

God's Righteousness

SESSION 13

Psalm 5:1-12

Memory Verse: Psalm 5:12

Believers can live with hope knowing that God will always do what is right and just.

Despair takes a toll on hope. When we're struggling with tough situations, we work to address them. When nothing changes, we let anxiety creep into our minds and hearts. It gets more entrenched when we think nobody seems to care.

Yet, when we cry out to the Lord for help, the examples of His grace in the past strengthen us in the present. That's when we settle into the confidence that we can trust Him. The reality that He will do what's right and just renews our hope.

As you prepare to lead this session from Psalm 5, reflect on God's grace in the past. Ask Him to help you apply your experiences with Him to a circumstance you're facing right now. Pray for the adults in your Bible study who may be on the verge of losing hope.



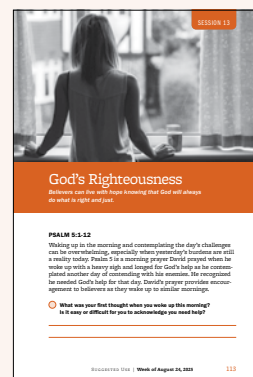
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Waking up in the morning and contemplating the day's challenges can be overwhelming, especially when yesterday's burdens are still a reality today. Psalm 5 is a morning prayer David prayed when he woke up with a heavy sigh and longed for God's help as he contemplated another day of contending with his enemies. He recognized he needed God's help for that day. David's prayer provides encouragement to believers as they wake up to similar mornings. (PSG, p. 113)

What was your first thought when you woke up this morning?
Is it easy or difficult for you to acknowledge you need help?



Understand the Context (Psalm 5)

Psalms of lament express the deep despair of believers who cry out to God for help. Psalm 5 fits well into this category. It's a personal appeal for the Lord to intervene in a distressing situation. While it's a personal cry, it also serves a worshipping community. It gives a voice to the anguish that plagues God's people when they are on the verge of hopelessness.

In Ecclesiastes 4:1-3, Solomon gave an insightful description of people who had a cloud of despair hovering over them. Their painful distress resulted from cruel mistreatment. The vicious assaults of their oppressors had not abated. Further, they had no power to protect themselves and no one who would come to their defense. With no deliverance in sight, hope slowly leaked out of their hearts.

According to the information in the superscription of Psalm 5, David penned it and then passed it along to the worship leaders. He directed them to incorporate flutes as they added music to the words. In the psalm itself, he mentioned praying in the morning (Ps. 5:3). That suggests the psalm may have been used when God's people gathered in the morning at the tabernacle for worship and to offer sacrifices. While they may have used Psalm 5 as their morning prayer, Psalm 6 could have been their evening prayer.

David's emotional cry provides the heartbeat for Psalm 5. His adversaries had been relentless in their quest to destroy him. They did not appear

to be focused on taking his life. Rather, they seemed to be bent on destroying his reputation. In their assaults, they weaponized their words. They spread one lie after another about him while churning out empty flattery at the same time. Just as frustrating, nobody seemed to be able to stop them.

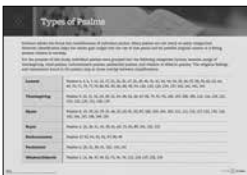
Psalm 5 gives growing disciples a simple but effective pattern for praying through distressful situations. The psalm begins with a heartfelt plea for God's help that grows out of a personal relationship with Him (5:1-3). Specifically, it emanates from the certainty that God always does what's right. Therefore, He cannot allow wickedness to come into His presence. However, His love for His people compels Him to welcome us. He will listen to us as we open our hearts to Him (5:4-7).

Our personal walk with the Lord prompts us to ask for Him to help us so we can keep on growing in righteousness. Our devotion to Him will keep us from behaving like our adversaries (5:8-9). We trust Him alone to hold them accountable for their wickedness (5:10). No matter what happens, we can always rejoice with hope because of His goodness to us.

As you read Psalm 5, identity what it reveals about God's character. (PSG, p. 114)



PREPARE: Hang **Pack Item 2** (*Poster: Types of Psalms*) on a focal wall. Make copies of **Pack Item 8** (*Handout: Praying Scripture in Psalms*).



INTRODUCE: To start the session, find a recording of “Reveille” and play it.

ASK: **What was your first thought when you woke up this morning?** (PSG, p. 113)

READ: Enlist a volunteer to read the opening paragraph on page 113 of the PSG.

DISCUSS: Allow a couple of volunteers to share times when a problem kept them up at night. Note that we are not alone when it comes to waking up to a stressful situation or difficult circumstance. Point out that this session is drawn from Psalm 5. Direct attention to **Pack Item 2** (*Poster: Types of Psalms*) and note that Psalm 5 is a lament psalm.



ASK: **Is it easy or difficult for you to acknowledge you need help?** (PSG, p. 113)

DISCUSS: Instruct a few volunteers to label their response using a scale of 1-5, with 1 being “Agree” and 5 being “Disagree.” Talk about what makes it hard to ask for help—both from other people and from God.

TRANSITION: *David made a habit of coming to God with his concerns. As we study this session, think about things that keep you up at night and why you need to bring them to God today.*

NOTES

Group Activity Option

Music

Secure a copy of the lyrics to “Great Is Thy Faithfulness” (*Baptist Hymnal*, 2008, No. 96) and be prepared to lead the group in reading the verses. After the last verse is read, sing the chorus together. Highlight the sentence, “Morning by morning new mercies I see; all I have needed Thy hand hath provided.” Share that today’s session finds David offering a morning prayer that confesses his struggles while affirming God’s faithfulness.

The Source of Righteousness (Ps. 5:1-6)

1 Listen to my words, LORD; consider my sighing. **2** Pay attention to the sound of my cry, my King and my God, for I pray to you. **3** In the morning, LORD, you hear my voice; in the morning I plead my case to you and watch expectantly. **4** For you are not a God who delights in wickedness; evil cannot dwell with you. **5** The boastful cannot stand in your sight; you hate all evildoers. **6** You destroy those who tell lies; the LORD abhors violent and treacherous people.

(v. 1) My sighing: As David dedicated himself to praying, he gave a significant clue about the reason he urged the Lord to **listen**. Something had happened to him that had left him in despair. It had been painful enough for his praying to turn into **sighing**, which in Hebrew suggests a burning sense of longing (*hagig*). Apparently, David's weak words could not convey completely the extreme agony in his heart. The apostle Paul also identified groaning with praying (Rom. 8:26). David's sighs indicated a measure of oppression or injustice that he had to endure.

Key Phrase

My King and my God

These are two titles that David used to exhibit his submission and humility to the Lord. Though he ruled over the kingdom of Israel as a king, the Lord reigned over him with even greater authority. The sovereign God who created the universe listened attentively to his anxious **cry**.

The Lord revealed Himself to David as an extremely personal friend as well as the supreme sovereign monarch. Meanwhile, David underscored the depth of his relationship with God by including **my** before each title. He had complete confidence that the God who loved him would answer His prayer.

(v. 3) In the morning: The heavy burden on David's heart prompted him to make prayer his first priority every **morning**. Daybreak would give him fresh hope that his prayer would be answered. He may have spent the early morning hours getting everything ready so he could make his way to the altar to worship and offer a sacrifice. Or he may have been thinking about going to the Lord personally to **plead my case**. Either way, he vowed that he would **watch expectantly** for the Lord's answer.

(v. 4) Wickedness: As David continued to pray, he underscored another character trait of God that set Him apart. The Lord refused to find pleasure in **wickedness**. Individuals who chose the paths of **evil** would never have access to Him.

David's affirmation of God's intolerance for wickedness placed him in the company of Old Testament prophets. For example, Isaiah recognized his sin when he found himself in God's presence (Isa. 6:1-5). Likewise, Amos warned God's people that they would be able to return to the Lord only when they hated evil (Amos 5:15). Habakkuk issued a similar warning (Hab. 2:17; 3:5).

(v. 5) The boastful: After rejecting evil in general, David identified specific behaviors that the Lord opposed. Those who give themselves to these expressions of wickedness **cannot stand** in God's holy presence. First on the list were **boastful** people. These are individuals who are consumed by selfish pride and have demonstrated with their behavior that they reject the Lord's ways. They hold no room for Him in their hearts. The Lord also placed such arrogance first on the list of behaviors that He abhorred in Proverbs 6:16-17.

(v. 6) You destroy: Lying happened to be next on the list of evil behaviors that the Lord hated (see also Prov. 6:17). David affirmed that the Lord hated **lies** and that dishonest people would face His destruction.

David also stated that **violent and treacherous people** could count on facing the Lord's judgment. The first term relates to individuals who long to shed blood, probably through murder. The second term relates to fraud and cheating. Apparently, David's arrogant enemies had told lies about him, along with threatening to harm him physically in some way.

EXPLORE Psalm 5:1-6

1



APPLICATION POINT: Believers can know for certain that God is fully righteous, and His acts will always be righteous.

OVERVIEW: Use Understand the Context (PSG, p. 114) to provide background for Psalm 5.

READ: Invite a volunteer to read **Psalm 5:1-3** as the group notes the requests in David's initial plea.

LIST: On the board, draw three parallel horizontal lines. Direct adults to list what David asked God to do in verses 1-3. Highlight the following words by recording them on the lines: *Listen-words; Consider-sighing; Pay attention-cry.*

RECAP: Summarize the following content from page 115 of the PSG: "Though a king, David knew he was under the Lord's authority. This earthly king was praying to the King of kings—his King. God alone is sovereign over all earthly affairs. Thus, David's intensity was balanced with submission, indicating that David's imperatives were not impertinent demands but reverent requests to his God."

READ: Read aloud **Psalm 5:4-6**, directing the group to listen for how David based his appeal on the character of God.

ASK: What were your first thoughts this morning? How do they compare with David's first thoughts (v. 3)? (PSG, p. 117)

TRANSITION: David recognized specific actions that displease God and chose to pursue righteousness instead.

NOTES

Group Activity Option

Relational

Divide the group into four teams. Using **Pack Item 4** (*Poster: God in the Psalms*) assign each team three or four of the characteristics of God. Instruct the teams to consider how Psalm 5:1-6 highlights their assigned characteristics. Allow teams to share some of their results. Review the entire list by saying, "Our God is our . . ." and reading the list together.

The Benefit of Righteousness (Ps. 5:7-10)

7 But I enter your house by the abundance of your faithful love; I bow down toward your holy temple in reverential awe of you. **8** LORD, lead me in your righteousness because of my adversaries; make your way straight before me. **9** For there is nothing reliable in what they say; destruction is within them; their throat is an open grave; they flatter with their tongues. **10** Punish them, God; let them fall by their own schemes. Drive them out because of their many crimes, for they rebel against you.

(v. 7) Reverential awe: The Lord's adversaries had rebelled against Him. Therefore, He denied them access to His presence. In contrast, David testified that the Lord's **faithful love** prompted Him to welcome His people who came to worship Him. David testified that he found himself in sincere humility and awestruck adoration as he worshiped the Lord.

The king's desire was to **bow down** toward God's **holy temple**. Since there was no physical temple during David's reign, he could have been referring to the tabernacle (1 Chron. 6:31-32) or simply to God's presence in heaven. Either way, David was humbled and overwhelmed by **reverential awe** toward the Lord.

(v. 8) Lead me: The Lord demonstrated His faithful love by opening His arms to His people. In light of His faithfulness, David asked for help against **adversaries** who constantly harassed him in their wicked efforts to malign him. David intended to address their wickedness by walking closer with the Lord, but he knew that he couldn't do it alone. So, he asked God to **lead** him in the paths of **righteousness**. He sought spiritual wisdom and strength so he would not drift away from his desire to be upright.

(v. 8) Straight: David referred to his eagerness to be right with the Lord as taking the **straight** path. The Hebrew word used here suggests a smooth or pleasing way to go. The king asked God to keep him on the best path possible. John the Baptist later called on God's people to take the straight path as they awaited the Messiah's arrival (Matt. 3:3).

Here, David testified that God had to be the One who made the path straight. He could not do it himself. And if he stumbled, he would fall to violent and relentless enemies who chose a spiritually crooked path. He might even be tempted to adopt their wicked behavior himself.

Key Doctrine

Man

Only the grace of God can bring man into His holy fellowship and enable man to fulfill the creative purpose of God. (See Romans 3:22-24; Ephesians 2:8-10.)

(v. 9) Nothing reliable: In the Hebrew language, being **reliable** (*kun*) conveyed the idea of being firmly established or anchored. The prophet Isaiah used this word when he proclaimed that the Lord created the earth and "established it" (Isa. 45:18). Accordingly, the words of David's enemies had not been established and could not be trusted. Their false accusations and meaningless speech were nothing more than an outward display of the **destruction** they harbored in their hearts.

(v. 9) Their throat . . . their tongues: David's enemies concealed their destructive desires under a thick blanket of verbal deceit. The **throat** and **tongues** served as symbols of what people said. As the prophet Jeremiah declared, evil people often use words to deceive others (Jer. 9:3). Paul also called out the rebellion that motivates deceitful speech (Rom. 1:29-31; 3:10-13). David stated that the flattering words of his adversaries would have a deadly effect if left unchallenged.

(v. 10) Punish them: Some psalms are considered "imprecatory," which means they invoke curses and judgment on God's enemies. Here, David called on God to bring calamity on those who were plotting against him. He pleaded with the Lord to convict them of their crimes and to **punish them**. David asked the Lord to **drive them out** because of their endless rebellion.

EXPLORE Psalm 5:7-10

2



APPLICATION POINT: The righteous enjoy God's presence and depend on His guidance.

READ:

Invite a volunteer to read Psalm 5:7-10, dividing the group into two teams. Direct one team to listen for why David felt he could approach God with his concerns, while the other team listens for characteristics of David's enemies.

VISUAL:

Draw two columns on the board: *David* and *David's enemies*. Ask each team to share what they heard. Record their responses on the appropriate columns.

ASK:

As believers, how are we called to deal with our enemies?

RECAP:

Summarize this content (PSG, p. 119): "First, we must recognize who our true enemies are. The apostle Paul indicated that our ultimate struggle is against the devil and his forces (Eph. 6:12). Second, we must understand that people who are opposed to Christ and His Church are darkened in their understanding of the gospel "because of the hardness of their hearts" (4:18). They are blinded by Satan from "seeing the light of the gospel" (2 Cor. 4:4). Third, the Lord has instructed believers to pray for unbelievers (Matt. 5:44-48; Luke 6:27-38) and share the gospel with them so that their eyes will be opened. Jesus came for this purpose (Isa. 42:6-7; Acts 26:17-18)."

ASK:

In what area of life do you currently need God's guidance? (PSG, p. 118)

NOTES

Group Activity Option

Object Lesson: Rope

Display a piece of rope and enlist two volunteers to pull on opposite ends of the rope. Explain that in Psalm 5 the psalmist seems to be in a tug of war with his enemies. Emphasize that David recognized God as the source of righteousness and sought His help in conquering his enemies. Point out that he gave us a great example of trusting God's presence and depending on His guidance.

God's Blessing of Righteousness (Ps. 5:11-12)

11 But let all who take refuge in you rejoice; let them shout for joy forever. May you shelter them, and may those who love your name boast about you. **12** For you, LORD, bless the righteous one; you surround him with favor like a shield.

(v. 11) Take refuge in you: The presence of adversaries could not be denied, but their threats were not the last word in this psalm. David turned the focus of his testimony to God's people who had run to Him for **refuge**. Seeking safety in Him underscored a courageous act on the part of His people. It suggested that they had developed an intimate relationship with Him and clung to Him for protection. By contrast, their adversaries had been banished from His presence (Ps. 5:10).

(v. 11) Rejoice: Earlier David wrote about turning toward God with a groaning heart. His sighs spoke volumes about the desperation caused by his enemies' evil schemes (5:1). Here, he called on God's people to **rejoice** for all the Lord had done for them. Everyone who trusted the Lord should shift from troubled sighing to endless joy.

(v. 11) Shelter: This word has also been translated as "spread your protection." The Hebrew word for **shelter** (*sakak*) conveys the idea of providing security by way of fencing in, overshadowing, or covering. The Lord used the word as He instructed Moses how to build the ark of the covenant. In the construction process, He directed Moses to make two cherubim whose wings would cover the mercy seat (Ex. 25:20). In the same way, David asked the Lord to protect His people by overshadowing them with His presence. God covers His people with Himself.

(v. 11) Boast: God's people have good reason to brag on their King. In Hebrew, **boast** (*alatz*) implies exaltation and praise. For example, Moses exalted the Lord for His holiness and His miracles at the Red Sea (Ex. 15:11). The Lord alone deserves to be the sole object of the exaltation among His people because only He can protect them and give them peace.

Their exaltation also signifies their sincere love for Him. For believers in David's day, God's **name** was associated with the tabernacle (Deut. 12:5). So, loving His name was tantamount to turning to Him in worshipful submission.

(v. 12) Bless the righteous one: Previously, David had asked the Lord to guide him so he would grow in righteousness (Ps. 5:8). As he concluded the psalm, he returned to the priority of being **righteous**. He urged all of God's people to embrace the value of being in a right relationship with Him and to live with character that revealed what it means to live by His standards.

In Genesis 15:6, Abram (Abraham) placed his faith in the Lord. In response to this act of trust and submission, the Lord deemed him as righteous. In other words, Abram was considered to be right with God. In Psalm 5, David asked the Lord to **bless** everyone who surrendered to Him in the same way.

(v. 12) Favor: The Hebrew word rendered **favor** (*ratsown*) has also been translated as "kindness" (CEV) and "love" (NLT). It suggests being accepted or experiencing goodwill. The Lord used the word when He taught His people about the appropriate way to bring pleasing sacrifices to Him (Lev. 1:3; 19:5).

David asserted that the Lord accepted His righteous people with open arms because He loved them. In turn, His acceptance served as a **shield** to defend them from their enemies. The Lord's favor provided protection for His people (see also Ps. 91:4).

Praying Scripture

Psalm 5:12

Spend time praying Scripture using Psalm 5:12. Read the verse, then respond to these questions:

- How does God reveal Himself in this verse?
- How should I respond to what He reveals?

Example: Ask God to help you recognize His trustworthiness and protection. Thank Him for His blessings and for surrounding you with His favor.

EXPLORE Psalm 5:11-12

3



APPLICATION POINT: God will bless and protect the righteous.

READ: Invite a volunteer to read **Psalm 5:11-12** while the group notes how the psalmist uses the parallel structure.

IDENTIFY: Guide the group to examine the verses and identify three words that picture God as a Source of security. (*Refuge, shelter, and shield*)

ASK: **How did David's view of the character of God affect his perspective of his circumstances?** (PSG, p. 120)

HIGHLIGHT: *David ended the psalm expressing that even when facing enemies, he could rejoice and boast in the Lord. He knew that he was safe regardless of his circumstances.*

PRAY: Distribute copies of **Pack Item 8** (*Handout: Praying Scripture in Psalms*). Lead adults to take a few minutes to pray Psalm 5:12 using the “Praying Scripture” prompts on page 138 of the Leader Guide. Remind them that this is the memory verse for this session and encourage them to memorize it during the week.

SUMMARIZE: *David began the psalm crying out to the Lord and pleading with Him for protection. He appealed to God's righteousness and faithful love for guidance. In the end, David was able to offer praise and joy for the blessings he had received. We can follow his example by calling out to God and expressing our gratitude to Him for all He has done for us.*



NOTES

Group Activity Option

Bible Skill

Direct adults to work in groups of two or three to complete the Bible Skill activity on page 120 of the PSG. After a few minutes, review these questions about the people who came to Jesus: ***What caused their desperation? How did they turn to Jesus for help? What did Jesus do in response? What does this teach you to do with your despair? What does it teach you about Jesus's response?*** Allow volunteers to share their responses.

CHALLENGE

- SUMMARIZE:** Review these points from Apply the Text on page 121 of the *Personal Study Guide*:
- *Believers can know for certain that God is fully righteous, and His acts will always be righteous.*
 - *The righteous enjoy God's presence and depend on His guidance.*
 - *God will bless and protect the righteous.*
- DISCUSS:** Direct attention to the first set of questions on page 121 of the PSG. As a group, discuss how being a part of a Bible study can help adults connect with God's presence and guidance.
- CHALLENGE:** Encourage the group to read and reflect on the second set of questions on page 121 of the PSG during the week. Also, remind them to take advantage of **Pack Item 8** (*Handout: Praying Scripture in Psalms*) and to pray through other verses using the handout.
- PRAY:** Call on a pre-enlisted volunteer to close in prayer, thanking God for His faithful love and blessings.

After the Session

Reinforce the session by texting or emailing the group. Encourage them to look for opportunities to “boast” about the Lord and to rejoice in His righteousness. Remind the group that they can take their deepest concerns to God because He will always do what is right and just. Direct them to continue memorizing Psalm 5:12 and using **Pack Item 8** (*Handout: Praying Scripture in Psalms*) during their quiet times this week.

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