

SESSION 7

rest in God's greatness

SCRIPTURE FOCUS

Psalms 57

BUILDUP THEME



INTERNALIZE GODLINESS

God responds to our prayers and causes us to want to praise Him for His glorious help.

MEASURABLE RESPONSE

The students will praise God for His kindness, power, and sustaining presence.

MEMORY VERSE

"My soul is among lions: and I lie even among them that are set on fire, even the sons of men, whose teeth are spears and arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword. Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens; let thy glory be above all the earth" (Psalm 57:4, 5).

Memorable Propagative

- ☐ When was the last time you had a dream about being chased? Did something in your dream slow you down? Were you standing in mud, fighting paralysis, or carrying an unusually heavy load?
- ☐ Read Psalm 57:4, 5. David was chased over hills, around mountains, and into caves. He ran for his life. He wrote Psalm 57 about one of those occasions. He felt surrounded by lurking, hungry lions, yet he praised God. David knew that his circumstances didn't determine God's goodness. David praised God because God deserves it all the time.
- ☐ Regularly praise God's glory in your classroom. Lead by example, especially if you are facing a particularly difficult trial. Include God's glory in your prayers for your students.

Sample Devotional

David ran for his life from King Saul and those loyal to Saul. Psalm 57 records David's response to God. Though danger lurked all around him like hungry lions, David rested and even lay down for a while in a cave. David's heart remained steadfast. He determined to sing among the nations about God's mercy and truth.

Session Starters

Option 1—Chase Nightmares

Steps

1. Students share nightmares in which they were being chased by something scary or vicious.

ASK: What chased you in your dream? Did something slow you down? What was it? How did you feel as you were being chased?

ASK: As you ran from different dangers or bad people in your dreams, did you ever stop to take a little rest? Why not?

2. Transition to the Bible study.

David ran for his life from king Saul and those loyal to Saul. Psalm 57 records David's response to God. Though danger lurked all around him like hungry lions, David rested and lay down for a while in a cave. We will find out how David was able to rest in the face of danger.

Option 2—Sleep Strategies

Gather

- Resource 68-R11.

Steps

1. Students share their sleep strategies.

ASK: What helps you to get to sleep at night?

ASK: What threatens to rob you of sleep? (Q1)

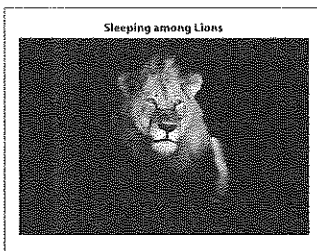
ASK: What experience do you have in trying to sleep in dangerous situations?

2. Show resource 68-R11.

ASK: What might be your strategy if you were sleeping outdoors in lion country? (Q2)

3. Transition to the Bible study.

David used lions to describe the distress he felt. Yet, he was able to lay down and rest. He wrote Psalm 57 about that time in his life. His experience helps us learn to rest in God no matter the circumstances we face.



68-R11

Bible Study

Gather

- Resource 68-R12.

Not long after being anointed king of Israel, Saul revealed the nature of his heart by failing to trust and obey God. God responded by promising Saul's kingdom to David after Saul's death. That made Saul mad. He then set his heart on killing David to keep him from becoming Israel's next king (1 Sam. 18:8, 9).

Saul drove himself crazy trying to kill David because nothing Saul tried worked. David was always one step ahead of Saul, leaving for his next hiding place before Saul could arrive to capture him. On one occasion, David ran into the cave of Adullam (1 Sam. 22:1) to hide. David wrote Psalm 57 to capture his thoughts and feelings as he rested in the dark cave.

ASK: What thoughts might you have if a king and all his men and resources were hunting you down to kill you? (Q3)

David was not frantic, skittish, or frazzled. He trusted God and praised His name. His psalm testifies to the sufficiency of God's enabling in times of great need.

I. Faith-Filled Prayer (Ps. 57:1-5)

David opened his psalm with a faith-filled prayer. He made requests based on what he believed is true about God. His prayer shows the importance of knowing and trusting God's revelation of Himself both through creation and through His Word (Ps. 19).

A. Faith in God's kindness (57:1)

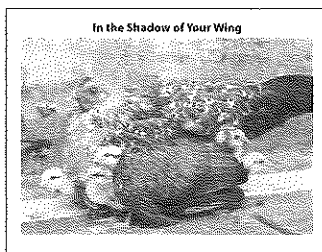
READ: Psalm 57:1.

David requested that God be merciful to him. In this setting, God's mercy refers to His kindness. David knew he was hopeless against Saul without God's kind hand guiding and guarding him. He repeated the request to show that he was counting on God alone for help. He even said that his soul, the deepest part of his being, trusted in God.

DISPLAY: Resource 68-R12.

David pictured God's kindness toward him, comparing God to a bird that gathers its young under its wings. A bird's wings provide chicks with comfort even if danger lurks nearby. God comforted and relaxed David even though Saul was still hot on David's trail.

ASK: Have you experienced God's comfort and peace in a time of trouble? What were the circumstances? (Q4)



68-R12

B. Faith in God's power (57:2, 3a)

The image of a bird under the shadow of a wing is comforting and encouraging from the perspective of the young bird. But the mother bird isn't much of a match against predators. So David added a statement about His faith in God's power.

READ: Psalm 57:2.

King Saul reigned over a relatively tiny strip of land on earth. God reigns over all Creation. His name is Most High, and He has all the infinite resources of Heaven to do whatever He pleases. David said, "God Most High performs for me." Translators add the words "all things" in verse 2 to make the verse sound better. But David's original statement left a blank for us to fill in.

ASK: How would you fill in the blank? God performs (blank) for me. (Q5)

God guides and directs to accomplish His will for the believer. In David's case, God's will was to preserve David's life so that he might eventually become king of Israel.

READ: Psalm 57:3a.

The Most High has infinite power and sovereign control over the world. When He sends from Heaven to accomplish His will, His enemies will be shamed. No one can stop God from accomplishing His will on earth because God's power is unrivaled. Anyone who tried to run over David and swallow him up would look like a fool in the end.

ASK: What do you think the Israelites must have thought about Saul's army hunting all over Israel for one young man only to fail over and over again? (Q6)

C. Faith in God's presence (57:3b, 4)

READ: Psalm 57:3b.

David had faith that God would send forth His lovingkindness and faithfulness (truth). God's kindness would come from God and surround him without fail. In other words, God would never leave David alone to face what he described as lions.

READ: Psalm 57:4.

David beautifully conveyed his trust in God, but he was human. He had to fight against giving in to feelings of despair and panic when he considered his circumstances. He admitted his soul was among lions. That means he must have felt like he could be attacked and ferociously killed at any moment. Furthermore, the men who sought him were

fiery. Perhaps that's a reference to the fervor they employed in their hunt for David's life. They pursued him with grit and determination. They barked out threats and broadcast their desire to kill God's anointed. Their words carried to David like spears and arrows, pierced his soul, and threatened to cause him to despair.

Despite the immediate dangers, David laid down and rested while his enemies grew anxious to find him and destroy him. They were the ones bothered and irritated. David found God's presence enough to quiet his soul.

We can rest and relax in the face of trials and uncertainties too. We serve David's great God. He hasn't changed. He is still the God Most High, and He will faithfully surround us with His lovingkindness.

ASK: How might you remind yourself of God's presence with you? (Q7)

D. Faith in God's exaltation (57:5)

Verses 5 and 11 are exactly the same. They both mark the end of David's thoughts. The former marks the end of his prayer and the latter the end of his praise.

READ: Psalm 57:5.

David prayed with confidence that God would be exalted above the heavens and His glory would be above all the earth. David kept God's larger purpose in mind as he prayed. David believed God would work through David's life to make His glory known throughout the earth. God's glory includes His person and ways.

ASK: What competing desires in David's heart might have kept him from focusing his life on God's glory becoming known? (Q8) *The desire for Saul's men to stop hunting him; the desire to ascend to the throne and have a comfortable place to live; the desire to clear his name and be respected in Israel.*

God chose to anoint David as the next king of Israel so He might make His glory known in the earth. God's glory is always His highest motive in the way He works in and through us.

II. Faith-Filled Proclamations (Ps. 57:6)

Verse 6 serves as a hinge between David's faith-filled prayer and his faith-filled praise. It comes after the refrain that ends the first section of the psalm. But it doesn't seem to go with the next section. Verse 7, which reflects the start of verse 1, would seem to be the logical start of the next major section of the psalm. The leave verse 6 alone and the focus on some special attention in the psalm. David used it to proclaim two points.

A. The believer is unbroken (57:6)

David admitted that his pursuing and trap-laying enemies affected him. But with all their scheming and planning, David's soul wasn't broken.

READ: Psalm 57:6.

David's soul was "bowed down" like a young tree being pulled toward the ground. He felt the pressure pulling on him to give up his mission to become Israel's next king. But David wasn't broken. He would continue to resist the extreme pressure. By not breaking, David proclaimed the sufficiency of God's kindness, power, and presence in his life.

ASK: When have you seen God's kindness, power, and presence loudly proclaimed through the life of another believer? (Q9)

B. The enemy is entrapped (57:6)

By contrast, those who sought David's life and laid traps to capture or even kill him, were figuratively caught by those same traps (57:6). They didn't end up in the pits they dug, but their actions made them guilty before God. God would justly judge their actions, holding them accountable for how they treated God's anointed.

James spoke of the process of being lured in by sin that traps and destroys a person.

READ: James 1:14, 15.

Saul and those who joined in his pursuit of David were lured by sin and then trapped by it. The more they struggled, the deeper they fell into the pit and the more frustrated they became. Eventually, Saul lost his life as part of God's judgment for his sins.

III. Faith-Filled Praise (Ps. 57:7–11)

In the second major section of his psalm, David revisits the same topics but as a praise instead of a prayer.

A. Praise for stability (57:7a)

READ: Psalm 57:7a.

David began his prayer by asking for God's kindness (57:1). He opened his praise by saying that his heart is steadfast and sure (57:7a). He repeated himself, perhaps because he was so delighted with God. He couldn't help but talk about how God had ministered to him. God had honored David's prayer and met David's needs in the cave of Adullam.

ASK: When have you been so delighted with God that you just had to talk about Him? (Q10)

We could picture David sitting under the shelter of God's wing,

comforted by God's kindness. God loved David and would do whatever it took to protect him from those who wanted to harm him. God's kindness quieted David's heart and allowed him to rest.

B. Praise with power (57:7b, 8)

READ: Psalm 57:7b, 8.

David planned a time of praise to God, calling for his own "glory" to be awakened. David's "glory" is his whole being, including his soul. David also called for musical instruments to be awakened and used to awaken the dawn, a normally sleepy and quiet part of the day for most people. The idea is that David can't wait to send out a powerful message about God's greatness. He wants to get started as soon as possible, even before the sun is up.

ASK: What would you think if David woke you up with jubilant singing and instruments just before the crack of dawn? (Q11)

ASK: What does his eagerness to praise God say about his relationship with God? (Q12) *David had a deep trust in God that proved true through deeply unsettling and troubling times.*

No one likes to face troubles, but the lessons learned about God's kindness and faithfulness in those times of difficulty become valuable. While David disliked running for his life, he very much appreciated learning what happens when he runs to God.

C. Praise among the people (57:9, 10)

READ: Psalm 57:9.

In verse 4, David said his soul was among lions. Not a particularly happy place to be. In verse 9, David said he would praise the Lord among the peoples and nations. It seems David planned to take his praise band on the road to wake them up to the reality of God's greatness. He even included the nations of the earth, meaning the Gentiles. They needed to hear about God too.

READ: Psalm 57:10.

David repeated his mention of God's loving-kindness (mercy) and faithfulness (truth) from verse 3b. He added that God's loving-kindness reaches to the heavens and His faithfulness to the clouds. They fill the vast sky, meaning God has more than enough kindness to meet our needs and the needs of the world. God pours generously from his bottomless cup of mercy every day.

ASK: Who in your world and beyond needs to hear about God's kindness? (Q13)

ASK: How might they learn about it? (Q14)

D. Praise of God's exaltation (57:11)

READ: Psalm 57:11.

David wanted others, whether in Heaven or on earth, to grasp God's greatness and be compelled to sing about it too. Exalting God by lifting up His name is our job. As we recognize His greatness, His abundant kindness, and faithfulness, we need to tell people about Him! They desperately need to know God! When God is lifted up and praised, everyone is better off.

Session Application

Steps

1. Discuss David's response to his troubling time.

ASK: What didn't David do as he faced a difficult trial? (Q15) *He didn't complain, give up, have a breakdown, turn to distractions, or try to ignore the issue.*

ASK: How would you summarize what David did? (Q16) *He prayed a faith-filled prayer based on what He knew and believed about God. He planned a faith-filled praise to God for what he expected God to do.*

David knew God and trusted God because he spent time with God before his intense trial came.

ASK: Are you resting in God's greatness? (Q17)

ASK: What could you do to better prepare yourself to face difficult trials? (Q18)

2. Give students an opportunity to praise God's kindness, power, and presence.

SESSION 8

draw near to God

SCRIPTURE FOCUS

Psalm 73

BUILDUP THEME

DEVELOP LIFE SKILLS

God wants us to draw near to Him and tell those set on slippery places about His saving grace.

MEASURABLE RESPONSE

The students will determine ways to draw close to God so they are prepared to declare His greatness.

MEMORY VERSE

"But it is good for me to draw near to God: I have put my trust in the LORD God, that I may declare all thy works"
(Psalm 73:28).

Teacher Preparation

- ☐ Have you browsed pictures on social media of someone's vacation or brand-new home? Did you catch yourself feeling envious of the person?
- ☐ Read Psalm 73. Note the process Asaph went through to stop feeling envious of the wicked and to start feeling content in the Lord's presence. Note also what he thinks of his enviousness when he puts his life and the lives of the wicked in proper perspective.
- ☐ Social media has led to widespread enviousness. And the tendency for people to make their lives appear like a fairytale, makes the problem worse. A typical social media user may feel like the only one for whom life isn't grand.
- ☐ Asaph, long before the days of social media, had envious feelings when he looked at the lives of those who had rejected God. From his limited perspective, they looked like they were the winners. He thought about joining them. He didn't, but many in his day and in the days since did. Challenge your students to replace feelings of envy with an appreciation for God's presence. Asaph's Psalm 73 will help them be content with being near God.

Session Summary

Asaph's envy of the wicked almost destroyed his relationship with God. But in the sanctuary, he saw things from God's perspective. He learned that the wicked are slated for destruction, whereas God is pleased with the righteous and will escort them safely to Heaven. Asaph concluded that spiritual blessings are far more valuable than material prosperity and that he needs to draw near to God so he might be a strong testimony of God's greatness and grace.