears from Jesus’ feet with her hair, and how she also anointed his feet with expensive perfume, how she did this as an act of thanks and worship for the forgiveness she had received from the Lord.
14. Everyone who has been forgiven of their sin should want to joyfully and thankfully worship the Lord!
15. [Psalm 150:6](#) – *“Let everything that has breath praise the LORD. Praise the LORD.”*

### Why Should We Praise God?

16. Pastor Gary said: “Why should we worship him? Because he’s worthy of our praise, but we should worship him because there’s [a] natural exuberance that comes from our heart over the most glorious thing that’s ever happened to mankind! That God so loved the world that he would send his son Jesus to die on a cross. <sup>3</sup> ... Real enthusiasm is knowing about God and all that he’s done and being captivated [by] his love and who he is! ... And [praise] will naturally flow from a heart of thanksgiving.”
17. [Psalm 48:1](#) – *“Great is the LORD, and most worthy of praise, in the city of our God, his holy mountain.”*
18. The Lord, in response to receiving our praise, will bless us in many ways.
- a. We read in [Acts 16:16-40](#), that in response to Paul and Silas’ praise, the Lord freed them from a jail in Philippi.
    - i. [Acts 16:25–26](#) – *“About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them. Suddenly there was such a violent earthquake that the foundations of the prison were shaken. At once all the prison doors flew open, and everybody’s chains came loose.”*
    - ii. The Lord can set us free from prisons of fear, anxiety, grief, and all kinds of prisons we find ourselves in.
  - b. We read in [2 Chronicles 20](#), that the Lord gave victory to Jehoshaphat and the people of the tribe of Judah, in response to their praise.
    - i. [2 Chronicles 20:22](#) – *“As they began to sing and praise, the LORD set ambushes against the men of Ammon and Moab and Mount Seir who were invading Judah, and they were defeated.”*
  - c. We read in [2 Samuel 12](#), that when the child that was conceived in David’s adulterous affair with Bathsheba died, he went to worship the Lord.

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<sup>3</sup> [John 3:16–18](#) – *“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son.”*

- i. **2 Samuel 12:20a** – *“Then David got up from the ground. After he had washed, put on lotions and changed his clothes, he went into the house of the LORD and worshiped.”*
- ii. Pastor Gary said: “[What the Bible tells us that David did is] very challenging. I know that there are people in our own congregation [who have] lost children. And that’s almost unthinkable to go to the house of the Lord and to worship God. Now, he was not worshiping God because his child died; he was worshiping God because he realized that God [was] the only source for [his] comfort. And God [was] the only source to help [him] through [his] grief. And God [was] the only source, ... the only one who could help [him] to carry on when [he] didn’t feel like carrying on. That’s what God does. That’s why [David] worshiped the Lord.”

### **How Should We Praise God?**

#### 19. Praise the Lord with singing!

- a. There are more than four hundred references in the Bible concerning singing praise to the Lord, and fifty of those are direct commands to sing to the Lord.
- b. **Psalm 149:1** – *“Praise the LORD. Sing to the LORD a new song, his praise in the assembly of the saints.”*
- c. **Psalm 105:2** – *“Sing to him, sing praise to him; tell of all his wonderful acts.”*

#### 20. Praise the Lord with instruments!

- a. **Psalm 150:3–6** – *“Praise him with the sounding of the trumpet, praise him with the harp and lyre, praise him with tambourine and dancing, praise him with the strings and flute, praise him with the clash of cymbals, praise him with resounding cymbals. Let everything that has breath praise the LORD. Praise the LORD.”*

#### 21. Praise the Lord with lifted hands!

- a. **Psalm 63:4** – *“I will praise you as long as I live, and in your name I will lift up my hands.”*
- b. **Psalm 134:2** – *“Lift up your hands in the sanctuary and praise the LORD.”*

#### 22. Praise the Lord with clapping!

- a. **Psalm 47:1** – *“Clap your hands, all you nations; shout to God with cries of joy.”*

#### 23. Praise the Lord with dancing!

- a. **Psalm 149:3** – *“Let them praise his name with dancing and make music to him with tambourine and harp.”*

### **Discussion Questions**

1. What are some of the ways we can intentionally “verticalize” our focus/thinking? (See #1 - #4 above)

2. How have you experienced a change in your thinking, especially when it concerns problems in your life, because you were able to fix your eyes and your thoughts on the Lord?
3. Read [Psalm 145](#) and discuss what it means to praise the Lord.
4. Read and discuss the quotes by Evelyn Underhill and J.B. Phillips. (See #9 above)
5. Read and discuss Pastor Gary's remarks about the ways all of creation praise the Lord. (See #12 above)
6. Read and discuss Pastor Gary's comments about why we should praise the Lord. (See #16 above)
7. Read and discuss all three of the biblical examples Pastor Gary shared concerning the Lord's blessing in response to praise. (See #18 above)
8. Allow the people in your group to share their experiences about the ways they actively praise the Lord. (See #19 - #23 above)
9. Close your time in prayer as the Holy Spirit leads.

\* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New International Version (NIV 1984)