

5. (a) Give the poetic phrases describing a person immersed in God's Word. Use Jeremiah 17:7,8 for additional details.

(b) Draw similarities between a fruitful tree and a godly person. Use John 15:5-8 and Galatians 5:16-25 in your answer.

6. (a) In contrast to the godly person, what poetic words describe the ungodly? Use Jeremiah 17:5,6 also.

(b) Draw similarities between chaff and a person without God.

7. There are two possible "ways" in life: obedience or disobedience to God. What is the end result of each path? Use Proverbs 14:12 and Deuteronomy 30:15-20 in your answer.

Second Day: Read Psalm 2 and Acts 4:23-31

8. (a) Who do John and Peter say authored Psalm 2?

(b) Who do they say are the kings and rulers against God's Anointed?

(c) Who do they say is God's Anointed?

9. How does God react to those who rebel against Him?

10. What do verses 8,9 foretell? Read Revelation 19:11-16.

11. Using verses 1-3 and 10-12, give your own summary statements describing the two available choices for mankind.

Third Day: Read Psalm 3 (Optional background reading: 2 Samuel 15-18)

12. What are the author's emotions in verses 1,2?
 - (a) shield
 - (b) glory
 - (c) lifter of my head
13. What is true despite David's emotions from verses 3,4? What do each of the following mean to you: (See Exodus 24:16,17; 40:34,35.)
 - (a) shield
 - (b) glory
 - (c) lifter of my head
14. How could verses 5,6 help you on a sleepless night? (Also read Psalm 4:8.)

Fourth Day: Read Psalm 4

15. (a) What are three requests in verse one?
 - (b) Can God hear if you don't pray? Why or why not?

16. Read Exodus 13:12; John 17:17-19; Ephesians 5:26; 1 Thessalonians 5:23; Hebrews 13:12.
- (a) What is the author's confidence in verse 3?

 - (b) How are the godly set apart?
17. (a) Read Ephesians 4:26,27 and Psalm 4:4. Why is it important to settle matters of anger daily?
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- (b) Read Mark 3:5; Exodus 32:19; Matthew 21:12,13. Is anger in itself sin?
18. Read 1 Samuel 15:22 and Psalm 4:5. What sacrifices please God? Give an example of how you sacrificed this week.

Fifth Day: Read Psalm 5

19. Read Ephesians 2:13-22 and Psalm 4:8. How is Jesus our peace?
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20. (a) List attributes of God found in this psalm. Try to find at least seven.
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- (b) Why is it important to know truth of God's nature?
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- (c) Relate some "myths" you hear about God that are the opposite of these seven truths.

21. (a) Give ways the psalmist relates to God. Use at least five different verses.
- (b) Does your relationship with God resemble the psalmist's? Why or why not?
22. Read Matthew 13:49,50; Matthew 21:41; Luke 19:22-27.
- (a) List the phrases used to describe the wicked.
- (b) What does Jesus say will happen to the wicked?
23. (a) To whom does David appeal for justice in verse 10?
- (b) Is David personally vowing revenge?
- (c) Read Romans 12:9-21 and Matthew 5:38-48 and form a scriptural response to evil.

Sixth Day: Read Psalm 6

24. (a) What is the theme of this psalm? Give phrases to support your answer.
- (b) Read Hebrews 12:5-11. Discuss how rebuke and chastening can be done without anger.
25. (a) What is the tone of verses 8-10?
- (b) How can you use the truth of verses 8-10 in your life?

Notes

Book 1 - The Genesis Section (Psalms 1 - 41)

Psalms 1 - 6

Psalm 1: Two Ways of Life Contrasted

The “Blessed” Man

Psalm 1 is a perfect introduction to the book of Psalms because its subject matter is the blessedness of those who live righteous lives and the emptiness and misery of those who are ungodly. Two classes of people are dealt with: the righteous (godly) and the wicked (ungodly). The psalm is a striking study in contrasts. In the description of the “blessed” there is a series of negatives: This man does not walk in the counsel of the ungodly; he does not stand in the way of sinners; he does not sit in the seat of the scornful. It takes more energy to walk than stand, and sitting down implies consent and agreement with the God-mockers.

Following the negatives, the godly person’s positive qualities are highlighted: *“His delight is in the law of the Lord...”* Delight implies study, pleasure, and thought. Meditate means ponder. So to delight and meditate on God’s law, one must first have it in mind, as Explorer’s Bible Study encourages!

“He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water” (verse 3) describes one whose roots are deep and always refreshed by the water of God’s Holy Spirit. Water is often used to depict the Holy Spirit in scripture. (See John 7:37-39). The blessed man planted by the rivers of water will also bear fruit which will glorify God. Galatians 5:22,23 uses the word picture “fruit” to describe the outward working of the Holy Spirit: *“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.”*

Verse 3 ends with the phrase *“whatever he does shall prosper.”* This need not be considered in a commercial sense, equating success in the world with biblical “prospering.” The world’s standard of prosperity is quite different than God’s. A worldly definition of success might measure “things,” status, and material goods. Jesus’ parable of the rich farmer (Luke 12) ends with a caution not to be rich in things, but to be rich toward God. Jesus also astounded his disciples in Mark 10:23 saying, *“How*

hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God.” Prosperity in God’s economy is often overlooked by the world: the greatest in God’s kingdom is the least (Luke 9:48).

The Ungodly Man

“The ungodly are not so.” Every person who is not a professing servant of God is not always an offender of all moral obligations. Often they are of high moral standards and are greatly respected. But this is not the final standard. God’s tests go through to the very roots of character and motives, and the standard is allegiance to God. The test is—God’s servant or not? This prepares us for the sharp contrast in this psalm: godly or ungodly. *“The ungodly are not so.”* The psalmist does not dwell on the details of ungodliness. He confines himself to indicating the source of their life. In this psalm, we have the fountain heads of moral character. All true fruitfulness of character is found in God’s garden only; in being planted by God’s hand and by God’s rivers. All barrenness and uselessness result from not being there. A person may be respected and religious and yet be ungodly. Regardless of one’s own righteousness or standing before others, it is in the sight of God that one is characterized as “godly” or “ungodly.” The “ungodly” have come short of God’s requirement. The Bible says they are like chaff which has no nutritional value. Chaff has no power to reproduce and is driven away by the wind. Character, before God, stands forth in its naked truthfulness. The counsel of the ungodly will not abide and he who walks in it is driven away like chaff. We personally choose character. The choice is ours. We choose what we are. Judgment does not make character, but declares it. Blaming others for what we do and are dates back to the dialogue with Eve and Satan. We should assume personal responsibility for our conduct and character. Character should be guarded with care and love. An individual is either living for God or isn’t. *“For the Lord knows the way of the righteous.”*

Psalm 2: Messianic Psalm

This psalm is the most quoted psalm in the New Testament. There are several “voices” or

“speakers” in the psalm. Verses 1,2 are the author’s voice: *“Why do the nations rage, and the people plot a vain thing?”* This psalm is written by one who saw restlessness, discontent, and rebellion. This is a rebellion of the masses of the world against God.

Verse 1 mentions two groups of people aligned against God: first, the heathen, who rage. “Heathen” to a Hebrew author is a non-Jew, that is, a Gentile. The second group is “the people.” To the Hebrew author, “people” meant Hebrews like themselves. So the author begins this psalm by asking, “Why would anyone (Jew or Gentile) rage against God?”

Why is the world against God and His Christ? Multitudes blindly follow godless power, wealth, and intellect represented among the kings and rulers of the earth. Rulers of all ages, from ancient Pharaohs to Hitler in Germany, have opposed God and His people. Acts 4:27,28 explains this psalm’s fulfillment when the rulers of Jesus’ day opposed Him, even from birth. *“For truly against Your holy servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people Israel, were gathered together, to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose determined before to be done.”*

The rebels speak in verse 3. *“Let us break Their bonds in pieces and cast away Their cords from us.”* Those in rebellion believe God restrains rather than frees people. Yet true freedom to live abundantly comes in obedience to God not in disobedience. Liberation is never an end in itself. True freedom comes in recognizing God’s laws as superior to any other way of life as verse 11 states: *“Serve the Lord with fear; and rejoice with trembling.”*

The author speaks again in verses 4,5 giving God’s reaction to the disobedient: He laughs. It is a laugh of derision from the Creator as the created seeks to rebel. Omnipotent God cannot be usurped. In wrath God shows His displeasure with rebellion.

God’s plan will be accomplished. It cannot be thwarted. Verse 6 is God speaking: *“Yet I have set...”* God does not consult anyone. He is self-sufficient and all-powerful.

The Son speaks in verse 7, stating what God said to Him, *“You are My Son; today I have begotten You.”* The Anointed of verse 2 and the Son of verse 7 can be none other than Jesus Christ. Christ is translated from the word meaning “Anointed.”

Verses 8,9 are the voice of God, speaking to the Son. These statements span both the first and second coming of Jesus. Those who accept Jesus as Savior are spared the rod of iron but there is a time when those who reject Jesus will face his wrath. We will be held accountable for our response to the sacrificial death of Jesus on the cross. Either He dies for our sin or we die. The choice is ours.

The choice is poetically described in verse 12. *“Kiss the Son”* means to show homage and tribute. A kiss in eastern custom is a sign of respect. We have a choice: to experience the blessing of believing God’s Son as our Savior or to reject Jesus and experience God’s wrath. We choose life or death.

This psalm is intended to celebrate the appointment and final triumph of Messiah as King. The heathen nations are represented as foolishly opposing it. They agree among themselves to rebel. God will accomplish His purpose, scorning those adversaries who are rebellious. The decree goes forth that the anointed King is enthroned and is made heir of all things even to the uttermost parts of the earth. The psalm ends with words of counsel and admonition to earthly rulers. It exhorts them to submit to the glorious King and warns of inevitable ruin for those who resist.

Neither David nor Solomon totally fulfill the role of king about whom this psalm speaks. This psalm looks toward final fulfillment of Christ’s righteous reign. The kingdoms of this world will become the kingdom of our Lord and His Christ (See Revelation 11:15).

Psalm 3: Victory in the Face of Defeat **Psalm 4: Evening Prayer for Deliverance**

Psalms 3 and 4 were written by David when he fled from his son Absalom. It is believed that both

psalms were composed on the same day, one in the morning and the other in the evening. The words are of one who had often sought and found help from God. David needed protection and deliverance from his enemies. A nation was against him. Absalom, his own son, was heading the rebellion, and his most trusted counselor had joined with Absalom. David knew the odds were overwhelmingly against him. He sought help that only God could give. David's words spell out the dangers: *"How they have increased who trouble me!"*; *"Many are they who rise up against me."*; *"Many are they who say of me."*; *"Ten thousands of people who have set themselves against me all around."* Yet in spite of this, he is not crushed or despondent. There is one Friend who cannot fail him. In Him David has confidence. This lifts him above his circumstances and fears. God's divine protection was a reality. Surrounded by enemies, God was his shield and his glory. He knew that the Lord that could hear him from *"His holy hill"* (verse 4), could still lift up the light of His countenance upon him and put gladness in his heart. Protected by the Lord, he lay down and slept in safety. Enemies may taunt (verse 2), and friends might fail, but the victory is God's (verses 7,8).

The second and fourth verses close with the word *"Selah."* This term is used seventy-three times in the Psalms and three times in the book of Habakkuk. It generally indicates a rest or a pause. It also suggests that the reader reflect on what has been read.

Both psalms contain a phrase about sleeping peacefully (Psalm 3:5 and Psalm 4:8). What a wonderful picture of God's peace descending on a troubled soul enabling one to sleep even in times of trouble. What wonderful trust on the part of the author to believe that God is in control. Hear God saying, "Rest. Trust me. Worry and sleeplessness will do no good. Believe that I am working on your behalf." Psalm 121:4 says, *"Behold, he who keeps Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep."*

There is a great sense of dependence on God's work even when situations do not seem favorable. God does not forget His own. He does not remove Himself in difficult situations. We simply must see with the eyes of faith as the psalmist does. Men say

one thing, God often says just the opposite. Our responsibility is to trust, not fret; to do the right thing and depend on God (Psalm 4:5).

Psalm 5: Morning Prayer for Guidance

This psalm is a morning prayer and David's circumstances are different. He is no longer in exile and has the privilege of entering the house of the Lord and bowing in worship (verse 7). He is not fleeing from enemies but is in danger of those who are secretly lying in wait for him (verses 9,10).

Several traits of God are manifested in this psalm. Verses 1-3 depict a God who hears if we request.

How certain it is that all need to meditate on God's Word and pray. We need to have that blessed communion with God and the joy of His fellowship in prayer. This little pronoun in *"my King, my God"* illustrates the root reason for our plea because He is our King and our God. He is ours by covenant and by promise. How beautiful to begin the day with God.

If the devil wins those morning minutes, he knows he has won that day. The enemy well knows how important that morning devotion is and he spares nothing to frustrate and confuse it. It takes perseverance. A few moments spent in communion with God at each opening day—a visit to the throne of grace—will help us through the snarls of daily routine.

Verses 4-6 reveal a God who hates sin. The holy God is unable to tolerate sin. He simply cannot be in the presence of sin as it contradicts His divine nature. In Him there is no darkness at all. We need to hate what God hates, to abhor sin in any form. How important it is for us to love what God loves and hate what He hates. To hear His name taken in vain and see a disregard for His Word should pierce our hearts like a sword. Pray that God will never allow us to get accustomed to sin. God hates sin and so must we. But always love and pray for the sinner.

Sin separates people from God. We need to identify and remove all sin from our lives through

the power of the Holy Spirit within us. There is no such thing as a “little sin” before God. Anything at all that contradicts the divine nature is sin. We need to confess, repent, and refuse to participate in anything God calls sin. No one will be able to stand faultless under God’s wrath (verse 5).

Verse 7 points out the mercy of God. Throughout the Psalms there is a strong feeling that God, by His very character as a righteous God, is pledged to defend and bless the righteous. David confesses that it is only in the loving kindness of God that he can enter His holy temple. We do not deserve to come into God’s presence, yet in mercy He invites us in. We deserve condemnation for our sin, yet in mercy Jesus frees us from the punishment we deserve. When we grasp this concept, we will have a reverence and holy fear of God. Coming to God’s temple is not done flippantly but with a sense of awe.

Verses 8-10 describe God’s judgment. God can look into a person’s heart and see what no one else sees. Verse 9 says God knows when one is unfaithful (not sincere) and when one flatters with one’s tongue (speaking one way and acting another).

David’s prayer in verse 10, “*Pronounce them guilty, O God!*” is not malicious. David is not cursing his enemies, but he is jealous for the honor of his Master. David is asking God to let the wicked get caught in their own trap—“*Fall by their own counsels.*” This is the natural consequence of their choice of rebellion against God. He considers the wickedness of traitors as a rebellion against God more than treason against his own earthly throne. His prayer is for the honor of God’s name and the vindication of His justice.

Verses 11,12 emphasize God’s blessing on the obedient, enabling them to rejoice. Verse 12 states that God’s favor surrounds like a shield, despite appearances to the contrary. A mistaken notion can be corrected from these verses. Many say that God must not love you if you encounter bad circumstances. Yet just the opposite is true: when all else seems against you, you can be certain God is FOR you.

Psalm 6: David’s Appeal and Answer

There are seven Psalms considered penitential. (Penitence describes the state of mind of one who acknowledges and deeply regrets his wrongs and is determined to amend.) No sin is beyond forgiveness if it is followed by true penitence. Psalms 6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, and 143 are all penitential psalms. They all recognize sin as the source of corruption and trouble.

The honest emotions of the author give us courage to be honest before God as well. He does not hide what he is feeling but cries out to God. David was in great danger from his enemies. In great distress, he cried to God for mercy. In the long and bitter struggle, his physical strength had deteriorated and he prayed to God for deliverance and healing (verses 1-7).

David knew his sin deserved punishment from a righteous God and pleaded for God’s mercy. Mercy can be described as “not receiving what we deserve.” God is rich in mercy (Ephesians 2:4) and knows our sinfulness. Often we do not realize we need to confess in order to receive mercy. David knew this well and admitted his weakness (verse 2). We can only receive mercy if we admit we need it.

David’s bones and soul are vexed (verses 2,3), denoting physical, spiritual, and emotional illness. Depression is a very real emotion. Scottish reformer John Knox confessed he passed through a dark time when his soul was filled with “anger, wrath, and indignation, which it conceived against God, calling all His promises in doubt.” Martin Luther knew periods of depression while shut up in Wartburg Castle. On one occasion Luther threw his ink-pot at the devil. Other times he shouted aloud “I have been baptized” and then all the devils of depression and fear were helpless.

In verses 8 to 10 faith had triumphed. David’s prayer and weeping had been heard. In confidence David acknowledged that God had heard the voice of his weeping. God had heard his supplication, received and answered his prayer. With faith and humility, prayer should be absolute and direct. We can face even the dark night of the soul knowing that God hears our cry (verse 6). We can depend on God to work in His time in His way for our highest good.

Notes