

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes

First Quarter 2024: *The Book of Psalms*

Lesson 2 “Teach Us to Pray”

Read for this week’s study

Psalms 105:5; Colossians 3:16; James 5:13; Psalm 44; Psalm 22; Psalm 13; Psalm 60:1–5.

Memory Text

“Now it came to pass, as He was praying in a certain place, when He ceased, that one of His disciples said to Him, ‘Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples’” (Luke 11:1, NKJV).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. Fostering the Use of the Psalms in Prayer
- III. Trust in Times of Trouble
- IV. A Psalm of Despair
- V. From Despair to Hope
- VI. Oh, Restore Us Again
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Facilitator: Jon Paulien

1. There is a sense in which the book of Psalms is as much a prayer book as a hymn book. This lesson focuses particularly on prayers that occur in the context of difficult or challenging times. Psalms were often written to help the psalmist process adverse situations. They can help us process similar situations in our own lives. (Sabbath Afternoon’s Lesson)
2. What reading strategies have you found helpful in relation to the Psalms? Read Psalm 105:5, Colossians 3:16 and James 5:13. How do these texts suggest we relate to God? (Sunday’s Lesson)

3. Read Psalm 44. What does this psalm say that is relevant to believers today? What does the fact that psalms like this are rarely read in church say about us? What does the inclusion of psalms like this tell us about God? Can trials and difficulties draw you closer to God? Can trials and difficulties drive you further away from God? (Monday's Lesson)
4. Read Psalm 22. What can we learn from this psalm about trust in God amid great suffering? What difference does it make that Jesus could utter to God the darkest verse in this psalm on the cross? (Tuesday's Lesson)
5. Read Psalm 13. What are some of the major moods that the psalmist experiences, as evidenced in this text? What brought about the major change in the psalmist's general outlook? What do you think of Ellen White's advice for times like this? "When temptations assail you, when care perplexity and darkness seem to surround your soul, look to the place where you last saw the light." MH 250. (Wednesday's Lesson)
6. Read Psalm 60:1-5. On what occasions do you think this psalm would make a suitable prayer? How can we benefit from psalms of lament even in the joyous seasons of life? (Thursday's Lesson)
7. How can one's personal prayer life be benefited by written prayers, like those of the psalms and the great prayer books of the Protestant tradition? (Friday's Lesson)

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

So now, imagine that the Father appears visibly among us here at Loma Linda this evening. How would we speak to Him? Or to make it more personal, let us say that He is willing to meet us in the fellowship room. As many of us as could, would go over there and gather around Him, just as the crowds did around Jesus; and Mary loved to sit there at His feet. Supposing we should have the inestimable privilege of talking there freely with God the Father for a whole hour. Would it be appropriate at the end for someone among us to arise and say, "This has been such a special occasion, don't you think we ought to close this meeting with a word of prayer?" Or would it be correct to understand that talking, conversing, having conversation with our God as with a friend for that whole hour actually is real prayer, and we have been praying the whole hour long?

Now God is seated there and we are gathered around Him. What should we say? Should we be the first to speak? Once we have started speaking, would we talk all the time? Or would we let God speak for a while? Normally, when we pray we do all the talking, don't we? And then we say "Amen" and go about our business, or go to sleep. It would be like meeting in the room with our heavenly Father, and talking to Him incessantly for several minutes, and then saying,

“Amen, thank You very much,” and then going home. It wouldn’t make sense, would it? It certainly wouldn’t be conversation as with a friend.

Conversation means at least two people speaking. But how do we converse with God when we can’t see Him just now, because of the present emergency? We all understand that emergency and why in mercy He does not reveal Himself visibly to us at this moment. And so, the Bible is called the Word of God—God speaking to us. If we wish to hear God speak, except in most extraordinary occasions, God speaks to us through the Bible. We speak to Him in prayer. Truly, as someone has said, “We commune with God through the study of the Scriptures.” {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #15, “Talking to God as a Friend” recorded May 1984, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link: <http://pkp.cc/15MMCAG>*

That brings up the fundamental principle of interpretation, which we must use throughout the rest of our conversation, the principle of context. It was the context, it was the setting, that determined the meaning of a passage when it was originally written. To the extent that we can recreate and recover that original setting we are in a position to recover the original meaning.

When Paul says, “I wish you could be as I am. It’s all right to marry if you must, but I wish you could be as I am,” does that mean that all of us are second class saints if we’re married? No, put it in its context. Why did he say, “I would not allow a woman to speak in church”? And why does the Old Testament say, “You cannot boil a kid in its mother’s milk”? And then you turn to Judges. That is a stirring time every trip through the Bible. And you read about Samson, filled with the Spirit, killing a thousand men with the jawbone of an ass. You read about that fat king and the dagger that was thrust into him. And the dreadful story of the Levite and his Concubine.

I brought with me the worst illustration I have ever seen of reading the Bible the wrong way. It is called *The Bible Unmasked*. A man who’s avowed purpose was to destroy confidence in the Bible and in God, collected every unpleasant story of immorality and cruelty in the Bible and laid them end to end with the preface, “Would you mothers let your children read this sort of thing?” I brought my more modest printing. I have a later edition that has line drawings in it. I mentioned this in class up at Pacific Union College more than thirty years ago and a student, his name was Winn Paulie, came back with the best answer I have ever heard in all these years. “If you took the medical counselor book and cut out all the pictures of disease; cancer of the lip and tongue, etc., and all the symptoms of disease and printed them all by themselves, it would be a useless, repulsive publication. The only justification for printing those things is that they are always presented in the setting of the remedy.” {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio

series, Conversations About God, #6, “Evaluating the Evidence” recorded February 1984, Loma Linda, California} To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link: <http://pkp.cc/6MMCAG>

Further Study with Ellen White

Yet notwithstanding the perversity of those who leaned toward idolatrous practices, God in mercy would do everything in His power to save the divided kingdom from utter ruin. And as the years rolled on and His purpose concerning Israel seemed to be utterly thwarted by the devices of men inspired by satanic agencies, He still manifested His beneficent designs through the captivity and restoration of the chosen nation. {PK 96.2}

The precious Saviour will send help just when we need it. The way to heaven is consecrated by His footprints. Every thorn that wounds our feet has wounded His. Every cross that we are called to bear He has borne before us. The Lord permits conflicts, to prepare the soul for peace. The time of trouble is a fearful ordeal for God’s people; but it is the time for every true believer to look up, and by faith he may see the bow of promise encircling him. {GC 633.1}

We are to follow Christ day by day. God does not bestow help for tomorrow. He does not give His children all the directions for their life journey at once, lest they should become confused. He tells them just as much as they can remember and perform. The strength and wisdom imparted are for the present emergency. “If any of you lack wisdom,”—for today,—“let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.” James 1:5. {DA 313.4}

In the darkest days, when appearances seem most forbidding, have faith in God. He is working out His will, doing all things well in behalf of His people. The strength of those who love and serve Him will be renewed day by day. {MH 482.1}

He is able and willing to bestow upon His servants all the help they need. He will give them the wisdom which their varied necessities demand. {MH 482.2}

Heaven has a never-failing supply of help for all who are needy. {OHC 117.4}

That prayer of Christ embraces all His followers to the close of time. Our Saviour foresaw the trials and dangers of His people; He is not unmindful of the dissensions and divisions that distract and weaken His church. He is looking upon us with deeper interest and more tender compassion than moves an earthly parent’s heart toward a wayward, afflicted child. He bids us learn of Him. He invites our confidence. He bids us open our hearts to receive His love. He has pledged Himself to be our helper. {5T 237.2}

We know that in sadness and grief we feel very frail, but we know that Jesus is right by our side to sympathize with us, and He will help us. We can commune with our best Friend; He is right by our side. We need not go into the heavens to bring Him down, for He is right by us to help us. {CTr 42.4}

Press close to Jesus, and place your hand in His, and He will firmly hold your hand, and never let go of the soul who maintains his faith in Him. . . . {UL 42.3}

It is when we come into difficult places that He reveals His power and wisdom in answer to humble prayer. Have confidence in Him as a prayer-hearing, prayer-answering God. He will reveal Himself to you as One who can help in every emergency. He who created man, who gave him his wonderful physical, mental, and spiritual faculties, will not withhold that which is necessary to sustain the life He has given. He who has given us His word—the leaves of the tree of life—will not withhold from us a knowledge of how to provide food for His needy children. {MH 199.4}

The deep necessity of man for a divine teacher was known in heaven. The pity and sympathy of God were exercised in behalf of man, fallen and bound to Satan’s chariot-car; and when the fullness of time was come, He sent forth His Son. The One appointed in the counsels of heaven came to the earth as an instructor. He was no less a being than the Creator of the world, the Son of the Infinite God. The rich benevolence of God gave Him to our world; and to meet the necessities of humanity, He took on Him human nature. To the astonishment of the heavenly host, He walked this earth as the Eternal Word. Fully prepared, He left the royal courts to come to a world marred and polluted with sin. Mysteriously He allied Himself to human nature. “The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.” God’s excess of goodness, benevolence, and love was a surprise to the world, of grace which could be realized, but not told. {FE 399.4}

Christ knows our weakness, and to Him we can go daily for help. It is not necessary for us to gain strength a month ahead. We are to conquer from day to day (MS 28, 1886). {7BC 974.3}

God asks us to live only one day at a time. You need not look a week or a month ahead. *Today* do your best. Today speak and act in a way that will honor God. The promise is, “As thy days, so shall thy strength be” (Deuteronomy 33:25). {HP 59.6}

We can but look onward to new perplexities in the coming conflict, but we may well look on what is past as well as what is to come, and say, “Hitherto hath the Lord helped us” (1 Samuel 7:12). “As thy days, so shall thy strength be” (Deuteronomy 33:25). The trial will not exceed the strength which shall be given us to bear it. {TDG 58.3}

The way to the throne of God is always open. You cannot always be on your knees in prayer, but your silent petitions may constantly ascend to God for strength and guidance. When tempted, as you will be, you may flee to the secret place of the Most High. His everlasting arms will be underneath you. {CH 362.2}

God's everlasting arm encircles the soul that turns to Him for aid, however feeble that soul may be. {4T 328.1}

God has the world in His hand. We have God on our side. All heaven is waiting and longing for our cooperation. The Lord is supreme. Why then should we fear? The Lord is almighty; why should we tremble? In the past God has delivered His people, and He will be our helper if we will arise in His strength and go forward. {TMK 342.3}

We are to live only one day at a time. We do not have to do the work of a lifetime in a few hours. We need not look into the future with anxiety; for God has made it possible for us to be overcomers every day. {FLB 249.4}

Whatever your anxieties and trials, spread out your case before the Lord. Your spirit will be braced for endurance. The way will be open for you to disentangle yourself from embarrassment and difficulty. The weaker and more helpless you know yourself to be, the stronger will you become in His strength. The heavier your burdens, the more blessed the rest in casting them upon your Burden Bearer. {MH 72.1}

Circumstances may separate friends; the restless waters of the wide sea may roll between us and them. But no circumstances, no distance, can separate us from the Saviour. Wherever we may be, He is at our right hand, to support, maintain, uphold, and cheer. Greater than the love of a mother for her child is Christ's love for His redeemed. It is our privilege to rest in His love, to say, "I will trust Him; for He gave His life for me." {MH 72.2}

Human love may change, but Christ's love knows no change. {MH 72.3}

Not a sigh is breathed, not a pain felt, not a grief pierces the soul, but the throb vibrates to the Father's heart. {AG 189.5}

To all who are reaching out to feel the guiding hand of God, the moment of greatest discouragement is the time when divine help is nearest. . . . From every temptation and every trial He will bring them forth with firmer faith and a richer experience. {SD 92.5}