

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes

First Quarter 2024: *The Book of Psalms*

Lesson 8 “Wisdom for Righteous Living”

Read for this week’s study

Psalm 119:1–16; Psalm 90; John 3:16; Psalm 95:7–11; Psalm 141; Psalm 128.

Memory Text

“So teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom” (Psalm 90:12, NKJV).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. Your Word I Have Hidden in My Heart
- III. Teach Us to Number Our Days
- IV. The Lord’s Test
- V. Deceitfulness of the Wicked Way
- VI. Blessings of Righteous Living
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Facilitator: Daniel Duda

1. “Keeping God’s law is by no means a legalistic observance of rules but life in an intimate relationship with God, a life full of blessings (Psalm 119:1, 2; Psalm 128). [...] If God’s children heed God’s instruction and admonishment, their faith will be purified and their trust in the Lord strengthened. Wisdom for righteous living is gained through the dynamics of life with God amid temptations and challenges. Thus, the prayer that God would teach us to number our days so that we may gain a heart of wisdom (Psalm 90:12), reflects an ongoing commitment to walk in faithfulness to the Lord.” (Sabbath afternoon)
2. One of the fascinating features of Old Testament poetry is acrostics – starting each successive line with the next letter of the Hebrew alphabet. Psalms 25, 34, and 145 are good examples: the first letter of each *verse* starts with the next letter of the [Hebrew] alphabet (thus each psalm has 22 verses). In Psalms 111 & 112, however, the acrostic is in the first letter of each *line*, thus they both have 22 lines (but only 10 verses).

3. In Psalm 119 every first word in each of the *eight verses* starts with the same letter of the alphabet (making it the longest chapter in the Bible [22x8]).
4. Jews cannot pray very long without meditating on the Torah (see Psalms 1; 19; 119). This puts Torah [“law”] at the center of their spirituality. Why is meditation important in today’s fast paced society? How does meditating deliver us from excessive romanticism, subjectivity or mysticism? What does it teach us about accepted norms of our life, ethical contexts of our faith and the public character of true religion? (Sunday’s lesson) Why does meditation have such a bad reputation in some Christian circles?
5. How do we “number our days” (90:12) in light of eternity (vv.1-4) so that we live wisely (v. 12) and joyfully (vv. 14-15)? (Monday’s lesson?) How is that connected with doing God’s will (v. 14), revealing God’s glory (v. 16) and growing in God’s beauty (v. 17)?
6. Tuesday’s lesson deals with divine testing (see Psalm 81:7, 8; Psalm 95:7–11; and Psalm 105:17–22). How do you understand Psalm 81:7 in light of Exodus 17:1-7 (and Genesis 3:1-9)?
7. How is the progressive and cunning character of temptation depicted in Psalm 1:1 and 141:4? What does the psalmist pray for in Psalm 141? (Wednesday’s lesson) How can we deal with the progressive, alluring and cunning character of evil? How does God “deliver us from evil”? What role does an honest dialogue of faith play in this? How is the role of a worshiping and supporting community highlighted here?
8. Thursday’s lesson focuses on blessings of righteous living (Psalm 1:1–3; 112:1–9; Psalm 128). How do the blessings spread from employment (128:2) to the home, to the city and to the nation (vv. 3-6)? How does this protect us from unhealthy escapism?
9. In our contemporary society, people would rather be happy than wise. How can obtaining wisdom be more desirable than achieving happiness? Why is God more concerned with our holiness (character) than with our comfort? The primal mode of knowing God is obedience based on God’s faithfulness. How can we gain wisdom in exhibiting that in a better and more attractive way?

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

I mean, you’ve got someone burning at the stake, and say, “Now, I’ll turn the fire out if you’ll tell me you love me.” You may get a testimony “I love you with all my heart.” Wouldn’t you have reason to question the validity of that testimony? Why then the law? Remember Paul’s answer? He says, “It was added because of sin and transgression.” What is sin, Romans 14, but a breach of trust. What is sin? 1 John 3:4: “the transgression of the law”? Literally, “lawlessness.” What would it mean to keep the law? What is the fulfilling of the law? Romans

13:8, 10. What is the fulfilling of the law, but love? You see, sin is a lack of trust and a lack of love. So God comes and gives us the commandments “Thou shalt trust,” and “Thou shalt love,” and “Thou should be trustworthy,” and “Thou shalt be loveable.” Can you command those things? Paul says you can’t. Well, then, why did God give us the commandments? He says, it isn’t that He’s changed what He wants. All He wants is love and trust-but it was given, because of lack of love, and lack of trust, because of transgression.

What would you do in your home, if your children were killing their playmates on the grounds, and when you were in the office your wife was committing adultery with anyone who rang the doorbell, what would you do? Would you give them up right away? I don’t think it’s going too far to imagine what God did. God gathered His children around Him at the foot of Sinai, and said, “Dear children, please. I want all the murdering to stop, and I want all the adultery to stop, and all the stealing to stop, please.” But think what that says about His family! Do any of you have to do this? I mean tomorrow morning before you go to work and the children go to school, are you going to pause at the end of breakfast, and say, “Now children, let’s make this a good day together, shall we? Do you promise that when one of your playmates tries to go first up the steps to the slide, that you won’t kill him?” “Well, Daddy, if you say so.” And then as you leave the door, and kiss your wife good-bye, you say, “Wife, please promise you won’t commit adultery today.” She says, “Well, if you insist. I mean, you’ve been good to me, and I kind of owe it to you; all right, I won’t today.” But would you have to do it to your family every day. You know, like pinning the Ten Commandments to the wall? The Pharisee thought that’s what the Ten Commandments were all about, and that’s why when he read through the ten, and he hadn’t murdered anybody that day, and he hadn’t committed adultery that day, and he hadn’t broken the Sabbath, because it was Monday anyway, he said, “I thank Thee, Lord that I haven’t broken the Ten Commandments,” because he misunderstood.

How embarrassing it was for God, in the hearing of His enemies who mock Him for apparent failure to hold the family together, to have to say to His children, “Please, children, no more murdering; no more stealing; no more immorality! Could you find it in your hearts to love Me?” If you have to do that in your home tomorrow morning, be sure you close the windows, because if the neighbors hear you saying, “Please, children, don’t murder anyone today, and please, wife, don’t commit adultery,” they’re going to think your home is in a mess! And God’s home was in a mess when He had to say this to His children. That’s a marvelous thing God did, though. He has held Himself up to shame at the hands of His adversary when He has gone these lengths to control us.

Now, you can’t command love, and you can’t command trust. But as a stopgap measure, as an emergency measure, you can say with authority, “I want it to stop.” And then while it stops, not for the best reason, maybe you can teach the right reason, like having it written in your heart, so you really want to do it without being told.

Especially the tenth commandment can't be commanded, can it? The tenth commandment says "Thou shalt not only never do anything wrong, but thou shalt not even want to." Isn't that right? For the tenth? That's like saying, "Thou shalt not only keep the Sabbath, but thou shalt even enjoy it." Isn't that right, in Isaiah? That's why you wonder if you've survived without sinning for very long. For you see, you might have been present at Sabbath School, and had everything ready for worship Friday night. You haven't done anything forbidden all Sabbath, but if you haven't enjoyed it, you have sinned. It says, "If you call the Sabbath a delight, all is well" in Isaiah? How can you command these things? When Paul read the ten, he thought he was doing very well until he got down to that last one, and he says, "When I realized I hadn't done any of those bad things, but I might have wanted to once in awhile," he said, "that infuriated me, and for a while I rebelled. God, you've not only said 'Don't do anything bad,' You've even said 'you can't even want to!'" And after a while he said, "God, I love that tenth commandment because as I understand the Decalogue, the Decalogue describes the kind of people who will be admitted to the kingdom of God in the hereafter." {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, The Picture of God in All 66 – Exodus, recorded October 1981, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

*Audio links to the West Covina series recorded in 1983:

<http://pkp.cc/3MMPOGIA66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/4MMPOGIA66> (Part 2)

Last week, we considered some of the emergency measures God has used to hold the family together while He goes on demonstrating the truth. Most notable of these emergency measures has been His use of law. And most notable among the laws have been the Ten Commandments. But God's extensive use of law surely seems opposed to freedom. It has indeed been seriously misunderstood. Consider, for example, Jesus' words on this subject to His disciples. In John 14:15 and John 15:14 Jesus said, "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments." And added, "You are my friends if you do what I command you." (RSV)

What kind of friendship is it that demands obedience? How do you fit "keep My commandments," with "you shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free"?

Sometimes this is explained to mean that we are free so long as we do exactly what we are told. Have you parents ever tried that with your children? "Now children, we want freedom in our home. We can have freedom so long as you do exactly what you are told. Do I make myself clear?" If your children are afraid of you enough, they will say, "You have made yourself clear." But inside they may have serious reservations. It seems such a contradiction. Of course, everything depends upon how we understand what it is that God has asked us to do, and how we understand the reason why He even had to ask us in the first place. I believe, as I am sure

many of you do, that all of God's laws, particularly the Ten Commandments, were given for our best good. They were given especially to preserve freedom—not to infringe upon it.

But law, the use of law, has been seriously misunderstood throughout the Great Controversy. The most notable example of misunderstanding occurred about 1500 years after Sinai, when the Son of God came Himself to live among a people who had been especially entrusted with this revelation of God's will formulated in the Decalogue, the Ten Commandments. Of all people, they should have understood it was an emergency measure—with Moses there to explain that there was no need to be afraid. But when Jesus came, He found a group of people who were totally preoccupied with God's laws and with obedience to their every detail.

He never had to tell them not to make a graven image. They had learned their lesson in the discipline of Babylonian captivity, and they never sank into ordinary idolatry again. He never had to tell them which day was the Sabbath. They regarded it as their highest duty to obey all ten of the Ten Commandments. He never had to urge them to pay tithe. Matthew records they used to tithe even the tiniest things; the seeds of the mint, anise, and cumin. Nor did Jesus have to tell them they should obey the laws of hygiene. He commented on the fact that they would even strain gnats out of their goat's milk lest they should eat a forbidden insect. Nor did He ever have to tell them to search the Scriptures. He said they did it all the time—though they did it for the wrong reason (John 5:39). Nor did He ever have to tell them to be careful in their association with unbelievers. In fact, when they came in from the marketplace, they used to wash themselves in certain special, ceremonial ways, lest they be contaminated by association with the Gentiles. You see, they all could say, like the rich young ruler: "All these things we have obeyed from our youth up."

You would think that in the face of such rigorous obedience and willingness to do precisely what they were told—you would think Jesus would be pleased, and they would recognize and welcome Him when He came. But all heaven watched the incredible scene of those who claimed to love God's law, denouncing the Lawgiver as a lawbreaker. It must have puzzled the angels a great deal. So, Jesus ventured to suggest that while they were working so hard to obey, that actually they were obeying for the wrong reason. Because they were obeying for the wrong reason, they really were not obeying at all. You can imagine how offensive this was to them. In fact, He went further and suggested that if only they knew the God who had given the law, they would keep the law for an entirely different reason, a reason that would make it possible for them to be obedient and free at the same time. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, *Conversations About God*, #12, "God's Law Is No Threat to Our Freedom" recorded April 1984, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link: <http://pkp.cc/12MMCAG>*

Lou: There's another phrase in here that raises questions many times. I've wondered about this myself. When we pray "lead us not into temptation," what are we really praying? Does that imply, have you ever wondered about this, "God, be careful; please don't get me into temptation"? That God would really want to do that?

Graham: One thing that helps is the word "temptation" means trial or testing. Some versions have, "Lead us not into hard testing." The idea that God would tempt is unthinkable, as our heavenly Father. Remember James deals with this. That when we're tempted, don't even blame the Devil. He says, "You are led away by your own lusts and enticements." Certainly don't blame God. He wouldn't do any such thing. So "lead us not into temptation" cannot mean, "Please, don't You tempt us," but "Lead us not into testing," Jesus prayed that in Gethsemane. He said, "Remove this cup from Me, if possible." I don't think we should pray, "Lord, I'm ready for it. Bring on the trials; I feel very strong today." I believe we should say, "Lord, in all humility, I mean bring me not into trial; nevertheless, Thy will be done."

I think, "Lead us not into testing" must be coupled with, "Nevertheless, Thy will be done." Jesus did it in Gethsemane, and we do it in the Lord's Prayer. You know, the Lord's Prayer and the prayer in Gethsemane are very similar in a number of respects. "Lead us not into testing, Remove this cup from Me. Nevertheless, Thy will be done." So I think the prayer in Gethsemane helps us to understand the Lord's Prayer. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #15 with Lou Venden, "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>*

Does God want us to avoid Him in the hereafter because He has been so forgiving? Because we would be uncomfortable in His presence, in fear that perhaps He might bring up the subject of our sinful past? Mere pardon is no guarantee that He won't do that. So God not only forgives, He also treats us as if we had never sinned. More than that, He even treats us as if we had always been His loyal children.

How do we know that to be true? Is that based on a promise? Now, a promise is only a claim. Is there evidence and demonstration in Scripture that God not only forgives us, but He will treat us as if we have always been His loyal children? Look how God spoke to Solomon about his father, David in 1 Kings 9:3, 4: "The Lord said to him [Solomon] . . . 'If you walk before me in integrity of heart and uprightness, as David your father did.'" (NIV) Integrity of heart? Uprightness? Think of all the things that David did! And yet, because David had been set right with God and had been won back to trust and had received a new heart and a right spirit, God

describes sinful David as if he had always been His loyal son! He did it to David. He is willing to do it to every one of us. Now, **that** is the meaning of the experience of justification.

And since that Latin term, justification, has come to have such a narrow, legal connotation in theological circles, I suggest we offer a substitution, another term such as, “set right,” or “put right” with our God. Jesus came to bring peace with our God. Not by paying some legal penalty so God would not have to kill us after all. Jesus brought peace with God by showing the truth about our God; that there is no need to be afraid. God will indeed give up those who refuse to trust Him, who turn down the truth, who are unwilling to listen and let Him save and heal them. And they will die, not as penalty, but as consequence. God absolutely will not torture to death His dying children. Guess where that idea came from. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #20, “At Peace with our Heavenly Father” recorded June 1984, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link: <http://pkp.cc/20MMCAG>*

Further Study with Ellen White

The law of ten commandments is not to be looked upon as much from the prohibitory side, as from the mercy side. Its prohibitions are the sure guarantee of happiness in obedience. As received in Christ, it works in us the purity of character that will bring joy to us through eternal ages. To the obedient it is a wall of protection. We behold in it the goodness of God, who by revealing to men the immutable principles of righteousness, seeks to shield them from the evils that result from transgression. {OHC 137.6}

The Lord did not lock the reservoir of heaven after pouring His Spirit upon the early disciples. We, also, may receive of the fullness of His blessing. Heaven is full of the treasures of His grace, and those who come to God in faith may claim all that He has promised. {3BC 1152.4}

But in heaven, service is not rendered in the spirit of legality. When Satan rebelled against the law of Jehovah, the thought that there was a law came to the angels almost as an awakening to something unthought of. In their ministry the angels are not as servants, but as sons. There is perfect unity between them and their Creator. Obedience is to them no drudgery. Love for God makes their service a joy. {MB 109.2}

The man who attempts to keep the commandments of God from a sense of obligation merely—because he is required to do so—will never enter into the joy of obedience. He does not obey. When the requirements of God are accounted a burden because they cut across human inclination, we may know that the life is not a Christian life. True obedience is the outworking of a principle within. It springs from the love of righteousness, the love of the law of God. The

essence of all righteousness is loyalty to our Redeemer. This will lead us to do right because it is right—because right doing is pleasing to God. {COL 97.3}

In the work of redemption there is no compulsion. No external force is employed. Under the influence of the Spirit of God, man is left free to choose whom he will serve. In the change that takes place when the soul surrenders to Christ, there is the highest sense of freedom. The expulsion of sin is the act of the soul itself. True, we have no power to free ourselves from Satan's control; but when we desire to be set free from sin, and in our great need cry out for a power out of and above ourselves, the powers of the soul are imbued with the divine energy of the Holy Spirit, and they obey the dictates of the will in fulfilling the will of God. {DA 466.4}

Satan is constantly urging men to accept his principles. Thus he seeks to counterwork the work of God. He is constantly representing the chosen people of God as a deluded people. He is an accuser of the brethren, and his accusing power he is constantly using against those who work righteousness. The Lord desires through His people to answer Satan's charges by showing the result of obedience to right principles. {6T 11.2}

give ourselves wholly to God and in our work follow His directions, He makes Himself responsible for its accomplishment. He would not have us conjecture as to the success of our honest endeavors. Not once should we even think of failure. We are to co-operate with One who knows no failure. {COL 363.1}

When it is in the heart to obey God, when efforts are put forth to this end, Jesus accepts this disposition and effort as man's best service and he makes up for the deficiency with his own divine merit; for he is the source of every right impulse. {OW, December 1, 1909 par. 10}

All true obedience comes from the heart. It was heart work with Christ. And if we consent, He will so identify Himself with our thoughts and aims, so blend our hearts and minds into conformity to His will, that when obeying Him we shall be but carrying out our own impulses. {DA 668.3}

In every human being He discerned infinite possibilities. He saw men as they might be, transfigured by His grace—in "the beauty of the Lord our God." Psalm 90:17. Looking upon them with hope, He inspired hope. Meeting them with confidence, He inspired trust. Revealing in Himself man's true ideal, He awakened, for its attainment, both desire and faith. In His presence souls despised and fallen realized that they still were men, and they longed to prove themselves worthy of His regard. In many a heart that seemed dead to all things holy, were awakened new impulses. To many a despairing one there opened the possibility of a new life. {Ed 80.1}

It is the glory of the gospel that it is founded upon the principle of restoring in the fallen race the divine image by a constant manifestation of benevolence. This work began in the heavenly courts. There God decided to give human beings unmistakable evidence of the love with which

He regarded them. He “so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” John 3:16. {CH 222.1}

Christ presented to men that which was entirely contrary to the representations of the enemy in regard to the character of God, and sought to impress upon men the love of the Father, who “so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” John 3:16. He urged upon men the necessity of prayer, repentance, confession, and the abandonment of sin. He taught them honesty, forbearance, mercy, and compassion, enjoining upon them to love not only those who loved them, but those who hated them and treated them spitefully. In all this He was revealing to them the character of the Father, who is long-suffering, merciful, and gracious, slow to anger, and full of goodness and truth. {CT 29.3}

The earth was dark through misapprehension of God. That the gloomy shadows might be lightened, that the world might be brought back to God, Satan’s deceptive power was to be broken. This could not be done by force. The exercise of force is contrary to the principles of God’s government; He desires only the service of love; and love cannot be commanded; it cannot be won by force or authority. Only by love is love awakened. To know God is to love Him; His character must be manifested in contrast to the character of Satan. This work only one Being in all the universe could do. Only He who knew the height and depth of the love of God could make it known. Upon the world’s dark night the Sun of Righteousness must rise, “with healing in His wings.” Malachi 4:2. {DA 22.1}

The plan for our redemption was not an afterthought, a plan formulated after the fall of Adam. It was a revelation of “the mystery which hath been kept in silence through times eternal.” Romans 16:25, R. V. It was an unfolding of the principles that from eternal ages have been the foundation of God’s throne. From the beginning, God and Christ knew of the apostasy of Satan, and of the fall of man through the deceptive power of the apostate. God did not ordain that sin should exist, but He foresaw its existence, and made provision to meet the terrible emergency. So great was His love for the world, that He covenanted to give His only-begotten Son, “that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” John 3:16. {DA 22.2}

We shall receive help if we ask Him in faith. We are His by creation, we are His by redemption. By the cords of divine love we are bound to the Source of all power and strength. If we will only make God our dependence, asking Him for what we want as a little child asks His father for what he wants, we shall obtain a rich experience. We shall learn that God is the source of all strength and power. {LHU 55.2}

The opinion is held by many that God placed a separating wall between the Hebrews and the outside world; that His care and love, withdrawn to a great extent from the rest of mankind, were centered upon Israel. But God did not design that His people should build up a wall of

partition between themselves and their fellow men. The heart of Infinite Love was reaching out toward all the inhabitants of the earth. Though they had rejected Him, He was constantly seeking to reveal Himself to them and make them partakers of His love and grace. His blessing was granted to the chosen people, that they might bless others. {PP 368.1}

It is for our present happiness and our future good that God subjects us to discipline. The greatest blessing that His children have is the discipline that He sends them. He never leads them otherwise than they would choose to be led if they could see the end from the beginning and discern the glory of the purpose that they are fulfilling, as workers together with Him. {TDG 122.3}

God in His great love is seeking to develop in us the precious graces of His Spirit. He permits us to encounter obstacles, persecution, and hardships, not as a curse, but as the greatest blessing of our lives. Every temptation resisted, every trial bravely borne, gives us a new experience and advances us in the work of character building. The soul that through divine power resists temptation reveals to the world and to the heavenly universe the efficiency of the grace of Christ. {MB 117.1}

The tempter has no power to control the will or to force the soul to sin. He may distress, but he cannot contaminate. He can cause agony, but not defilement. {FLB 327.6}

The tempter can never compel us to do evil. He cannot control minds unless they are yielded to his control. {DA 125.2}

The education begun here will not be completed in this life; it will be going forward throughout eternity, ever progressing, never completed. Day by day the wonderful works of God, the evidences of His miraculous power in creating and sustaining the universe, will open before the mind in new beauty. In the light that shines from the throne, mysteries will disappear, and the soul will be filled with astonishment at the simplicity of the things that were never before comprehended. {8T 328.2}

Now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face; now we know in part; but then shall we know even as also we are known. {8T 328.3}