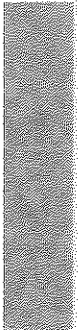


SESSION 9

number your days



SCRIPTURE FOCUS

Psalm 90

BUILDUP THEME



PREPARE TO SERVE

God expects believers to take full advantage of their opportunities to serve Him.

MEASURABLE RESPONSE

The students will determine to value their days.

MEMORY VERSE

"So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom"
(Psalm 90:12).

Teacher Preparation

- ☐ Use Google to figure out how many days you've been alive. What is your response to the number? Do you have any reason for wanting some of those days back?
- ☐ Read Psalm 90. Moses wrote this psalm in response to Israel's refusal to enter the Promised Land. He challenged Israel to trust and fear God and to apply their hearts to know God's wisdom. They had a limited number of days to live. They needed to value each of them.
- ☐ What do you do to add value to your days? What can you do yet today to give it eternal value?
- ☐ Use Psalm 90 to challenge your students to use their days for the Lord. Encourage them not to put off what they know God is calling them to do today.

Session Summary

Psalm 90 records a prayer in which Moses reflected on God's eternity and mankind's brief existence on earth. He cited sin as the reason life is so fleeting, and he asked God to teach him to spend his days wisely.

Session Starters

Option 1—Age in Days

Gather

- Access to the internet.

Steps

1. Have students Google how many days have passed since their date of birth.
2. Allow volunteers to share the total number of days they've been alive.

ASK: What is your response to seeing your days numbered?

ASK: What might you change about your life as a result?

3. Transition to the Bible study.

Moses asked God to teach us to number our days, meaning he wanted God to help us see our days as valuable. Moses wrote Psalm 90 to encourage us to live every day for the Lord.

Option 2—Missed Opportunities

Steps

1. Discuss past regrets.

ASK: What opportunities in the past did you pass up that you now regret? (Q1)

ASK: How has your regret affected your outlook on the future? (Q2)

2. Transition to the Bible study.

Moses led the Israelites to the Promised Land, but they passed on the opportunity to enter. They failed to trust and fear God. Moses' Psalm 90 challenges us to trust and fear God and to apply our hearts to know wisdom so we might make the most of the limited days we have on earth.

Bible Study

Moses apparently wrote Psalm 90 after Israel had sinned against the Lord at Kadesh Barnea (Num. 14). Instead of responding in faith to Joshua and Caleb's challenge to invade Canaan at once, the people of Israel responded in fear. They focused on Canaan's giants and strong cities

instead of focusing on their God. They foolishly chose to stay in the wilderness. Under divine judgment, they wandered there for forty years until only the younger generation and Joshua and Caleb remained alive to enter Canaan. Faced with the brevity of life and the certainty of death in the wilderness, Moses reflected on God's eternal existence, humanity's fleeting time on earth, and the need to invoke God's favor and grace. His prayer holds helpful lessons as we, too, face the fact that life is brief.

I. Trust God (Ps. 90:1, 2)

A. The creator God is personal (90:1)

READ: Psalm 90:1.

Moses began his prayer by addressing God as "Lord" (Elohim). This name identifies God as the Creator and Ruler of the universe. As Creator of all that exists, God must be eternal, having neither a beginning nor an end. He has always existed, and He will exist forever. Moses will make that clear.

ASK: Why did Israel, who had just rejected the Promised Land, need to know that God is the creator of the universe? (Q3) *So they would know the Lord is all-powerful and that He is the one true God; so they would focus the rest of their lives on worshiping and serving the Lord.*

The nation of Israel had moved from place to place during her history, starting with just Abraham and Sarah in Ur and ending up at Kadesh Barnea hundreds of years later as a nation of millions. Elohim was Israel's "dwelling place" in all those generations, including the four hundred years they lived in Egypt (90:1). "Dwelling place" is figurative for God's provision and protection of Israel. The idea is that God had been Israel's oasis of refreshment and place of refuge for hundreds of years. But Israel didn't always go to the Lord her refuge for provision and protection. When the Israelites saw the giants in Canaan, for instance, they acted as if they had no refuge or an inferior one at best.

ASK: What had God done in the past to show the Israelites at Kadesh Barnea that He is their oasis and refuge? (Q4) *He delivered them from Egypt through the Red Sea; He provided food and water for them in the wilderness; He went with them in the wilderness in pillar of cloud and fire; He provided the tabernacle as a way to approach Him.*

Moses' point is that the Creator of the universe, the eternal God, had been Israel's personal God from their beginning. God chose them. They needed to trust Him.

B. The creator God is powerful (90:2)

READ: Psalm 90:2.

Moses declared that God existed before “the mountains were brought forth.” God formed the mountains at the time of the Flood. Moses purposefully referred to the worldwide flood to make a point to the Israelites who rejected the Promised Land.

The Canaanites lived in the Promised Land. They worshiped Baal, a storm god and the god they believed was responsible for their bountiful crops and produce. It appeared from the Israelites’ perspective that the wonderful produce their spies brought back from the Promised Land was proof that Baal was a powerful god who protected and provided for those who worshiped him. Israel didn’t want to tangle with a people who had Baal as their provider and refuge.

The Israelites ignored God’s history, which Moses had recorded for them in Genesis. Elohim brought the storms that contributed to the worldwide flood. God then caused the mountains to rise so the waters would recede. God exercises His power over the earth’s people and over the earth itself. Elohim, not Baal, is the one true God.

READ: Genesis 6:4–7. **ASK:** What similarities do you see between the people of Noah’s day and the Canaanites? (Q5) *Both were tall and strong; both served false gods; both deserved to be judged for their horrible wickedness.*

David wrote Psalm 29 many years after God’s People conquered the Promised Land. He reflected on the greatness God showed at the time of the Flood.

READ: Psalm 29. **ASK:** What key truths about God did David take from the account of the Flood? (Q6) *God commands the weather and its effects with His voice; God sat enthroned at the Flood as King forever; God will strengthen His People and give them peace.*

David understood God in a way the Israelites of Moses’ day had missed. David had faced a Canaanite giant one-on-one and won because He believed God would fight for him (1 Sam. 17:47).

Moses added that God “formed the earth and the world,” meaning there could be no other god but Elohim. Baal was a false god created by people to explain what Elohim, the only true God, was doing in the land of Canaan. God is “from everlasting to everlasting.” Israel should have put their faith in Him to destroy the Canaanites like He destroyed the sinful world during the Flood.

ASK: What might God be calling you to do that requires you to put your faith in His personal and powerful presence with you? (Q7)

II. Fear God (Ps. 90:3–11)

A. God controls life and death (90:3–6)

READ: Psalm 90:3.

God controls the destruction of a person's body, which returns to dust. That means He controlled when the Canaanites would die and when the Israelites would die. Israel feared they would fall at the hands of the Canaanites according to Baal's will. The Israelites' fear of Baal insulted God.

READ: Numbers 14:3, 4. **ASK:** Who did the Israelites depend on to spare their lives? (Q8) *They believed they could determine when and how they died.*

As we will see later in this study, God demonstrated that the Israelites couldn't spare their own lives. He judged them by putting a time limit on their lives. Every adult would die within forty years (Num. 14:33–34).

Moses went back to the days of Noah for more evidence of God's control over people's lifespans. Noah's generation saw people live to be nearly a thousand years old. Methuselah, Noah's grandfather, lived to be 969 years old. Noah's father, Lamech, lived to be 777 years old. Noah was over 600 years old when he entered the ark (Gen. 7:6). We can't imagine living that long. It would seem like an eternity. Even Moses' generation, who lived to be well over 100 years old, couldn't imagine living a thousand years. Yet all those who lived nearly a millennium eventually died.

READ: Psalm 90:4–6.

God, unlike humans, sees a thousand years like it was yesterday or just a four-hour watch in the night. He spared only Noah's family at the Flood, sweeping the rest of the world away. Their lives, and the lives of all who have lived since the Flood, resembled a sleep with judgment arriving in the morning. Our lifespan seems as brief as grass that springs up quickly but then is cut down and withers under the sun's blazing heat. No one can spare his or her life. Death comes for all people according to God's will.

ASK: What other comparisons might emphasize life's brevity? (Q9)

God destroyed the world's population with ease, but Israel didn't think He could handle the population of Canaan. Israel failed to learn from history and respect God's control over their life and death.

ASK: What is your response to God's control over life and death? (Q10)

B. God judges sinners (90:7–11)

READ: Psalm 90:7, 8.

God grew angry at Israel for refusing to trust Him and enter the Promised Land. Moses said Israel was terrified by God's wrath. Their doubt and fears were open before God. He saw them as they were.

READ: Numbers 14:11, 12.

God was ready to destroy the entire nation of Israel and raise a new one through Moses. Only Moses' intervention caused God to relent. Still, God condemned all the Israelite adults to die in the wilderness, sparing only faithful Joshua and Caleb (Num. 14:23, 24). Meanwhile, the wicked Canaanites enjoyed the bountiful Promised Land rent free for another forty years, thinking all the time that Baal blessed their loyalty to him.

READ: Psalm 90:9–11.

The Lord sentenced the generation that refused to enter Canaan to die in the wilderness. Life expectancy was seventy years, unless above-average stamina extended a person's life to eighty. Even if they lived to eighty, the unbelieving Israelites would live out their time in the wilderness in labor and sorrow. Knowledge of God's anger and wrath should lead us to respect God.

ASK: What are some consequences of refusing to take God at His word? (Q11) *Missing out on the seeing God work through us in unexpected ways; loss of eternal reward; increased anxiety and fear.*

III. Seek God (Ps. 90:12–17)

A. Seek God's wisdom (90:12)

All was not lost with the Israelites. Moses asked God to teach them to number their days because God had numbered them and limited them.

READ: Psalm 90:12.

To number one's days is to make them count by using them for God's glory. Israel would make their lives count by learning and obeying God's Word and by teaching their children to trust God when they had a chance to enter the Promised Land.

ASK: How do you "number" your days? What makes your life count for eternity? (Q12)

ASK: How might you teach younger generations to value their days? (Q13) *Older generations can testify to the swiftness of life; share both their regrets and their accomplishments to younger believers; encourage younger generations to set spiritual goals; model what it means to use each day to serve the Lord well.*

Though Moses predicted the number of years his generation might live, no one has any guaranteed number of years. So, numbering our days is even more urgent.

The apostle Paul began his new life in Christ by asking, "Lord, what do you want me to do?" (Acts 9:6), and at the end of his life he testified,

"I have finished my course" (2 Tim. 4:7). The Lord had given Paul the task of declaring the gospel among the Gentiles, and he was not disobedient (Acts 9:15, 26:19). He had faithfully numbered his days and applied his heart unto wisdom.

READ: 2 Corinthians 5:9, 10. **ASK:** What lies ahead for believers who finish the course God has planned for them? (Q14) *Rewards from Christ in the form of crowns.*

B. Seek God's mercy (90:13–15)

READ: Psalm 90:13–15.

Moses asked the Lord to turn from His anger and have pity on His people. He wondered how long the Lord would discipline them. He longed for a new day—a fresh start—that would usher in mercy and joy. He desired as many days and years of gladness as those that had been filled with the Lord's discipline.

As Israel wandered in the wilderness, they didn't have to be filled with despair and regret. They could turn to the Lord and live out their limited years in the joy of the Lord.

ASK: What will bemoaning missed opportunities to live for God in the past do to opportunities to live for God today and in the future? (Q15) *It will rob present and future opportunities.*

C. Seek God's enabling (90:16, 17)

READ: Psalm 90:16, 17.

Moses longed to see God perform His wondrous works on behalf of Israel and reveal His glory to His people again. He asked God to crown Israel's efforts with favor and grace. Our prayers, too, should include a request for a display of God's power in our lives and the gift of His favor and grace on our service for Him. Unless the Lord empowers our service and crowns it with His favor and grace, our work will be in vain.

Session Application

Steps

1. Encourage your students to value their days.

Because life is brief at best and uncertain, we must redeem the time. Every moment of every day is a precious gift from God to be appreciated and used to honor Him. We can't count on tomorrow's opportunities. We may not be alive tomorrow. Today is the tomorrow we planned yesterday to devote to the Lord. Now is the only day of opportunity we can seize confidently. We, like Moses,

should ask the Lord to crown all our efforts for Him with favor and grace.

ASK: What will you start doing to make your days count for Christ? (Q16)

ASK: To whom might you impart the wisdom you've learned from living for the Lord? (Q17)

2. Ask God to help your class number their days so they might end them without regrets, having finished the course God laid out for them.