



GRATITUDE

**LIFE GROUPS
LEADER GUIDE
NOVEMBER 7-21, 2021**

LIFE GROUPS	TEACHING PLAN	
	FW	<i>Gratitude</i>
	November 7	21

GRATITUDE FOR THE WIN

PSALM 30

NOVEMBER 7, 2021

TEACHING PLAN

PREPARATION

- > Spend the week reading through and studying Psalm 30:1-12. Consult the commentary provided and any additional study tools (such as a concordance or Bible dictionary) to enhance your preparation.
- > Determine which discussion points and questions will work best with your group.
- > Pray for your pastors, the upcoming group meeting, your teaching, your group members, and their receptivity to the study.

HIGHLIGHTS

TAKEAWAY: GOD WANTS TO USE YOUR HELPLESSNESS TO LEAD YOU TO A PLACE OF GRATEFUL FAITH IN HIS SAVING POWER.

WHY IT'S IMPORTANT: IN SEASONS OF DIFFICULTY AND DISAPPOINTMENT, WE ARE PRONE TO FEEL HELPLESS AND DEFEATED. GOD WANTS TO USE THOSE SEASONS TO SHOW US HE IS OUR EVER-PRESENT HELP AND REASON FOR GRATITUDE.

GOSPEL CONNECTION: WHEN WE CONFESS OUR SINS, JESUS IS FAITHFUL TO FORGIVE US AND CLEANSE US FROM ALL UNRIGHTEOUSNESS (1 JOHN 1:9).

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to help get the conversation going.

Notes:

- 1 Recall movies, books, or TV shows where the bad guy wins in the end (for example, *Braveheart*). Why do we feel good when the good guys win or the bad guys “get what’s coming to them” in a movie or TV show? How do we feel if the bad guys win? Why do we find this so disagreeable?
- 2 Have you ever felt like an underdog, like a “good guy” who can’t seem to “win”?
- 3 What is your attitude about life this Thanksgiving season (defeated, hopeful, determined to work harder, trusting in God to work everything out in the end, etc.)?

All of us have felt like the underdog at some point in our lives, whether we’re in that place because of our own wrongdoing or because life came at us hard. Often, we think if we just work harder, good things will come our way. But if we look at the world on a macro level, we see this is not always the case. There are many humble people who work hard and struggle to find victory in the way the world defines it. Clearly, the answer isn’t simply to work harder. There must be another way.

In Psalm 30, David praised God for giving him the “win” when it looked like he would lose. He had sinned against God, but God was his security. By trusting in God, David found victory and was eternally grateful for it. This Thanksgiving season, and in every season, we can be grateful to God for picking us up from our low position and giving us the eternal “win” in Jesus Christ.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

Notes:

This psalm is a “song” of thanksgiving written by David on the occasion of the dedication of the temple, and focuses on God’s loving correction in David’s life for his sin of self-sufficiency. David was grateful to have a new start with the Lord. His season of difficulty, disappointment, and defeat was restored with rejoicing, dancing, and singing.

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ PSALM 30:1-5.

- What reasons did David have for previously feeling like he was an underdog?

David had enemies who had seemed to be triumphing over him. He also had some kind of physical sickness that either was a near death experience or, at the very least, made David feel that way. Either way, he endured a season when he was weak, tired, and desperate.

- How did David’s feelings of helplessness end up being a good thing in his life?
- What had David learned about God through this experience?

David’s desperation led him to cry out to God for help. He couldn’t do anything about his situation, but he knew Someone who could. David found God trustworthy. This experience led David’s gratitude to grow. Resolved to rejoice in the Lord after He had delivered him from the depths of the pit, David praised God and shared testimony—here in song—inviting others to praise Him too.

- Which of these truths about God that David described stand out to you the most in this season of your life? Explain.

Notes:

- When in your life has a season of defeat or helplessness resulted in spiritual growth? What happened? What did you learn about God through that experience?

We are all helpless, especially in regard to our sinful condition. And many of us don't like to acknowledge that truth. We try to insulate ourselves against feeling helpless by medicating ourselves with hard work, entertainment, and other forms of distraction.

- What kinds of things must we believe are true about God and His character to humbly acknowledge our helplessness before Him?

When we humbly come before God in repentance, we acknowledge that He is powerful and we are not. We confess that He has control when we have none. We are reminded that He loves us even though we are sinful, and we trust that He is willing and able to help us.

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ PSALM 30:6-12.

- What reasons did David have for previously feeling like he wasn't an underdog, but a "sure thing" never to be shaken?
- Why is it tempting to think of ourselves as self-sufficient and secure? What are some things we pursue in life to feel that way?

- Why would God allow David's life to take such a terrible turn (v. 7)? Doesn't He want us to feel secure? Explain.

Notes:

- What's the difference between the security of verse 6 and verse 7?

God disciplined David for his sin of self-sufficiency and self-centered independence from the Lord. God removed His presence from David because of his sin.

We can talk ourselves into almost anything, just like David had. We can think that because we have a house, health insurance, healthy kids, and wear our seatbelts, we are secure. Yet, circumstances can come to any of us and wreck that security. But this isn't a bad thing because God uses it to show us where true security lies. He allows us to fail so we can grow in our trust and gratitude for Him who never fails.

- How did David respond to being "shattered"?
- How could he have responded instead?
- In your own words, what reasons did David have to say he would give thanks to God forever?
- What reasons do you have to give thanks to God forever?

Having pleaded his case in repentance, David received the forgiveness of God that turned his sadness into shouts of joy. He recognized the clear evidence of the Father's love acting for his good. God wanted David, and He wants us, to recognize our status as underdogs, unable to secure victory apart from Him. He disciplines us to turn our hearts to Him in obedience to His instructions. When we confess our sins, weeping may last for the night, but joy comes in the morning.

Notes:

- At first glance, it might seem strange that Psalm 30 was written for the dedication of the temple. Read Psalm 18:6 and 1 Corinthians 3:16. Why were David's words here appropriate for the dedication of God's temple?

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

Notes:

- In what areas of your life are you tempted to rely on circumstances as your source for gratitude?
- How does Psalm 30 challenge you in that this Thanksgiving season?
- What has to happen in a person's life for verse 1 to be true for them? Who in your life needs to hear that?

PRAY

Thank God for rescuing you from the sin that triumphed over you. Praise Him for hearing your cry for help and bringing you up from the grave. Ask Him to give you opportunities this week to give testimony about that, like David did, so others might learn to praise God too.

FOLLOW UP

Midway through this week, send a follow-up email to your group with some or all of the following information:

Notes:

- > Questions to consider as they continue to reflect on what they learned this week:
 - What practical steps can you take this week to remind yourself where true security lies?
 - David unashamedly testified about his personal failures that God turned to joy. How does sharing your personal testimony with others show gratitude to God?

- > A note of encouragement, following up on any specific prayer requests mentioned during your group gathering.

- > The challenge to memorize Psalm 30:11-12.

- > The text for next week's study, so group members can read it in anticipation of next weekend: Psalm 107.

PSALM 30:1-12

30:1-2. “Lifted... up” is from a Hebrew word that is most often used to describe drawing water from a well (Exodus 2:16,19; Proverbs 20:5). Though enemies are not always the immediate cause of the psalmist’s affliction, they aggravate the suffering, adding insult to injury (41:5,11). This seems to be the case here since the problem was more likely sickness, as indicated by the word healed in verse 2.

Notes:

30:3. “Sheol” in many instances is a synonym for death. To be near Sheol is to be close to death (88:3), so being “brought... up” from Sheol or “spared from the Pit” is equivalent to being rescued from death (28:1; 88:4).

30:4-5. The personal experience of the individual becomes a lesson to be learned by the community. It is the individual’s responsibility to communicate to the community what Yahweh has done. The lesson is that times of suffering pale in comparison to Yahweh’s deliverance (30:5).

30:6-7. These verses recall the time before the affliction in order to point out a likely reason for the suffering, which is the need for humility. Before God allowed the psalmist to suffer, he was so secure that he felt he could never be shaken. The security apparently became a source of overconfidence even though it was Yahweh who showed His favor and made him like a strong mountain (5:12). In other words, the blessing of God gave him a false sense of security. The suffering began when Yahweh hid His face.

30:9. The psalmist seeks to motivate God to act on behalf of His people by emphasizing the loss of praise and testimony for Yahweh if the sufferer were to die (6:5; 88:10-12). This may seem bold, but it demonstrates a key element in Israel’s purpose—to be a testimony for Yahweh to the nations by proclaiming His truth (Deuteronomy 4:6-8).

30:11-12. Lament is parallel with sackcloth, the clothing used to represent a time of mourning (Genesis 37:34; Esther 4:3; Ezekiel 27:31). Dancing and being clothed

with gladness are also related ideas showing the dramatic change after Yahweh delivered the psalmist from death. The purpose of the deliverance is praise and testimony. This demonstrates the change in perspective from the false sense of security to a renewed sense of purpose in keeping with the reason why God had called out His people from among the nations (30:9).

Notes:

LIFE GROUPS	TEACHING PLAN	
	FW	<i>Gratitude</i>
	NOVEMBER 14	21

GIVE THANKS TO THE LORD

PSALM 107

NOVEMBER 14, 2021

TEACHING PLAN

PREPARATION

- > Spend the week reading through and studying Psalm 107. Consult the commentary provided and any additional study tools (such as a concordance or Bible dictionary) to enhance your preparation.
- > Determine which discussion points and questions will work best with your group.
- > Pray for your pastors, the upcoming group meeting, your teaching, your group members, and their receptivity to the study.

HIGHLIGHTS

TAKEAWAY: WE DO NOT PRAISE GOD TO GET WHAT WE WANT FROM HIM, BUT RATHER TO ACKNOWLEDGE HIS GOODNESS, SUBMIT TO HIS WILL, AND RELY ON HIS STRENGTH.

WHY IT'S IMPORTANT: GRATITUDE IS A GIFT FROM GOD GIVEN TO HELP US GROW IN INTIMACY WITH HIM.

GOSPEL CONNECTION: JESUS HAS RECONCILED US TO THE FATHER AND IS OUR ULTIMATE REASON FOR GRATITUDE.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to help get the conversation going.

Notes:

- 1 Share about a time when you had to ask for help in completing a task or solving a problem.
- 2 Is it difficult for you to ask for help from others? Why or why not?

We live in a culture that values self-sufficiency. We like to think that we can solve any problem and accomplish any task through our own strength, wisdom, and power. Life has a way of proving such notions wrong as we face problems or tasks that we cannot solve on our own. Our truly deep need can either drive us to despair or drive us to God. Thankfully, when we acknowledge our need and come to God desperately seeking His grace, we will find Him ready to help us in our need.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

Notes:

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ PSALM 107:1-3.

Psalm 107 was probably written shortly after the Israelites were allowed to return to Jerusalem to rebuild the city and the temple after the Babylonian exile. The Psalm begins with a call to Israel to give thanks to the Lord for the salvation He provided them before citing four unique dire situations from which God redeemed them.

- What attribute of the Lord did the psalmist command his readers to give thanks for? How might forgetting this attribute of God keep us from being thankful?
- What keeps you from being thankful to God? What are some practical ways we might cultivate thankfulness in our hearts toward God?

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ PSALM 107:4-32.

- Look at verses 4-5, 10-11, 17-18, and 23-27. What four situations did the psalmist recount? What do each of these situations have in common?
- Why did God allow these people to face such dire situations? Why might God allow us to face similarly difficult circumstances?

In each of the four situations the Psalmist recounted feeling hopeless. The people were completely lost (vv. 4-5), imprisoned (vv. 10-11), deathly ill (vv. 17-18), and surrounded by a deadly

storm (vv. 23-27). God allows us to face dire circumstances so we might come to the end of ourselves and realize He is our only hope. It is only when we realize we cannot save ourselves that we turn to the only One Who has the power to truly save.

Notes:

- How did the people's sin contribute to their affliction (vv. 11, 17)? Why is it sometimes difficult for us to admit that our sinful actions have contributed the afflictions we face?
- Who "bowed" the people's hearts with labor (v. 12)? Who was the source of the great storm that caused the sailors distress (v. 24)? What was God hoping to accomplish in the hearts of the people?

In both instances, the people were guilty of rebelling against the Lord (vv. 11, 17). God showed them kindness by confronting them with earthly consequences for their sins. In so doing, He was moving them to repentance that would have an eternal impact in their lives. While not all the affliction we face is due to our own sin, any time we face affliction, we should pause to consider whether there is sin in our hearts that is keeping us from delighting in God.

- How did the people respond (vv. 6, 13, 19, 28)? What does their response tell us about their understanding of their predicament? What does it tell us about their faith in God?
- What does the people's desperate cry for mercy tell us about their faith in God? How might crying out to God in desperation show Him honor?

In verses 6, 13, 19, and 28, the people's response to their affliction was the same—they cried out to God for mercy. This demonstrated that they understood their spiritual bankruptcy and their inability to save themselves. We honor God when cry out to Him in desperation because such prayers demonstrate that we believe God can save us and that He is our only hope.

Notes:

- How did God respond to each of the four groups of people who cry out to Him for mercy (vv. 6-7, 13-14, 19-20, 28-29)? What has God delivered you from?
- How did the psalmist encourage each of these people to respond to the deliverance God provides (vv. 8-9, 15-16, 21-22, 28-29)? How should we respond to the deliverance God has provided in our lives?

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ PSALM 107:39-43 AND LUKE 18:39-43.

- Based on these two passages, what makes the needy (v. 41) more likely to receive God's grace than princes (v. 40)? What made the tax collector in Luke 18 better positioned to be justified before God than the Pharisee?
- The psalmist ended Psalm 107 with a challenge to "ponder the loving deeds of the Lord" (v. 43). How has God demonstrated His steadfast love for us through Christ's sacrifice on the cross?

The needy, like the tax collector, realized that their only hope of salvation is that God would show them grace. They knew that they had done nothing to deserve God's favor and they admit their need for God and cry out to Him for help. Both the needy in Psalm 107 and the tax collector in Luke 18 give us a picture of what it means to cry out to God for eternal salvation. Following Christ requires that we repent of any notion that we can fix ourselves spiritually and work our way toward God through our own efforts. We must acknowledge our dire circumstances and our desperate spiritual condition and look to Christ who died on the cross for our sins. By looking to the cross, we will be reminded that God's love is free and endures forever!

Notes:

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

Notes:

- Would you describe your prayers to God as desperate? What might need to change for your prayer life to align with the heart of those who cried out to God for mercy in Psalm 107?
- How might we guard against praying pridefully like the Pharisee in Luke 18:11? How might you cultivate a heart of humility before God when you pray this week?
- What are some practical steps you might take to be more mindful of God's steadfast love for you?

PRAY

Thank God for demonstrating His steadfast love for us through the cross of Jesus Christ. Pray that we would be mindful of our desperate sinful condition before Him and that we would cry out to Him for mercy as we become more aware of the sin in our lives. Pray that God would help us repent from the pride that is keeping us from a deeper relationship with Him and cultivate a more humble and dependent faith in Him.

FOLLOW UP

Midway through this week, send a follow-up email to your group with some or all of the following information:

Notes:

- > Questions to consider as they continue to reflect on what they learned this week:
 - Are you currently in a season of dry or vibrant worship? Why?
 - If dry, how does Psalm 107 give refreshment? If vibrant, how does Psalm 107 help you know how to continue?

- > A note of encouragement, following up on any specific prayer requests mentioned during your group gathering.

- > The challenge to memorize Psalm 107:1.

- > The text for next week's study, so group members can read it in anticipation of next weekend: Psalm 116.

PSALM 107

107:1. Here is an initial call to praise. God is to be offered thanks because he is good. Divine goodness is one of the most fundamental truths about God (Pss. 25:8; 86:5; 106:1; 118:1). His steadfast love endures forever, never diminishing toward his people.

Notes:

107:2-3. The redeemed always should be talking about God's goodness. "Redeemed" is a synonym for being delivered or rescued from danger. The foe is probably a reference to Babylon amid their days of Babylonian captivity as Israel's enemies. Throughout the centuries, God had delivered his people from foreign lands where they had been held captive and in slavery.

107:4-5. In the wilderness, Israel found herself in a forty-year track to nowhere. They wandered in desert wastelands for four decades, captive to their own sin. They found no way to a city where they could settle, where a supply of food and water could be found to satisfy and sustain them. They were hungry and thirsty.

107:6-9. They finally became so desperate that they cried out to the Lord. He delivered them. They did not deserve it, but God by his grace delivered them, an expression of his goodness. God led them by a direct route, a straight way, clear of dangerous and difficult obstacles, to provide for their needs. They should give thanks to the Lord, a refrain (cp. vv. 15,21,31) for his goodness and love. He has satisfied the thirsty and fed the hungry, doing good to them.

107:10-12. Some of the people had sat in darkness, a vivid imagery for distress, despair, and hopelessness. Deepest gloom was theirs, a near-death ordeal. They were prisoners in foreign bondage, held in iron chains. This imprisonment was disciplinary by the Lord, the result of Israel's rebellion against the words of God. Because of their sin, God subjected them to bitter labor. Their prison life was brutal, becoming chained slave gangs, subjected to harsh, unending labor (cp. v. 10). As their strength failed them, they stumbled, their bodies unable to bear them up.

107:13-14. Finally, they cried to the Lord. Having been humbled, they confessed their sin and repented of their evil ways. God heard their cries for help and intervened to save them from their distress. God brought them out, delivering them. He snapped their chains of slavery and imprisonment, releasing them from their hard labor.

Notes:

107:15-16. In response, the psalmist urged that the people give thanks to the Lord for his unfailing love. God breaks down the city gates of Israel's oppressive foe, a reference to the city of Babylon, which had held Israel captive for seventy years.

107:17. Under such severe affliction, some of the Israelites had become fools, that is, morally incapable of accepting God's instruction. They pursued rebellious ways and iniquities. Israel had rebelled against the Lord, amazingly, in spite of the goodness of God in delivering his people out of Egyptian bondage through the Red Sea and feeding them quail and manna.

107:18-19. They loathed all food. In their hearts, they did not like God's will or God's timing. They wanted better provision now, and when they did not receive it, they grew impatient. Near the gates of death means they were dying, at the point of death. Again, they cried with a shriek for help, and, again, God saved them.

107:20-22. God saved the people by sending forth his word. He sent a saving message and healed them. God rescued them from the grave. "Grave" (a derivative of shachah, to fall down in troubles, to sink down in despair, to bow down) means to be plummeted down in trials and pain. Once saved and delivered from their troubles, their hearts should overflow with praise and thanks to God for his wonderful deeds. They should sacrifice thank offerings to God for his works of deliverance, accompanied by songs of joy.

107:23-27. When God's people launched out to the sea in ships, perhaps as merchants in pursuit of trade, they witnessed the works of the Lord in the deep. This speaks of terrifying storms in the open sea sent by the Lord. He stirred up a tempest and

lifted high the waves, bringing these storms against Israel because of her sin. In these wave-tossed ships, their courage melted away in fear and misery. At their wits' end, all their wisdom was swallowed up; they were unable to navigate.

Notes:

107:28-29. Finally, humbled and convicted of their rebellious ways, they cried out to the Lord. Again, he brought them out of their distresses. The God who sent the storm is the God who stilled the storm and rescued his people.

107:30-32. God's people were glad when the angry waves grew calm. God then guided them to their desired haven, a safe harbor of refuge. God ushered them where they needed to be. As a result, they should give thanks, a refrain in this psalm (cp. vv 1,8-9,15,21-22,31-32). This giving of thanks should be offered publicly before the assembly and in the council of the elders so that others could hear and be glad.

107:33-34. The Lord sometimes disciplined his people by turning their rivers (water supply) into a desert (drought) or by turning their fruitful land into a wasteland. This difficulty was the direct result of their wickedness.

107:35-40. Now, God turned the desert into pools of water, the reverse effect of verses 33-34. God's discipline is only for a season, and he delights to restore his children who repent of their sin. But what if those blessed by God experience misfortune and are made to experience oppression, calamity and sorrow by these arrogant foes? In such cases, God will call their oppressors into account. God will strip their oppressors of their power and influence and cause them to be removed from office, never to harm God's people again.

107:41-42. But unlike God's dealing with these proud princes, he will act as the protector of the needy who look to him for help. The upright see and rejoice over God's protection and deliverance.

107:43. This psalm ends with an instructive appeal. This song concludes as it began, with a call to consider, ponder, and meditate upon the great love of the Lord.

LIFE GROUPS	TEACHING PLAN	
	FW	<i>Gratitude</i>
	November 21	21

GRATITUDE IN OUR GRIEF

PSALM 11

NOVEMBER 21, 2021

TEACHING PLAN

PREPARATION

- > Spend the week reading through and studying Psalm 116. Consult the commentary provided and any additional study tools (such as a concordance or Bible dictionary) to enhance your preparation.
- > Determine which discussion points and questions will work best with your group.
- > Pray for your pastors, the upcoming group meeting, your teaching, your group members, and their receptivity to the study.

HIGHLIGHTS

TAKEAWAY: WE ALL GO THROUGH SEASONS OF GRIEF, BUT WE CAN EMBRACE THEM BECAUSE GOD IS EMBRACING US.

WHY IT'S IMPORTANT: WE WILL HAVE GRIEF IN OUR LIVES, BUT GOD IS WITH US IN EVERY SEASON.

GOSPEL CONNECTION: JESUS FACED THE ULTIMATE GRIEF SO THAT WE MIGHT FIND JOY IN HIM.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to help get the conversation going.

Notes:

- 1 What has been a difficult loss or change you have experienced lately? How would you describe your conflicting feelings in that situation?
- 2 How do you typically deal with grief?
- 3 How do you know when your grief is no longer healthy or appropriate? What are some symptoms of unhealthy grief? (Answers may include isolation, living in the past, loss of purpose, focusing only on the loss, etc.)

Grief is a part of life. We can't get rid of it or ignore it. In fact, it's healthy to grieve a loss or change. Even joy is often a part of our grief as we recognize God's hand in the situation and remember His plan for our lives. We can embrace seasons of grief with hope, knowing God is with us and for us.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

Notes:

Psalm 116 expresses thanks to God for His grace and goodness during a season of grief. The psalm focuses on praying to God, resting in God, walking with God, and worshiping God. Each of these can and should be done in a season of grief.

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ PSALM 116:1-4.

- What kinds of events might the writer have faced before his writing of this psalm? What are some events in our lives that we might connect with the words in these verses?
- What did the psalmist do in response to God's provision during his time of grief?

James Boice says, "Psalm 116 is a hymn by an individual celebrating God's deliverance from a sickness so severe he thought he was going to die." The experience of having been sick, having prayed, and having God answer him so clearly and powerfully left such an impression on the psalmist that he spent some time reflecting, and these reflections are scattered throughout the Psalm.¹

Many Christians know the joy of deep, personal prayer with God in both good times and bad. They find that regular times of prayer bring their lives more completely into harmony with His purpose. Others do not realize the tremendous opportunity they are missing and pray only at meals, bedtime, and other occasional moments of serious need. Regular periods of prayer help bring our lives into harmony with God's purpose. At the same time, life sometimes brings sudden, great challenges, and we then join the psalmist in praying "LORD, save me!" God stands ready to hear us whatever situation we face. The important thing is that we remember to call on Him and trust Him when we do.

1. James M. Boice, *Psalms, Volume 3: Psalms 107-150* (Baker, 1998), <https://app.wordsearchbible.lifeway.com>.

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ PSALM 116:5-8.

- What kinds of feelings and thoughts does a person have when physically or emotionally exhausted?
- In light of these kinds of emotions, why was the writer able to rest in God?
- How does “resting in God” express thanks to Him?

Notes:

The psalmist fully recognized God as the Source of his deliverance. The Lord had rescued him from the death that earlier threatened him (Psalm 116:3). We live in a fast-paced world filled with pain and grief at every turn. Many of us have so much to do, and we even find getting a good night’s sleep difficult. Doctors tell us we need to get enough physical rest, which is essential, yet the Bible encourages us to rest in God. We find our ultimate security in Him.

- Read Hebrews 13:6. How does knowing God is for you, embracing you throughout life, help you face difficult seasons of life?

Since God provides for His people (see Matthew 6:25-34), believers can courageously face difficulties. The writer of Hebrews quoted Psalm 118:6. Literally, the Hebrew text has “(with) Yahweh for me.” God’s presence and support banish fear of what others can do. We all need these words as we work through seasons of grief.

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ PSALM 116:9-19.

- What does it mean to walk before the Lord?
- What does verse 11 tell us about the psalmist's trust in God and trust in others?
- How might we feel the same way as we walk through seasons of grief?

Notes:

The word “walk” means to “live.” Therefore, walking with God means to live for God and be obedient to Him. In his alarm, the psalmist looked around and affirmed “everyone is a liar.” His desperate condition may have heightened his awareness of people’s universal sinful condition (Romans 3:4, 23). He ultimately could trust no one but God. God calls us to live in complete trust that He is good. Walking with God will bring our lives fulfillment we cannot know in any other way.

- What indication do we have from these final verses that the psalmist really sensed God’s embrace during his season of grief?
- How did he plan to repay God for His compassion and deliverance?
- Can we ever repay God for His goodness to us? If yes, in what way? If no, what is the basis for worship?
- Why is worship important even while we are experiencing grief?

In closing, the psalmist vowed to worship the Lord in the presence of God's people. This reminds us of the importance of godly community as we deal with grief. Christian brothers and sisters can remind us of the truth when the darkness threatens to close in around us. The psalm reminds us that we can always worship, even as we grieve. As we express gratitude to God in our great difficulty, we find joy that only He offers.

Notes:

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

Notes:

- Are you grieving due to a loss of someone close to you? How does today's study speak to you? Are you able and willing to trust God to do something wonderful through this loss?
- How does it affect you to know that the God of the universe personally identifies with your pain and hurt in this life?
- What limitations, if any, have you been placing on God's ability to work in your most difficult life seasons?

PRAY

Thank God for His care, compassion, and deliverance as we experience the grief of this life.

FOLLOW UP

Midway through this week, send a follow-up email to your group with some or all of the following information:

Notes:

- > Questions to consider as they continue to reflect on what they learned this week:
 - When you are grieved, does your behavior indicate that you have complete faith in God's power over death? Why or why not?
 - Thinking about your life this week, how have you continued to worship God in all circumstances?

- > A note of encouragement, following up on any specific prayer requests mentioned during your group gathering.

- > The challenge to memorize Psalm 116:1-2.

- > The text for next week's study, so group members can read it in anticipation of next weekend: Isaiah 9:1-7.

PSALM 116:1-19

116:1. The psalmist began with a declaration, “I love the LORD.” He later would share other reasons for loving God, but first he affirmed God heard his appeal (literally “voice”). Heard does not denote mere hearing but listening with an intent to action. The word translated mercy stresses the psalmist’s recognition of his dependence on God to help him (Ps. 28:2, “pleading”). It is related to the words translated “gracious” and “generously” in Psalm 112:4-5, which we studied in the previous lesson. The psalmist expressed his love for God for hearing his prayers.

Notes:

116:2. The Lord turned His ear to the psalmist’s request. This concept is even more personal than “heard” in verse 1 and suggests a careful, deliberate consideration of the psalmist’s petition. Thus God is attentive to prayer. I will call describes talking to God about anything good or bad—calling on Him in light of the relationship he has with God. Talking with the Lord about everything just makes sense! The words out to Him do not actually appear in the Hebrew text but are clearly implied by the context. The expression as long as I live literally means “in my days.” As long as the psalmist had days to live, he wanted to live them in harmony with God.

116:3. The psalmist’s word pictures highlight the desperate nature of his situation. He felt as if ropes of death were wrapped around him! The identical Hebrew expression also occurs in Psalm 18:4, where it describes David’s desperate situation as he faced King Saul and other enemies. The parallel expression torments of Sheol further accentuates the life-threatening nature of the psalmist’s situation. Sheol typically describes death and the grave, the place where the dead go. (See Ps. 88:3.)

The word translated *overcame* literally means “found” and conveys the idea that the ropes and torments had a life of their own as they worked together against the psalmist. The word trouble is related to the word “torments.” Encountered literally means “found” and is related to the word translated *overcame*. The word sorrow denotes deep

emotional pain or grief, as when a parent loses a child (Gen. 44:31). The psalmist appeared trapped.

116:4. The psalmist called to God in his distress. The word order of the Hebrew text emphasizes the power present in the name of the LORD. The psalmist's brief prayer LORD, save me! expresses a deep plea, or entreaty. The psalmist needed God's help right then, and he needed it desperately.

Notes:

116:5. The psalmist affirmed three of God's attributes that shaped the Lord's dealings with him. Gracious denotes the extending of undeserved favor toward people. Righteous denotes both the inner quality of integrity and the right behavior that flows from it. Compassionate describes a deep inner feeling of sympathy for the needs others have.

116:6. The word guards also means "watches over" and again suggests God's tender care. Inexperienced also can be translated "simple" or "open-minded." Inexperienced people are not as discerning with regard to making good choices (Prov. 9:4) or bad choices (Prov. 7:7) and thus especially need God's care. But God offers protection to such people.

116:7. Rest depicts a place or state of unthreatened security. The same word describes the resting place of a bird (Gen. 8:9, "resting place") as well as the security Ruth obtained when she married Boaz (Ruth 3:1, "security"). A related word occurs in Psalm 23:2 to describe calm, "quiet" waters suitable for sheep.

116:8. The psalmist fully recognized God as the Source of his deliverance. The Lord had rescued him from the death that earlier threatened him (Ps. 116:3). God dried up his eyes that flowed with tears of sorrow and guarded his feet from stumbling.

116:9. What would the psalmist do in response to God's delivering him? He would walk before the LORD; that is, he would live in a way that fully honored God. He would live in obedience, surrendering his life to the Lord in complete trust. As he did, he would follow in the spiritual

footsteps of his forefather Abraham, who likewise walked before the Lord. The expression land of the living occurs commonly to describe life on earth (Ps. 27:13). The prophet Isaiah foretold Jesus' death by saying "He was cut off from the land of the living" (Isa. 53:8).

Notes:

116:10. The word believed comes from the word from which we get our word "amen." It means "to cause to be confirmed." Even when the psalmist found himself severely afflicted, he confirmed God's faithfulness in his own heart. He lived in continuous surrender to God, displaying faith in all circumstances.

116:11. Alarm denotes a state of severe fright. In his alarm the psalmist looked around and affirmed everyone is a liar. His desperate condition may have heightened his awareness of people's universal sinful condition (Rom. 3:4,23). He ultimately could trust no one but God.

116:12. The psalmist actually never could repay the LORD for all the good God had done in his life. His rhetorical question affirmed His utter dependence on God's grace.

116:13. God's servant would take (literally, "lift up") the cup of salvation, an allusion to bringing a drink offering of gratitude to the temple (Lev. 23:13). He would worship the LORD (literally, "call on the name of the Lord") in this way as a public testimony.

116:14. The Law of Moses did not require the Israelites to make vows to the LORD, but people who made vows were to fulfill them completely (Deut. 23:21-23). The psalmist fulfilled his vows in the presence of all His people, not to draw attention to Himself but to encourage others. In this way the psalmist stressed the importance of public worship. His worship would inspire others to worship.

116:15. The psalmist earlier had affirmed how God rescued him from death (Ps. 116:3,8). Whenever death comes for God's faithful ones, it is always valuable, or precious, in the LORD'S sight. The triumphant end of an earthly life lived for God is a special moment.

116:16. The affirmation LORD, I am indeed your servant reveals another aspect of the psalmist's relationship with God. The Hebrew word translated servant literally means "slave." A slave had no rights in the ancient era and found fulfillment in doing his master's will. So it was with the psalmist and his Heavenly Master. He found his highest joy in serving God. The designation the son of Your female servant stresses the psalmist's godly heritage. His mother had served God faithfully, and he would too. The Lord had loosened the psalmist's bonds by rescuing him from the adversity of death.

Notes:

116:17. The Law of Moses outlined procedures for a sacrifice of thanksgiving (Lev. 7:12-15). God determined how His people were to approach Him; thus, if the people brought a thanksgiving offering, they were to bring it as He prescribed. As in verse 13, the expression worship the LORD literally means "call on the name of the Lord".

116:18. God's servant again affirmed he would fulfill the vows he had made to the LORD. He probably had made vows when he asked God to deliver him from his enemies and life-threatening circumstances (Ps. 116:3-4,10-11). Perhaps others had heard his vows to God, so the psalmist thought fulfilling them in the very presence of all His people was especially important. In response to God's deliverance, he would bring glory to God through His public worship and praise.

116:19. As the Law of Moses commanded, the psalmist fulfilled his vows in the courts of the LORD'S house, where he brought his sacrifices of thanksgiving (Ps. 84:2,10). The temple stood in Jerusalem, the city King David had made Israel's capital and to which he had brought the ark of the covenant (2 Sam. 5:5-9; 6:1-23). His son Solomon would complete the temple around 960 B.C. The psalm ended with the exclamation hallelujah!—a command for all God's people everywhere to praise the Lord.