



"REASONS TO REJOICE"

"Your Words were found, and I ate them, and Your Word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart." Jeremiah 15:16

"Series of Six" Lesson 3

A selection of Psalms for meditation

In our lesson this week, we will be studying Psalm 86 from Book 3 of the Psalms. It is the only psalm in this book that is believed to be written by David. Remember that Book 3 corresponds to Leviticus, which was about how God's people learned to draw near to God and worship Him. This psalm is classified as a "Personal Lament in times of trouble." David used a lot of Old Testament verbiage in his prayer to the Lord. No matter what trouble we are facing, David reminds us that we can praise God's Holy Name and appeal to Him based on His great character. There are many requests in his prayer, but all are based on a single theme that runs throughout the text: Mercy.

I've been praying that God's Word would really speak to our hearts as we study this week. As I was preparing to write and was sitting before the Lord, praying for wisdom, this song came on the radio by a band called *Mercy Me*. The song was called *Word of God Speak* and talks about the importance of listening and responding to God's Word. Listen to the words of the chorus: "Word of God speak, Would you pour down like rain, Washing my eyes to see, Your majesty, To be still and know, That You're in this place, Please let me stay and rest, In Your holiness, Word of God speak." It again reminded me of the power of God's Word. Would you pray with me before you begin; *Word of God, speak*.

First Day

1. Read Psalm 86:1-17. Observe the facts. We know that David was the author of this song, but what else do you observe? Why do you think he's writing it? Are there any repeated words, phrases, or thoughts? What is the "mood" or "tone"?

2. What would you say is the main theme, or thought, of the Psalm? (Notice verses 3, 6, and 16.)
3. How many times is God mentioned or referred to?
4. What words does David use to describe God?
5. What words does David use to describe himself?
6. Describe David's approach to the Lord. Is he confident or fearful? Proud or humble? Reverent or flippant? What can we learn from his approach?
7. How would you define the word *mercy*? (Dictionary, Bible Dictionary, Concordance, etc.)
8. Write your first impressions of this psalm. How does it minister to you? What emotion does it stir up?

That's all for today. I pray the word "mercy" jumps off the page and into your hearts. His mercy is a **"Reason to Rejoice"**!

Memory Verse of the Week: "For You, Lord, are good, and ready to forgive, and abundant in mercy to all those who call upon You." Psalm 86:5

Second Day

Review your memory verse. Praise Him, for He is abundant in mercy!

1. Read Psalm 86:1-17, concentrating on verses 1-7. Why does David think God should hear him? Does he think it has anything to do with his merits?

The Hebrew word "hesed" is translated as mercy, or loving-kindness. It implies the loyalty of God to the covenant He made with His people. In 1828, Noah Webster defined the word as "the act of sparing, or the forbearance of a violent act expected." The first mention of mercy in Scripture is in Genesis 19:16-19, when Lot was spared from the judgment of God that was falling on the wicked cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. Throughout the Old Testament, if Israel was given what they really deserved for their rebellious and stubborn refusal to walk in God's ways, they would be destroyed. But in His mercy, as they cried out and repented, He forgave them over and over for their wicked ways.

In the same way, God spared us from what we really deserve. "Grace" is God's unmerited favor, or getting what we "don't" deserve. Mercy is "not" getting what we do deserve. We deserve hell, but because of His loyalty to His covenant and His Word, we can receive mercy by salvation through the blood of Jesus Christ. It's nothing we deserve, as Titus 3:5, Psalm 103:8-14, and Ephesians 2:4-10 so clearly point out.

We all need mercy. Israel needed mercy; Moses needed mercy; David needed mercy. To find mercy, we come to Him on the basis of what Jesus did for us on the cross. The mercy of God is seen more at the foot of the cross than at any other place. God has never rejected anyone who was sincerely asking for mercy, desiring to accept Christ as their Lord and Savior. His heart is ready to forgive them.

Here are a few definitions of mercy from an Easy English Bible Dictionary.

1. God's love to people; when He does not remember the bad things that we do.
2. Being kind to bad people.
3. Being kind when you don't have to be kind.
4. Being kind to a person who doesn't deserve it because he's done wrong.

2. Every plea David utters ends with a reason why God should answer him. What reasons does he give?

It seems to be very important to David to acknowledge that God is His Lord, His Master, His everything. He references Jehovah four times, Adonai (Sovereign Lord or Master) seven times, Elohom five times, and El once. The many references to God and the variety of names for God are characteristic of this Psalm. (And it's only 17 verses!) David asked his Master to "rejoice" his soul. He knew that God alone was the source of all joy, as well as all grace and mercy. Many times he asked God to "restore the joy of his salvation," as in Psalm 51:12. David knew he continually needed to call out to God who was always there for him.

5. Most commentators believe that David's use of these words was from the story of Moses in Exodus 33:8 through 34:9. Read the story and briefly explain it in your own words. Did you find the description of God that David made reference to?

6. How has God shown abundant mercy in your life when you've called upon Him?

David, known as a man after God's own heart, knew he needed mercy and sought it daily. He knew God would be faithful, because He promised He would be, and God always keeps His Word. David needed God's mercy to forgive him, sustain him, preserve him, provide for him, and guide him. Whatever you are facing today in your "times of trouble," you can call upon God for the same. Hebrews 4:16 tells us that we can "Come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need."

7. Read the story of the ten lepers in Luke 17:11-19. Who was shown mercy? What was the result? How does that story speak to you? Are you usually the nine or the one?

8. If we are to be Christ-like, then we are also called to extend abundant mercy to others. Is there someone in your life that you have been unwilling to show mercy to? What is God calling you to do?

9. What are some practical ways that we can show mercy on a daily basis? (Some say that Matthew 25:34-40 gives us some good examples.)

10. If God's heart is "ready to forgive," what does that say about our hearts? Read Matthew 6:14-15. Ponder the principle of forgiveness and begin asking God to show you if there is someone that you have not extended mercy towards, by harboring unforgiveness. (How is holding a grudge also considered unmerciful?) Ephesians 4:32

Third Day

What's your memory verse? How does this verse minister to you today?

Psalm 86 begins with David's pleading cry, acknowledging what he was (vs 1-2), and what he wanted (2-4). He goes on to talk about a merciful God (vs 5-7), and then a mighty God (8-10). He does that by looking at the past (vs 8), looking at the future (vs 9), and looking at the present (vs 10).

1. Read Psalm 86:1-17 again. Reread verses 5-10. How does David show that he has a confident hope in God?
2. What does David say about God's uniqueness? Was David acknowledging that there are, indeed, other gods? (Read Exodus 15:11)

David speaks of God's incomparable greatness. He's praising God and reminding himself about who God is, what He does, and what He promises us. It's a great thing to meditate on God's character: His greatness, His power, His mercy, and His love.

3. Read Psalm 77. Asaph wrote this song as a reminder of God's greatness when we get overwhelmed. How does remembering His greatness and the works He's done help us in our times of trouble?
4. Take a minute and reflect on some of the wondrous things that God has done in your own personal life. Can you name some of them?

In verses 1-7, David is lamenting before the Lord; verses 8-10 He praises Him; and now in verses 11-13, David prays.

5. Read Psalm 86:11-13. What is David asking God for?

David wanted to know and understand God's ways so that he might be able to dedicate himself to following Him with an undivided heart. "Walking in truth" means a lot more than "knowing" God's truth. It means obedience to His truth and dedicating oneself to practicing it (1 John 2:3, James 1:22). Rev. William Jay, in his book Morning Exercises, says, "There are four ways we should walk in God's truth. We should walk in the *belief* of His truth, the *practice* of His truth, the *enjoyment* of His truth, and the *profession* of His truth."

6. What do you think it means to "unite" our hearts to fear, or reverence, His name?
7. Do you ask the Lord daily to know His ways, and then PLAN on following them? Do you REALLY want Him to teach you His ways, or do you usually just follow your own instincts and desires? (Read Psalm 143:8-10, John 17:17)

A united heart is a heart "wholly fixed on or attached to" the Lord. Literally it means "to make one." If we are attached to something, we love to hear about it, talk about it, think about it, discuss it, and do it. If we are united with someone, we share their sorrows, their joys, and their interests. We are "one" with them. What Ruth said to Naomi in Ruth 1:16-17 is a great example of someone "uniting" their hearts with another.

In the same way, if our heart is "united" with God's, we will share His burdens, His loves, His sorrows, His desires, and desire to walk in His ways.

8. Can you think of someone in Scripture whose heart was "united" with God's? Can you think of someone who had a "divided" heart?
9. What is your heart "attached" to? Is it wholly fixed on God, or does it tend to attach to other things? Jesus said that "We cannot serve two masters" (Matthew 6:24). How do we obtain an undivided heart, and how do we keep it that way?

10. In verse 13, David thanks God again for showing him mercy and saving his soul from death. Can you also make time today to thank and praise the Lord for rescuing you? Read Psalm 40:1-3 and 27:4-5. You can write a prayer of thanksgiving to the Lord, or how about a song of praise?

Fourth Day

Meditate on your memory verse today. Have you asked for His mercy yet today?

1. Read Psalm 86 again, focusing on 14-17. David makes his final petition before the Lord. In one word, what would you say he's crying out for?

We get a glimpse into David's condition when he penned this psalm. He was constantly being attacked, challenged, and chased. We don't know exactly what is happening at this time, but we do know, for a fact, that he was in danger. And David knows what to do. He cries out to the Lord for help and reminds himself what the Lord can do by praising Him for His attributes.

2. Let's look at how the attributes of God are revealed through the example of Christ. Read the verses and briefly describe how the attribute is being exercised. Then read the other and note how we, too, are called to do the same.

Compassion (also translated as mercy)

A. Matthew 15:32-37

B. Colossians 4:12

Gracious: Freely bestowing favor or to show favor or kindness

A. Luke 4:16-22

B. Proverbs 11:16

Longsuffering: To bear with for an extended time; patience, forbearance

A. 2 Peter 3:8-10

B. Ephesians 4:1-3, Galatians 5:22

3. We know that we need the Holy Spirit to be able to exhibit these attributes in our own lives. Read *Galatians 5:22-26*. The key to showing verses 22-23 are found in verses 24-25. What's the key to having fruit grow in our lives?
4. Do you have any fruit in your life? In what areas do you need to grow specifically?
5. Would you consider yourself a "gracious" woman? Why or why not?
6. Read the story of Jonah, chapters 1 through 3. It's a very short, but powerful book. Write your thoughts on how this story demonstrates God's compassion, grace, mercy, longsuffering, and truth.

7. David could cry out to God for protection because he trusted God's character. When you are afraid, do you call out to Him, knowing that His character is flawless and He can deliver you, protect you, and strengthen you? Do you need protection from something or someone today? How do these verses encourage you?

We'll wrap up tomorrow, but for now, meditate on the power and mercy of God. God bless you, ladies!

Fifth Day

Write out your verse from memory.

1. Read Psalm 86:1-17, focusing on 14-17. Why did David need God's strength?

Strength is defined as "the state or quality of being strong; a source of power or force; one that is regarded as the embodiment of protective or supportive power." I like how David asks for "Your strength." He knew his own strength was nothing compared to God's. God had shown His strength on David's behalf many times (i.e., 1 Samuel 30:6).

The phrase "son of a maidservant" is an interesting one. Some take it to mean that he was a "son of an Israelite mother, "therefore he was born and bred in the household of God." Others take this expression to mean that since a child of a slave was a slave for life (Exodus 21:4), David considered himself to be a permanent slave of God, using this term as a sign of humility.

2. Read the following verses on strength and write your thoughts.

A. 2 Corinthians 12:9-10

B. Nehemiah 8:10

C. Ephesians 3:14-19

D. Psalm 105:4

3. In whose strength do you usually try to draw upon, yours or the Lord's? In what area do you need His "strength" today?

James Hudson Taylor said, "Many Christians estimate difficulty in the light of their own resources, and thus they attempt very little and they always fail. All giants have been weak men who did great things for God because they reckoned on His power and presence to be with them."

4. Is God calling you to step out in faith in some area, and you haven't done it for fear of failing? Remember that God's power is limitless, and when He calls you, He equips you. Are you ready to be a "giant" for God's glory?

5. In verse 17, why does David ask for a sign?

6. Read John 9:1-5. Why was the blind man healed?

7. Now read John 11:39-44. Why did Jesus say what He did in verse 42?

8. Read Matthew 5:13-16. For what purpose should we desire our lights to shine?

It's important to understand that David prayed for deliverance so that others would see and know it was God at work. Jesus healed the blind man so that God's glory would be revealed. Our heart should desire that others see our good works, not so that they would think we are something special, but so that they

would recognize it is God's work in us. We need to guard our hearts from wanting vindication and glory for ourselves rather than for God's glory. Make sense? David wasn't doing a "neener-neener," if you know what I mean.

We need to remember that this was written as a song, stemming from a man who was simply pouring his feelings out to God. Sometimes the order and structure of a Psalm doesn't read like a 3-point logical outline. In a nutshell, David cries out to God to hear him, protect him, be merciful to him, give him joy, teach him, and grant him a sign. David tells God that He is good and forgiving, He answers prayer, He deserves to be worshipped by all, He is unique, He works miracles, and He is merciful and gracious.

9. I love David's comment in verse 10. "*You alone are God.*" He knows that God is all he needs. God is enough, because God is God. Can you say, with David, "You are my God." And "*YOU alone are God, and I will glorify Your name forevermore?*" Is God, *alone*, enough for you?

10. What did you learn about God from this Psalm this week?

11. How did this Psalm challenge you?

12. Are there any changes that you desire to make in your life as a result of studying this Psalm?

"Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless His holy name."

Psalm 103:1

