

TALK...

SEP 26-OCT 2

**PRAYING THE PSALMS** PSALM 74:1-23

Pray for God to remember his promises to his people. Praise him for bringing his salvation to the earth.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

What passage most surprised you?

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Where did you see Jesus in the Old Testament?

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Why do you think the analogy of an unfaithful wife is used in Jeremiah to describe the Israelites?

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What do you think it means to “always be full of joy” (Philippians 4:4)?

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What is the difference between living holy lives (Philippians 2:15) and simply obeying rules (Colossians 2:16-23)?

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TALKING POINTS**OLD TESTAMENT (ISAIAH 60:1— JEREMIAH 8:7)**

“Tell the people of Israel, ‘Look, your Savior is coming.’” (ISA 62:11)

God will “gather all nations” together to see his glory (ISA 66:18-24)

The spiritual unfaithfulness of Israel (JER 2–3)

Judgment for Judah’s sins: invasion and exile (JER 5)

Judah’s idolatry hurts only themselves (JER 7:19)

NEW TESTAMENT (PHILIPPIANS 1:27— COLOSSIANS 2:23)

Live your life as Christ did (PHIL 2)

“Everything else is worthless when compared with the infinite value of knowing Christ Jesus.” (PHIL 3:8)

“Always be full of joy in the Lord.” (PHIL 4:4)

“Christ is the visible image of the invisible God.” (COL 1:15)

Christ has freed us from empty legalism (COL 2)

*“Plow up the hard ground of your hearts! . . .
Change your hearts before the LORD.”*

JEREMIAH 4:3, 4

SEP 26-OCT 2



DISCUSSION GUIDE

REFLECT

PS 119

A WAY TO SEE

REFLECT ON JEREMIAH 4:1-4

Throughout the Old Testament, God consistently revealed his intentions to bless the nations of the world through the people of Israel. But the people’s hearts had become hardened to God’s will, and their privilege as his chosen people was in jeopardy as long as they insisted on disobedience and idolatry. Their hearts were like soil that had not been tilled for a long time. So Jeremiah told the people to plow up the hardness of their hearts as a plow breaks up unplowed ground. Once their hearts were broken and cleaned up, the good seeds of God’s commands could take root.

Just like the people of Israel, we must remove the sin that hardens our hearts if we expect God’s word to take root and grow in us. Soften your heart by asking God to change your heart and life. Read God’s Word daily, letting God’s Spirit break up the hard soil and plant the good seed of God’s word in your life. Open your heart to God through confession and repentance. As God works on your heart, let him change your ways. Then you can be a blessing to others, just as God intended.

REFLECTION THOUGHT

YOU CAN BE A BLESSING TO OTHERS, JUST AS GOD INTENDED.

HOW CAN WE PREPARE FOR THE LORD’S RETURN?

Isaiah distinguishes between two created orders: the present world of human powers and pressures, and the new creation where justice and harmony triumph. Isaiah sets the two in clear contrast (Isaiah 43:18-19; 65:17).

The first creation is characterized by weeping, death, oppression and violence, and the absence of God (Isaiah 65:19-24). But the present creation is not completely void of God’s grace. God’s people already experience some aspects of the new creation: God’s joy, righteousness, peace, comfort, salvation, divine blessing, and protection (Isaiah 24:14-16; 26:3; 40:1; 45:22).

For Isaiah, the new creation centers on the Lord as the Great King in his holiness and glory (Isaiah 6:1-5). God’s full rule and reign will bring other changes as well: the end of death (Isaiah 25:7-8); the resurrection (Isaiah 26:19); the end of hostility, corruption, and evil (Isaiah 60:18; 65:25); the full enjoyment of God’s presence (Isaiah 30:26; 60:19); and God’s uncontested rule in his eternal Kingdom (see Revelation 21:1-22:21).

The great hope of the new creation is grounded in the fact that it will be fit for God’s presence. “Look, God’s home is now among his people! He will live with them, and they will be his people. God himself will be with them” (Revelation 21:3). Every perfection that characterizes the new creation will flow from God’s presence with his people in his creation.

Series of horizontal dashed lines for reflection notes.



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TALK...

OCT 3-9

**PRAYING THE PSALMS** PSALM 79:1-13

Ask God to forgive your sins and the sins of your community and nation, and to help you serve him today.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

What passage most surprised you?

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Why do you think God's wrath is emphasized so strongly in these readings from Jeremiah?

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Why do you think Paul writes so much about living holy lives (1 Thessalonians 4)?

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What are some ways you can "encourage each other and build each other up" (1 Thessalonians 5:11)?

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Was there anything you found confusing or had questions about?

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TALKING POINTS**OLD TESTAMENT (JEREMIAH 8:8–23:20)**

Jeremiah weeps for sinful Judah (JER 8:18–9:2)

The foolishness of idolatry (JER 10:1-16)

Judah's broken covenant provokes God's wrath (JER 11)

God will punish Judah, but he will restore them one day (JER 16:14-15)

"I will raise up a righteous descendant from King David's line." (JER 23:5)

NEW TESTAMENT (COLOSSIANS 3:1—2 THESSALONIANS 1:12)

"Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others." (COL 3:12)

Instructions for Christian households (COL 3:18-25)

"God's will is for you to be holy, so stay away from all sexual sin." (1 THES 4:3)

Hope in Christ's second coming (1 THES 4:13–5:8)

"Do not stifle the Holy Spirit. Do not scoff at prophecies, but test everything that is said." (1 THES 5:19-21)

God has called us to live holy lives, not impure lives.

1 THESSALONIANS 4:7

OCT 3-9



DISCUSSION GUIDE

REFLECT

PS 119

A WAY TO SEE

REFLECT ON 1 THESSALONIANS 4:1-8

Christian holiness is not based on philosophical speculation about virtue but in doing God's will and pleasing him. Holiness encompasses every dimension of a person's life, but sexuality is one area where the need for holiness comes into clear focus.

Sex outside of marriage is always a powerful temptation. But believers should stay away from any sexual union outside marriage because it violates God's holiness and can have life-long consequences. Sexual sins always hurt someone. Sexual desires and activities must be submitted to Christ's authority. God created sex for procreation and pleasure and as a unifying force between a husband and a wife. Therefore, the sexual experience must be guarded by marriage.

Paul said that lustful passions should not control God's people. It is God's will for you to be holy, and he regards you as holy if you have accepted Christ's sacrifice on your behalf. Yet you must continue to learn and grow during your time on earth. This includes submitting every desire to Christ's authority.

Are there desires in your life that are not under Christ's control? What is God's Spirit saying to you about them?

REFLECTION THOUGHT

ARE THERE DESIRES IN YOUR LIFE THAT ARE NOT UNDER CHRIST'S CONTROL?

HOW CAN WE PREPARE FOR THE LORD'S RETURN?

The Thessalonian believers heartily embraced Paul's teaching about the Day of the Lord and Christ's second coming, but this instruction generated questions and speculations about the end times.

Paul expected Jesus' return to happen during his lifetime, but he also recognized that the final event would come at an unpredictable moment, "like a thief in the night" (1 Thessalonians 4:15; 5:2). The way to be ready for the end is not by knowing the date but by living with Christian alertness. The Thessalonians also needed to understand the deaths of fellow believers. Paul says nothing about the condition of believers between their death and the return of Christ. Instead, he emphasizes the resurrection of believers. Just as Christ was raised to life, those who died as believers will be raised when he returns. In fact, they will rise from the dead first and then be caught up together with the living believers to meet Christ in his royal coming.

Despite Paul's efforts to clarify the Christian hope, the Thessalonian believers became confused by some who were teaching that the Day of the Lord had already begun (2 Thessalonians 2:2). As a counterpoint to this false teaching, Paul addressed the issue further in his second letter to the young church (see 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12).

Lined area for reflection and discussion notes.



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TALK...

OCT 10-16



PRAYING THE PSALMS PSALM 85:1-13

Ask God to pour out his blessings, his love, and his truth on your community and nation.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

What did you learn about God?

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Why did God bless the Recabites?

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Why do you think King Jehoiakim was so angry about Jeremiah and Baruch's scroll?

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How does violating one's conscience (1 Timothy 1:19) have destructive consequences for a Christian?

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Was there anything that especially encouraged you or challenged you?

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TALKING POINTS

OLD TESTAMENT (JEREMIAH 23:21–36:32)

The cup of the Lord's anger (JER 25:15-38)

Jeremiah attacked by a mob (JER 26)

Jeremiah and the false prophet Hananiah (JER 28)

“Is not Israel still my son, my darling child? . . . I often have to punish him, but I still love him.” (JER 31:20)

God blesses the faithful Recabites (JER 35)

NEW TESTAMENT (2 THESSALONIANS 2:1—1 TIMOTHY 5:25)

Paul clarifies the manner of Jesus' second coming (2 THES 2:1-12)

“Some people have deliberately violated their consciences; as a result, their faith has been shipwrecked.” (1 TIM 1:19)

Instructions for church leaders (1 TIM 3)

“Since everything God created is good, we should not reject any of it but receive it with thanks.” (1 TIM 4:4)

Focus on using your gifts to the fullest, not on what others think (1 TIM 4:6-16)

*"I have loved you, my people, with an everlasting love.
With unfailing love I have drawn you to myself."*

JEREMIAH 31:3

OCT 10-16



DISCUSSION GUIDE

REFLECT

PS 119

A WAY TO SEE

REFLECT ON JEREMIAH 31:3

God reaches toward his people with kindness motivated by deep and everlasting love. He is eager to do the best for them if they will only let him. Even God's discipline is an effort to help them avoid sin's consequences by not sinning. After many words of warning about sin, this reminder of God's magnificent love is a breath of fresh air.

It's often easy to become so focused on the harsh words God has for people who love their sins, that we begin to dread God altogether. Look carefully and see him lovingly drawing us toward himself.

REFLECTION THOUGHT

GOD'S DISCIPLINE IS AN EFFORT TO HELP PEOPLE AVOID SIN'S CONSEQUENCES.

HOW SHOULD WE UNDERSTAND PAUL'S TEACHING ABOUT WOMEN'S ROLES IN THE CHURCH?

Paul's words regarding women's roles in the church were intended to correct what was happening in Ephesus, but the extent to which this passage applies to other situations is a subject of discussion. There are numerous arguments for how it applies, including universal, polemical, and cultural interpretations. These three arguments are outlined here.

The universal interpretation argues that Paul's statements apply at all times for all believers everywhere. This perspective looks at gender roles as they were defined at creation. It argues that Galatians 3:28 ("There is no longer . . . male and female") does not negate creational gender distinctions and roles. Gender roles should still be ordered as outlined in 1 Timothy 2:11-15 for as long as this creation continues. The polemical interpretation argues that Paul was simply correcting wrong ideas that women had been teaching. This argument points to evidence that suggests this teaching was disturbing family relationships (see 1 Timothy 2:15; 4:3; Titus 1:11).

The cultural interpretation argues that Paul was addressing his remarks to a strongly patriarchal society, both in concern for public decorum and in regards to Genesis 2:7, 22. Their society usually educated women poorly. Women would not normally have qualified as teachers and leaders. At the same time, Paul and the early Church tend toward the full engagement of women in ministry, which makes it unlikely that Paul was issuing a universal limitation here (see Acts 18:26; Romans 16:1-7; 1 Corinthians 11:5; Galatians 3:28). Cultures that do not operate according to patriarchal norms would apply Paul's principle in very different ways. An egalitarian culture, as in contemporary Western society, would see men and women as sharing equal roles in the church.

Lined area for reflection notes.



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TALK...

OCT 17-23

**PRAYING THE PSALMS** PSALM 85:1-13

Ask God to pour out his blessings, his love, and his truth on your community and nation.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

What passage most surprised you?

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Why do you think God insisted that the Israelites not move to Egypt?

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Has there ever been a time when you were tempted to trust in money (1 Timothy 6:17)? If so, how did you fight it?

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Why does Paul hold church elders to such a high standard in Titus 1:5-9?

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How might this week's readings affect the way you live?

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TALKING POINTS**OLD TESTAMENT (JEREMIAH 37:1–51:53)**

Jeremiah thrown into a cistern (JER 38)

The Babylonians destroy Jerusalem (JER 39)

The remaining Israelites disobey God's command not to seek refuge in Egypt (JER 42–43)

The Lord vows to destroy Babylon: "I will come like a lion from the thickets of the Jordan." (JER 50:44)

"The God of Israel is no idol! He is the Creator of everything that exists, including his people." (JER 51:19)

NEW TESTAMENT (1 TIMOTHY 6:1—TITUS 2:15)

"For the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil." (1 TIM 6:10)

Timothy shares the genuine faith of his mother and grandmother (2 TIM 1:5)

Living as a Christian soldier (2 TIM 2:1-14)

"Don't get involved in foolish, ignorant arguments that only start fights." (2 TIM 2:23)

Differences between the pure-hearted and the corrupt (TITUS 1:15-16)

Teach those who are rich in this world not to be proud and not to trust in their money.

1 TIMOTHY 6:17

OCT 17-23



DISCUSSION GUIDE

REFLECT

PS 119

A WAY TO SEE

REFLECT ON 1 TIMOTHY 6:9-10, 17-19

Most people still believe that money brings happiness despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary. Rich people craving greater riches can be caught in an endless cycle that only ends in ruin and destruction.

How can you avoid the love of money? Paul gives us some guidelines: Realize that one day riches will all be gone. Be content with what you have. Watch what you are willing to do to get more. Love people more than possessions. Use money for God's work. Freely share what you have with others.

There is a difference between what we need and what we want. Like Paul, we can choose to be content without having all that we want. We should honor God and center our desires on him, and we should be content with what God is doing in our lives (Matthew 6:33; Philippians 4:11-13). No matter how much you have, your life should demonstrate that God controls the resources and you are managing them for him.

What good works are you aware of which you could support more generously? Are there other people you know who would benefit from your blessing them?

REFLECTION THOUGHT

GOD CONTROLS THE RESOURCES, AND YOU ARE MANAGING THEM FOR HIM.

WHAT DOES CHRISTLIKE LEADERSHIP LOOK LIKE?

For Paul, the essence of good leadership mirrored Christ's own example. The cross of Christ was central for Paul, and it had a total claim on his life. When he said, "I want to suffer with him, sharing in his death," he meant suffering violently and bodily, just like Christ (Philippians 3:10).

Paul endured suffering for those to whom he proclaimed the Good News, always putting their salvation before his own physical well-being (2 Corinthians 4:12). Paul's life was a proclamation of Christ crucified, of God's wisdom despite human foolishness, and of God's power through Paul's weakness (1 Corinthians 1:18-31; 2 Corinthians 12:9).

As Paul summoned Timothy to take up the mantle of leadership, he was also summoning Timothy to suffer with him, scorning the shame of the cross (2 Timothy 1:8, 12, 16; 4:1-5).

The mantle of Christian leadership is the clothing of a servant who suffers for those he leads (Mark 10:35-45). If leadership does not orbit faithfully around Christ as its self-giving center, it ceases to be leadership in Christ and fails to understand the Good News. But leadership that is modeled after Christ gains a reward at Christ's future coming, when those who have died with him will live with him and those who endure hardship will reign with him (2 Timothy 2:11-12).

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