

January 5, 2025

In Times of Trouble or The Lord is King
Psalm 10:12-18

Unifying Principle (Focus)

People are greatly troubled by overwhelming violence, injustice, and oppression. How can we survive and overcome such abusive conditions? The psalmist appeals to God to rise up as king and ruler and restore justice to the defenseless who suffer under the attack of the wicked.

Goal For The Learner

Adults:

1. To describe the psalmist's confidence in God in times of trouble.
2. To earnestly desire to see the Lord establish justice in the world.
3. To cooperate with God's justice by seeking the good of the poor and the oppressed.

Challenges For the Week

1. See if you can find the connections between Psalms 9 and 10—their common themes of terror visited upon the weak, judgment for those who terrorize, and grace to those who are terrorized.
2. What are specific obstacles we create or experience that can make God seem far away in times of trouble?
3. What are some possibilities of who the poor, weak, and oppressed are—ancient Israel, who often found themselves victims of terror? Those who are economically, socially, and politically terrorized in any society, championed today by the BlackLivesMatter and #MeToo movements? Or those who are “poor in spirit” and in need of saving grace? Or all of them?
4. Compare the arrogant pride that marks the wicked in Psalm 10 with the sense of wonder and awe that marks the psalmist's encounter with the Creator in Psalm 8. How does Psalm 8 help us read Psalm 10's call to humility and to recognize the limitations of humanity?
5. Psalms 9 and 10 calls those in positions of authority to use their power and influence to seek justice and equity, and not for their own benefit. Discuss ways that mainly suburban white churches and primarily ethnic-minority churches in the inner city can develop significant, ongoing relationships. What creative activities can bring people together to provide a real witness to the power of Christ to obliterate barriers of race, class, wealth?
6. Interview your pastor to speak about Psalms 9 and 10 in light of the preacher's mandate to comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable.

January 12, 2025

The Majesty of a King's Reign or The Lord is Robed in Majesty
Psalm 93

Unifying Principle (Focus)

Throughout the world, we find chaos and disorder. Who can restore order and peace? Psalm 93 proclaims God as the Almighty and creative power whose reign stands firm amidst crisis and unrest.

1. To brainstorm possible situations of chaos and disorder expressed by the psalmist.
 2. To trust God's sovereignty to set things right amidst chaos and confusion.
 3. To be a witness to God's strength by standing up to the forces of chaos.
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1. Look for hymns of confidence founded in the Lord's kingship, such as "Rejoice, the Lord Is King."
 2. What are different challenges that threaten to take people under in today's world? How are these challenges like the floods in Psalm 93?
 3. Read Psalm 93 while viewing select scenes in the film *The Perfect Storm* when the fishing boat sails through the storm of the century. Consider how scenes like this give nuance to *majestic*.
 4. What do you find in Psalm 93 as a conviction that even though the seas raise themselves up, Yahweh is already on high. The rebellious forces of chaos are small and insignificant to God. What other stories in Scripture portray God's power over the waters?
 5. Read Psalm 93 (and 94–99) as a response to the problem presented in Psalm 89: the Davidic dynasty is in shambles. Imagine the people doubting the certainty of God's covenant promises. How would Psalm 93 answer the people's doubts?
 6. Name ways that reading and knowing Scripture ("Your decrees") offer strength in times of trouble.

January 19, 2025

Don't Forget or The Lord's Throne is Established

Psalm 103:1-14

Unifying Principle (Focus)

Good and fair leadership engenders confidence and peace. How do we express our gratitude to leaders who embody these qualities? Psalm 103 offers praise and thanksgiving to the Lord Almighty who rules with steadfast love, justice, and compassion.

Goals For The Learners

1. To identify the benefits, you have received from God's steadfast love and righteousness.
2. To recognize themselves as forgiven and loved eternally by the Lord.
3. To understand remembering as a call to action to promote the agenda of God's kingdom.

Challenges For the Week

1. Review the significance of remembering in the psalm, both God's (v. 14) and the believers' (v. 2, 18).
 2. Scholars note in Psalm 103 an individual's thanksgiving to God that leads the congregation to praise and worship. Give examples of the power of personal testimony for worship.
 3. Identify Psalm 103's three areas of praise—personal, communal, and universal. What are some ways that this tripartite structure might inform the learners' prayer lives.
 4. Prepare a worksheet on which you as a learner complete the phrase, "God, I bless you for . . ."
- Combine responses to create a psalm of praise.
5. Skim the Scriptural Allusion index for hymns that are based on Psalm 103, such as "Praise God from Whom All Blessings Flow" and "Bless the Lord, O My Soul." Sing stanzas of hymns between reading verses of Psalm 103.
 6. What do you say about the notion that the opposite of praising God is forgetting God? How is remembering a key factor in praise and worship? How often do you hear the word *remember* in worship? How does the call to remember inform your worship and service to God?

January 26, 2025

Doesn't Anything Last Anymore? Or My God, The King

Psalm 145:1, 10-21

Unifying Principle (Focus)

We live in an ever-changing world of turmoil and uncertainty. Where can we find a reason for relief and joy? Psalm 145 invites us to find constancy in God's everlasting kingdom of steadfast mercy, power, goodness, and compassion.

Goals For the Learners

1. To identify the stressors of today's changing times and circumstances.
2. To claim security in God's everlasting care and compassion regardless of circumstances.
3. To give honor and praise to God for God's unchanging concern for God's world.

Challenges For the Week

1. In Hebrew, Psalm 145 is an alphabetical acrostic psalm, an A-to-Z prayer of praise to God as King. Create an acrostic psalm of praise together that extols the attributes of God that the learners have experienced.
2. Summarize Jonah's story and imagine the people of Nineveh praising God with the words of Psalm 145. What insights does this exercise evoke?
3. Review God's covenant with Abraham and the promise to bless the nations through Israel. How is the Abrahamic covenant determinative for the rationale for praising God?
4. What is the responsibility of the one who wears the crown to care for his or her subjects' welfare? How is this responsibility fulfilled by current leaders of nations?
5. Trace the development of the phrase "steadfast love" (Hebrew, *chesed*) from a term for covenant loyalty between YHWH and Israel to a universal characteristic of God's common grace to all creatures.
6. Practice testifying to God's greatness and goodness with each other using terms and phrases from the psalm. Speak with exuberance.