

TALK...

JUNE 27-JULY 3

**PRAYING THE PSALMS** PSALM 148:1-14

Join every created thing by praising the name of the Lord for who he is and what he has done.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

Where did you see God at work in these readings?

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What did you learn about yourself?

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Why do you think Isaiah prophesied against Hezekiah in 2 Kings 20:14-18?

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What do you think was the purpose of the genealogy in 1 Chronicles?

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What does it mean to "maintain a clear conscience before God" (Acts 24:16)?

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TALKING POINT**OLD TESTAMENT (2 KINGS 18:13—1 CHRONICLES 5:17)**

God delivers Jerusalem from the Assyrian siege (2 KGS 19)

"Hezekiah received the Babylonian envoys and showed them everything." (2 KGS 20:13)

Josiah's religious reforms (2 KGS 23)

Nebuchadnezzar destroys the Temple (2 KGS 25:8-21)

The descendants of David (1 CHR 3:1-9)

NEW TESTAMENT (ACTS 21-25)

"I am ready not only to be jailed . . . but even to die for the sake of the Lord Jesus." (ACTS 21:13)

Paul preaches to a rioting crowd (ACTS 22)

Paul causes friction within the Jewish high council (ACTS 23:1-11)

"I admit that I follow the Way, which they call a cult." (ACTS 24:14)

"You have appealed to Caesar, and to Caesar you will go!" (ACTS 25:12)

My hope is in the resurrection of the dead!

ACTS 23:6

JUNE 27-JULY 3



DISCUSSION GUIDE

REFLECT

PS 119

A WAY TO SEE

REFLECT ON ACTS 23:6-8

Paul declared, "My hope is in the resurrection of the dead!" The Pharisees believed in it, too, so why didn't they believe in Jesus? The Pharisees thought the resurrection would happen to everyone all at once. Jesus was just one person, so what about the rest? The Pharisees couldn't solve this problem.

This is how Paul explained it: "The resurrection from the dead has begun through another man. . . . Christ was raised as the first of the harvest; then all who belong to Christ will be raised when he comes back" (1 Corinthians 15:21, 23). That way, Jesus "would be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters" (Romans 8:29).

Like Paul, we live between these two events—the first resurrection and the final one. Jesus' resurrection is history, and that's why we have hope for the future. Like Paul, our hope is in the resurrection of the dead. It's not hand-wringing desperation. It's a history-driven hope. Because we can point back to Jesus' resurrection, we can look forward to our own.

REFLECTION THOUGHT

WE LIVE BETWEEN TWO EVENTS—THE FIRST RESURRECTION AND THE FINAL ONE.

DOES GOD GIVE UP ON THOSE WHO ARE UNFAITHFUL TO HIM?

The kings of Israel and Judah had a major role in the history of the divided kingdom, but the people also played a part in what occurred. They followed their wicked rulers, and it is clear that their own hearts strayed from God (2 Kings 17:9-11).

But God's Old Testament people are sometimes portrayed positively. The people of Judah rejoiced over the removal of Athaliah and the installation of Joash as king (2 Kings 11:12, 18-20). At times, the people were instrumental in the succession of kings (2 Kings 14:21; 23:30) or were responsive to godly leadership (2 Kings 11:17; 18:36; 23:1-3, 21-23).

Yet despite God's repeated warnings through his prophets, the people of both kingdoms became set in their apostasy (2 Kings 17:13-22). So God's righteous wrath burned against them and their leaders, and he brought his threatened judgment upon them (2 Kings 17:22-23; 21:10-15; 22:17; 23:26 27; 24:20; 25:21). God thus acted according to his covenant with them, even though he longed to restore his people (see Leviticus 26:27-39; Hosea 11:1-11).

God never gave up caring for his people. He rescued them from Sennacherib and promised that a remnant would again thrive in the land (2 Kings 18:23-19:37). Jehoiachin was treated well in Babylon, which no doubt renewed hope among the repentant of God's people (2 Kings 25:27-30). God promised to one day restore his people from exile and give them fellowship with him in the land once again, ruling over them through his chosen king, the descendant of David (Jeremiah 23:3-6).

The first man, wAdam, introduced sin, but the "second Adam," Jesus Christ, is sin's antidote (2 Corinthians 5:21). When Christ died as Redeemer, he made God's salvation from sin available to all (John 3:16; Romans 1:16).



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TALK...

JULY 4-10

**PRAYING THE PSALMS** PSALM 10:1-15

Pray that the wicked would experience God's anger or witness God's kindness and turn from their evil desires and plans.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

What passage most surprised you?

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What has God done in your life that you love to tell everyone about? (See 1 Chronicles 16:24.)

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Why did Paul insist on appealing his court case to Caesar?

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What do you think Paul means when he says that God "abandoned them to their foolish thinking" (Romans 1:28)?

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What did you learn about God?

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TALKING POINT**OLD TESTAMENT (1 CHRONICLES 5:18–18:17)**

"So Saul died because he was unfaithful to the LORD." (1 CHR 10:13)

The exploits of David's mightiest warriors (1 CHR 11:10-25)

"[God] used me to burst through my enemies like a raging flood!" (1 CHR 14:11)

The Ark of the Covenant moves into Jerusalem (1 CHR 15:25-29)

God's covenant with David (1 CHR 17)

NEW TESTAMENT (ACTS 26:1–ROMANS 2:24)

"He could have been set free if he hadn't appealed to Caesar." (ACTS 26:32)

Paul's ship encounters a violent storm (ACTS 27:13-44)

Miracles on the island of Malta (ACTS 28:1-10)

"This Good News tells us how God makes us right in his sight." (ROM 1:17)

God will judge everyone's "secret life" (ROM 2:16)

*The LORD blessed the household of Obed-edom
and everything he owned.*

1 CHRONICLES 13:14

JULY 4-10



DISCUSSION GUIDE

REFLECT

PS 119

A WAY TO SEE

REFLECT ON 1 CHRONICLES 13:10, 14

Uzzah died instantly for touching the Ark, but God blessed Obed-edom's home while the Ark resided there. Both men were caring for the Ark, so how could there be such opposite results? These two events demonstrate the two aspects of God's character: He is perfectly just and perfectly loving.

Great blessings come to those who obey God's commands, but severe punishment comes to those who disobey him. For those who cherish sin in their lives, "It is a terrible thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Hebrews 10:31). For those who do away with sin, "times of refreshment will come from the presence of the Lord" (Acts 3:20).

Sometimes we focus only on the blessings God gives us, get too comfortable, and ignore his righteous justice. At other times, however, we concentrate so much on judgment that we miss his blessings.

Don't fall into a one-sided view of God. Along with God's blessings comes the responsibility of living with him—respecting his justice and cherishing his love.

REFLECTION THOUGHT

DON'T FALL INTO A ONE-SIDED VIEW OF GOD.

IF THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL HAD A SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD, HOW COULD THEY HAVE BEEN CONQUERED AND TAKEN CAPTIVE BY FOREIGN KINGDOMS?

The writer of Chronicles needed to explain why Israel had fallen into the hands of their enemies. So after establishing the genealogical framework, he started and ended his narrative by describing the unfaithfulness of Israel's rulers (1 Chronicles 10:13-14; 2 Chronicles 36:14).

Unfaithfulness to the Lord violates the covenant between God and his people and alienates an individual or a nation from the Lord. God was not breaking his covenant by judging Israel. He was in fact fulfilling the warnings he had given them (Deuteronomy 28:15, 36).

For Israel, the solution to unfaithfulness was not to make more sacrifices or be more religious (Isaiah 1:10-20). God's people would not avoid his judgment by doing those things. Rather, God wanted them—and wants us—to seek the Lord, become faithful to him, and walk humbly with him (2 Chronicles 7:14; Micah 6:6-8). The people would restore covenant fellowship with God by repenting and seeking him. Both Rehoboam and Manasseh followed this path, and both of these kings experienced God's mercy (2 Chronicles 12:6-7; 33:12-19). But other unfaithful kings died in their sins, and the unfaithful nation was eventually destroyed.

The same was true with the kingdom of Judah: Unfaithfulness brought judgment. When Rehoboam "abandoned the Law of the LORD," his unfaithfulness resulted in the invasion by Pharaoh Shishak of Egypt (2 Chronicles 12:1-2). When Uzziah attempted to act in the role of a priest, his unfaithfulness resulted in his contracting leprosy (2 Chronicles 26:16-18). When Manasseh rebuilt the pagan shrines and promoted false worship in Judah, his unfaithfulness led Judah into the sins that later brought about judgment and exile (2 Chronicles 33:1-9, 19; see 2 Kings 23:26; 24:3). The writer of Chronicles summarized the final demise of Judah as the unfaithfulness of all of its leaders who followed the practices of pagan nations and polluted the Lord's Temple (2 Chronicles 36:14).

Lined area for reflection notes.



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TALK...

JULY 11-17

**PRAYING THE PSALMS** PSALM 16:1-11

Reflect on all the good things God has given to you, including himself. Thank him for the hope of living with him forever.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

What passage most surprised you?

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What can we learn from David's behavior concerning the census and its consequences?

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What might you have asked of God if you were in Solomon's place?

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How do Paul's teachings in Romans help you better understand and explain the gospel message?

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What did you learn about God?

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TALKING POINT**OLD TESTAMENT (1 CHRONICLES 19:1-2—2 CHRONICLES 6:11)**

"Satan rose up against Israel and caused David to take a census." (1 CHR 21:1)

" ' The LORD has chosen you to build a Temple. . . . Be strong, and do the work. ' " (1 CHR 28:10)

Solomon asks God for wisdom (2 CHR 1)

Solomon's deal with the king of Tyre (2 CHR 2)

"At that moment a thick cloud filled the Temple of the LORD." (2 CHR 5:13)

NEW TESTAMENT (ROMANS 2:25—7:13)

"For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God's glorious standard." (ROM 3:23)

The faith of Abraham (ROM 4)

"When we were utterly helpless, Christ came . . . and died for us sinners." (ROM 5:6)

Adam brought sin into the world; Christ takes it away (ROM 5:12-21)

"Do not let sin control the way you live." (ROM 6:12)

“Because your greatest desire is to help your people . . . I will certainly give you the wisdom and knowledge you requested.”

2 CHRONICLES 1:11, 12

JUL 11-17



DISCUSSION GUIDE

REFLECT

PS 119

A WAY TO SEE

REFLECT ON 2 CHRONICLES 1:11, 12

Solomon could have focused on himself as God’s chosen king, but instead he focused on God’s people and God’s purposes. Solomon knew he had a huge responsibility to serve and lead God’s people. He knew that God had entrusted him with the lives of hundreds of thousands of people. Solomon realized it was beyond his own power to govern well. He also knew that his own good fortune or his military prowess wouldn’t give God’s people what they needed. He asked the Lord to continue being faithful and to give him wisdom and knowledge for the sake of his people.

We don’t have the responsibility to serve and lead hundreds of thousands. But we might have the responsibility to lead one. Even this requires great wisdom, something only God can give.

God desires that we care for others. It’s as important as loving God (Mark 12:29-31). The skills and abilities God gives us are for fulfilling this purpose of serving others. “A spiritual gift is given to each of us so we can help each other” (1 Corinthians 12:7). The gifts God gives us are not for our own benefit but for serving others. God blesses us so we can bless others.

REFLECTION THOUGHT

GOD DESIRES THAT WE CARE FOR OTHERS.

HOW DO WE PUT OFF THE OLD LIFE AND PUT ON THE NEW LIFE?

When people become believers in Christ, they are joined to Jesus Christ and begin to share in his experience and benefits, including his death and resurrection. Their old life dies with Christ, and they rise to new life by his power within them (Romans 6:3-14).

This is all the work of God, who transforms them by his Spirit. Their minds are renewed, their desires and actions change, and their lives begin to reflect the fruit of his Spirit (Romans 12:2; Galatians 5:22-23). They become different people, gradually growing into the likeness of Christ.

Believers are also responsible for living out Christ’s death and resurrection (see Philippians 3:10-14). They are to turn away from their old life that was full of darkness and embrace a new life full of light (Ephesians 4:17-5:20). Using the imagery of clothing, Paul calls believers to “throw off” the old, sinful life driven by the devil and to “put on” a new, pure life directed by the Holy Spirit. As they do so, they recognize their reliance on God’s grace and power.

Believers must actively turn from their old lives to live in a new way that pleases God. It is God’s gracious working in their hearts that gives them the desire and power to do so (Philippians 2:13).

Series of horizontal dashed lines for reflection notes.



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TALK...

JULY 18-24

**PRAYING THE PSALMS PSALM 20:1-9**

Pray for someone who needs the encouragement of God's strength and grace today.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

Was there anything in these readings that especially challenged you?

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How is God asking you to trust him?

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Why do you think 2 Chronicles focuses so much on Judah, the southern kingdom?

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What do you think Paul means when he talks about the Spirit praying for us (Romans 8:26)?

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Why did Paul devote so much attention to the people of Israel in Romans?

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TALKING POINT**OLD TESTAMENT (2 CHRONICLES 6:12–23:21)**

God's promise to Solomon (2 CHR 7:12-22)

Solomon's vast wealth (2 CHR 9:13-28)

The revolt of the northern tribes of Israel (2 CHR 10)

"There were still some good things in the land of Judah." (2 CHR 12:12)

Jehoshaphat's wars with other nations (2 CHR 20)

NEW TESTAMENT (ROMANS 7:14–11:36)

"I want to do what is right, but I don't do it." (ROM 7:18)

"Overwhelming victory is ours through Christ, who loved us." (ROM 8:37)

"Who are you, a mere human being, to argue with God?" (ROM 9:20)

We are saved by belief in Jesus' resurrection (ROM 10:9-10)

God's mercy is for everyone (ROM 11:25-36)

Once, you Gentiles were rebels against God, but when the people of Israel rebelled against him, God was merciful to you instead.

ROMANS 11:30

JULY 18-24



DISCUSSION GUIDE

REFLECT

PS 119

A WAY TO SEE

REFLECT ON ROMANS 11:30-32

God called the Jews to be the source of God’s blessing to the whole world (see Genesis 12:3). When the Jews neglected this mission, God blessed the whole world anyway through the Jewish Messiah. God, in his great power, was able to transform their failures into his fulfillment.

In the same way today, God calls believers to be a source of God’s blessing to the world. Christians have a great privilege, just as the Jews did, to be part of God’s blessings—not for themselves only but for all people everywhere.

Christians can be a blessing in so many ways: by being honest in business relationships, by looking out for neighbors in need, by welcoming strangers into your circles of friends, by raising your kids to love God and people, by accepting people who have no family. Every relationship you have is an opportunity to be a blessing.

God’s plan to bless all people will not be thwarted. Are you going to be part of it?

REFLECTION THOUGHT

GOD CALLS BELIEVERS TO BE A SOURCE OF GOD’S BLESSING TO THE WORLD.

HOW IS THE HOLY SPIRIT INVOLVED IN THE LIFE OF A BELIEVER?

Several New Testament writers emphasized different aspects of the Holy Spirit’s work, but Paul provides a comprehensive view of the Spirit’s work.

According to Paul, God gives his Holy Spirit to all who come into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ (Ephesians 1:13-14). The Spirit brings new life in Christ. He affirms believers’ salvation and their identity as children of God (Romans 8:14; 2 Thessalonians 2:13).

The Holy Spirit gives Christians power over sin, power for ministry, and power to live a fruitful life (Romans 8:2; 1 Corinthians 12:4-7; Galatians 5:22-23). Believers are to be continuously “filled with the Holy Spirit” (Ephesians 5:18), and though they experience the conflict between the flesh and the Spirit, they can please God by yielding to the Spirit’s guidance and power (Galatians 5:16-18).

The Holy Spirit enables Christians to understand God’s thoughts and ways (1 Corinthians 2:9-16). He gives spiritual gifts to believers to help the church grow (1 Corinthians 12:1-31). The Spirit leads and empowers their worship as they use the gifts that the Spirit has given them (1 Corinthians 14:26-33, 39-40).

The Spirit guarantees that believers will receive all the blessings that God has promised (2 Corinthians 1:22). The Spirit helps believers and prays for them in their human weakness (Romans 8:26). The goal of the Spirit’s work is to make them like Christ (Romans 8:28-29).

Lined area for reflection notes.



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