



Authentic



I will be careful to lead a blameless life—
when will you come to me?
I will conduct the affairs of my house
with a blameless heart. (Psalm 101:2 NIV)

Women's Ministries Bible Studies
Mesoamerica Region
2023

Welcome Friends,

Authentic

Warmest Greetings!

We're presenting you with 12 Bible Studies to share in your NazWomen Ministry. I am extremely grateful to my brother, Rev. Ricardo González, and my niece Marena González for their great collaboration in making this series. I hope they are a great blessing to all of you.

As I began this series of Bible Studies for Women, I asked myself: What does a woman need most? With that question in mind, I have been reaching out to women and listening to their concerns and desires for some time. However, it has been in the midst of conversations that perhaps have nothing to do with the subject, that the following word seems to come up again and again: Authentic.

Women want to live authentically. What do I mean? They need to share in authentic relationships, love their husband, family, children, friends in an authentic way. But most of all they long to be close to Jesus and his Church in sincere and authentic ways.

The Beacon Theological Dictionary describes “unauthentic existence” as equal to a life in sin and “authentic existence” as equal to a life of faith in Jesus Christ (Beacon, 74).

My prayer is that women will have times of discipleship where they share with each other and as they share the Holy Scriptures, they can be built up and have authentic growth in the likeness of the Master.

Blessings in the authentic love of Christ,

Marta



BIBLE STUDY 1: Psalm 3

THEME: *The Lord Lift You Up!*

Introduction:

Life for David had become total chaos, as described in 2 Samuel 15:1-18:33. His beloved son, Absalom, had betrayed him in the vilest way, had staged a coup and intended to take his throne away from him. The worst thing is that it seemed like Absalom would get away with it. And in the midst of it all, David composed a psalm. In it he laments, struggles, and anguishes, over his situation, but on the other hand he is encouraged as he trusts in and praises God, who never abandons him. Through his psalm/prayer, David receives the peace and strength he needs to continue God's purposes for his life and his nation. Focused on the LORD our God, even in the midst of anguish and fear, David's heart is filled with the hope of God's blessing.

Despite escaping from a son who wants to take away his kingdom and his life, the psalmist focuses on God who is the king, who sustains his life and defends him. David didn't listen to those who made fun of him and because of his trust and perseverance, God defended and rewarded him. In the end, he was returned to his kingdom and all his enemies were put to shame. The price was very high, Absalom lost his life in the middle of it all. It's obvious that Absalom's vanity caused his own downfall. However, God proved faithful to the promises he made to David and raised him up again, in the midst of the pain of losing a son. God is the Savior who blesses his children and his people.

Hypothesis: You can experience God's power to lift you so you can live in integrity even in the midst of difficult situations.

When we authentically trust in the Almighty God, he lifts us up in the midst of any situation that we may be going through.

ANALYSIS OF THE VERSE:

I. Family Problems – verses 1-2 – Self Focus

- David was going through the trauma of serious family problems. His own sin with Bathsheba triggered the tragedy in his family. Absalom's betrayal was not only his desire to take the throne from his father, but he also planned his father's death. In addition, David's other son, Amnon, raped his sister Tamar in an act of abuse and irresponsibility, in which David could have taken harsher measures.
- David knew that his problems were self-inflicted. He sinned against God and his loyal friend Uriah, by having an affair with Bathsheba (2 Samuel 11-12).
- Furthermore, he didn't teach his children to love and fear God, therefore, David reaped the consequences that he brought upon himself and yet he still cried out to God.
- Faced with this family chaos, the psalmist cries out to the LORD or Yahweh. By calling him Yahweh (which is the equivalent of "I AM" in Exodus 3:14) he is using an intimate term, remembering the God of the covenant with Israel.
- His prayer is authentic, he opens his heart to the Lord and exposes his pain.
- Prayer is not about formats or styles, but about honesty before God, knowing that God hears and will move on our behalf.
- The criticism and mockery of his opponents pierced David's soul (e.g., Jesus was also mocked in Matthew 27:43) and this caused him much pain.

- “Many” probably accused David of being a bad father, a bad husband, or “many” may have reminded him of his past. “Many” were David’s adversaries (verses 1, 2, 6).
- Everyone thought that David did not deserve to be king.

II. God Encourages the Psalmist – verse 3-4 – Focus on God

- Even when his life was falling apart, David knew who God was and focused on him. He stops looking at his terrible circumstances and places his eyes on God “... you, LORD...” (v.3). His circumstances didn’t depend on the "many against him" but on God.
- David recognizes God as a shield, as present in his life, as a restorer and the one who answers his prayers.
- The gracious God listened, gave hope and then gave peace.
- The image of God as a shield symbolizes the God who defends and protects his own from any external attack. This protection from God is personal "you are a shield around me" (Genesis 15:1 and Ephesians 6:16).
- When he refers to the fact that God is his glory and the one who lifts up his head, he tells us that God restores him, restores his dignity. God fills him with joy (Psalm 126:3).

III. Inner Peace – verse 5-8 – Complete Trust in the Lord

- David's trust in God was so complete that he fell asleep.
- Sleep is the picture of being totally vulnerable (e.g. Peter in Acts 12:6-7).
- David and his followers were safe because they had faith in the Lord who protected them (Psalm 91)
- "Arise, LORD" is David’s urgent cry to God in full confidence of his response.
- David did not depend on the troops, nor on his weapons, nor on strategies, nor that Absalom was going to change his mind. His trust for his salvation was in the LORD.
- Absalom's revolt, like David's sin, had negatively affected the entire nation. Therefore, David now asks God for his blessing on all of his people.
- God's blessing on the kingdom is for God's holy purposes to be accomplished.

QUESTIONS FOR TODAY:

- ? What do you do when you feel overwhelmed, when you feel that life seems to fall apart? Are you angry or frustrated? What should you do? Why, as Christians, should we not be afraid or worried? Why are some of us stressed? What can we do?
- ? What would it mean to allow Christ to be your shield of protection?
- ? David was living with the mistakes and bad decisions that he had made and yet he still prayed. And our gracious God listened to him and gave him hope and peace. How does this give you confidence when you have setbacks?

APPLICATION:

- Many times, the most serious problems in women's lives arise within our own families and our faith is challenged.
- Family problems sometimes compromise even the testimony of a woman, and she can feel devastated.
- It may be that a child has “gone astray” and is leading a lifestyle that is contrary to morality and Christian values.
- In situations like these, some family members and friends may criticize or make fun of you, which is very painful.
- Or the tragedy of divorce and infidelity may have reached you or a family member.
- Family trauma and public humiliation can lead women to feel that they are at “the bottom”.
- Do not allow family intrigues to divert you from the integrity of your obedience to God.
- When life falls apart, we can experience God's peace by clinging to Him in faithful prayer.
- The psalmist was not angry with God or with his children. David did not seek revenge against his children, on the contrary, he loved them despite their failures.
- Loving your children means sacrifice, but you have to have balance. Be merciful, but don't allow your mercy to be abused.
- Take action like David did; pray, love, trust God, wait.
- Sleep like David. Rest is always vital. Don't let anxiety and worry steal your sleep. God doesn't sleep so that you can sleep (Psalm 121:4-6).
- When the world seems to turn against you, they also turn against justice, but remember that Jesus Christ is your righteousness (Romans 5:1).
- Enemies and problems can be many, but with Jesus Christ on our side we have enough (Romans 8:31-33).

Conclusion:

God is with you! He is your shield, and he will lift you up. So, cry out to God, explain your situation to Him; let Him take your burdens, because He will answer you. Rest in his arms, because He is your Protector and purpose for living. True victory and contentment are found when we trust him and obey him. He will bless you and keep you!

What does ***Selah*** mean?

We are uncertain of the true meaning of the word “***Selah***”. It has been speculated that it's a liturgical or musical interlude, or a brief pause for dramatic effect in worship, or perhaps a musical note, or the time or line in which the congregation responds.

Below is a link for a musical rendition of this Psalm:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0ldAZxHzSIs>



BIBLE STUDY #2: Psalm 139

THEME: *Known By God!*

Objective: May the revelation of a personal and wise God fill all women who feel alone and aimless with hope and encouragement. All this, by the Spirit.

Hypothesis: Our God works wonders!

Introduction:

- Imprecatory Psalm: is a Psalm that speaks of revenge against those who do not please God.
- It's believed that the Psalmist wrote this Psalm after being falsely accused by people in positions of authority and leadership.
- It's believed that the Psalmist presented his complaint to the Lord and the Lord responded by letting him know that He was with him.
- Some say that this is the most beautiful and important chapter in all of Scripture.

I. I KNOW THAT GOD KNOWS ME

Psalms 139:1-4 (NIV)

For the director of music. Of David. A psalm.

- ¹ You have **searched** me, Lord, and you **know** me.
- ² You **know** when I sit and when I rise;
you **perceive** my thoughts from afar.
- ³ You **discern** my going out and my lying down; you are **familiar** with all my ways.
- ⁴ Before a word is on my tongue
you, Lord, **know** it completely.

A. Is it good for God to know us?

- i. Perhaps some people worry that God can see the most intimate parts of their life.
- ii. Some people will not want God to know very much about them and they may not want anyone to rummage through their thoughts.

B. The Psalmist rejoices that God knows him.

- i. He doesn't feel threatened because God knows everything about him but is amazed by it. He feels hope and strength because God knows him and understands him.
- ii. This knowledge that God has allows him to be understanding and merciful. God is full of compassion.

APPLICATION:

- ★ How much of our personal information is protected today? There are people who pay to acquire your information, who know what you like to look at, what internet sites you frequently visit, if you like fashion, cooking, pets, family, travel, and vacations, etc. They know your movements on social networks.
- ★ There are also entertainment platforms that claim to know you; according to your searches, you must like this type of movie or this type of series...
- ★ Sometimes we don't even know what we want to eat and when our husband asks where we want him to take us to eat on a special occasion, we answer: "I don't know".
- ★ God has us figured out. He doesn't need an algorithm to know what we like.
- ★ We ourselves don't know who we are, but God knows us, not through references or from the outside; he knows our intentions, he knows what motivates us to do things or not do them.
- ★ God knows the attitude with which I do things, or the attitude with which I don't do them.
- ★ God, you decipher my thoughts. Although sometimes they are not very organized, although sometimes what I have is a storm of options, possible scenarios, screams, nervous laughter, you understand what's in this crazy head, you decipher it, and you understand it. You understand me, you put yourself in my place.
- ★ When children cry, mothers immediately understand what that cry is about, so it is with the Lord, he understands our cries, our sighs, and our moans.
- ★ Verse 3 - You know when I'm working, the tasks I do, the work of my hands, you know my times of rest, what I spend my time on and what occupies my mind in those moments.
- ★ Everything I do is known to you.
- ★ You know my ways; the spheres in which I move, with my family, in my work, in the tasks and administration of the home. You intimately understand what is inside of me, what is in my soul.
- ★ Verse 4 - Before I pray, you already know my request. Even when there are no words, you know what is in my heart.
- ★ Friend, God doesn't know you so he can use it to hurt you, nor to get something out of you, but he knows you so that he can restore you, give life to you, lift you up, fill every area of your life with his love.

II. I'M AWARE THAT YOU KEEP ME SECURE

- ⁵ *You hem me in behind and before,
and you lay your hand upon me*
- ⁶ *Such knowledge is too wonderful for me,
too lofty for me to attain.*
- ⁷ *Where can I go from your Spirit?
Where can I flee from your presence?*
- ⁸ *If I go up to the heavens, you are there;
if I make my bed in the depths, you are there.*
- ⁹ *If I rise on the wings of the dawn,
if I settle on the far side of the sea,*
- ¹⁰ *even there your hand will guide me,
your right hand will hold me fast.*
- ¹¹ *If I say, "Surely the darkness will hide me
and the light become night around me,"*
- ¹² *even the darkness will not be dark to you;
the night will shine like the day,
for darkness is as light to you.*

- A. God is not only in the Psalmist but is all around him.
 - i. His presence is active, and he goes before opening the way.
 - ii. God is also behind him, guarding him from what his eyes cannot see, from what might take him by surprise.

- B. He understands that the hand of God is upon him.
 - i. He's not afraid of this, it gives him comfort, he feels secure/safe.
 - ii. Let's look at the account of Daniel and the vision he had by the river.

Daniel 10:17-19

¹⁷ *How can I, your servant, talk with you, my lord? My strength is gone and I can hardly breathe."*

¹⁸ *Again the one who looked like a man touched me and gave me strength.*

¹⁹ *"Do not be afraid, you who are highly esteemed," he said. "Peace! Be strong now; be strong." When he spoke to me, I was strengthened and said, "Speak, my lord, since you have given me strength."*

Psalm 139:7-12

⁷ *Where can I go from your Spirit?
Where can I flee from your presence?*

He doesn't ask this question as someone who wants to leave his presence, but as someone who recognizes that there is no place where the Lord cannot find him.

⁸ *If I go up to the heavens, you are there;
if I make my bed in the depths, you are there.*

There is no place, not even eternity, where God is not there to take care of your life, because even in the depths God accompanies you. after his death on the cross.

⁹ *If I rise on the wings of the dawn,
if I settle on the far side of the sea,*

For the pagan people, dawn was a god, but for the Psalmist it is a manifestation of the glory of God. "Wings of dawn" refers to the rapid change of colors that can be seen at dawn. Paraphrasing: Although I travel at the speed of light, you take me by the hand.

Dawn manifests itself with sunlight. God is there.

¹⁰ *even there your hand will guide me,
your right hand will hold me fast.*

Your hand does not let me go, it keeps me safe, as a mother keeps a restless child (who runs faster than the speed of light) safe. It reminds me of Peter and Paul. Two very restless, active, "electric" Christians whom the Lord had to take hold of their hands.

¹¹ *even if I say, "Surely the darkness will hide me
and the light become night around me,"*

¹² *even the darkness will not be dark to you;
the night will shine like the day,
for darkness is as light to you.*

The pagans needed a god for the night and another for the day. The god of the day slept at night and people were left without protection. That is why the night was full of dangers and people tried to stay at home to be safe.

So, they resorted to worshiping another god who could be awake at night to watch over them and listen to their requests.

The Psalmist says: my God is powerful by day and by night. He takes care of me 24/7, the night for him is as bright as the day.

APPLICATION:

- ★ God is above you, over you.
- ★ There are people who have plans, who have wished you harm, but God has taken care of you and has acted where you could not.
- ★ His hand sometimes stops us, makes us stop to see the panorama, to reflect, to call our attention to greater things, better things.
- ★ God is with you the darkest moments of your life, of your mind, of your inner being. God operates through his Spirit in our moments of darkness, of mourning, of suffering.
- ★ You know that his hand is on you, not to destroy, but to protect, to lift you up.

III. NOW I KNOW MY IDENTITY (v. 13-18)

¹³ *For you created my inmost being;
you knit me together in my mother's womb.*

¹⁴ *I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made;
your works are wonderful, I know that full well.*

¹⁵ *My frame was not hidden from you
when I was made in the secret place,
when I was woven together in the depths of the earth.*

¹⁶ *Your eyes saw my unformed body;
all the days ordained for me were written in your book
before one of them came to be.*

¹⁷ *How precious to me are your thoughts, God!
How vast is the sum of them!*

¹⁸ *Were I to count them,
they would outnumber the grains of sand—
when I awake, I am still with you.*

- A. For the Psalmist, his existence is not a product of chance, he was created by God.
- i. There was a thought process and a will for him to exist.
 - ii. He was not a product of science; he was created out of love.

- B. His response is to praise. (verse 14)
- i. That revelation leads him to worship.
 - ii. That revelation does not lead him to arrogance or pride, but rather makes him worship the God who made him.
 - iii. The Psalmist marvels at his existence, it's not a small thing for him to exist, to breathe, to be alive, it's not a small thing for him to have been created by God.

Psalm 139:15-16

*¹⁵ My frame was not hidden from you
when I was made in the secret place,
when I was woven together in the depths of the earth.*

He sees God as a weaver who weaves with tendons, muscles, bones, veins and everything else to create a complete work, a work of art.

*¹⁶ Your eyes saw my unformed body;
all the days ordained for me were written in your book
before one of them came to be.*

These verses declare your sense of purpose, of mission. He understands that he was created for a mission, not that the mission was created for him.

God is an employer; he has a vacant position and he needs you to fill it.

John 13:3-4 NIV

³ Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God;
⁴ so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist.

- Jesus was able to take the towel to wipe the feet of his disciples because he knew who he was, where he came from, where he was going, and why he had come.

Psalm 139:17-18

*¹⁷ How precious to me are your thoughts, God!
How vast is the sum of them!*
*¹⁸ Were I to count them,
they would outnumber the grains of sand—
when I awake, I am still with you.*

When reflecting that God knows his thoughts, God is around him and in every corner of his life, that God is his creator and has a mission for him, he cannot do anything but treasure the wonders that come out of God's mind.

There are too many, God has thoughts of blessing, so many that they cannot be counted.

Here we are not talking about sterile information, about information that does not transform life, but about a revelation of the divine person and his work.

If he counted all of God's blessings one by one, at the end, God would still be by his side.

APPLICATION:

- * Do you ever reflect on your existence?
- * Where do you think you came from? Do you think there was intention in your formation?
- * Are you a divine design or were you a cosmic accident?
- * Do you mourn the day of your birth, as Jeremiah did?
- * You are the work of the Lord!
- * As such, don't waste even a drop of your being on vain things, on things that don't matter.
- * If you don't have the conviction of "being", of "purpose", life looks hollow and empty. Or it can look just like the Psalmists, a life to enjoy.

CONCLUSION:

Psalm 139:19-24

- ¹⁹ "If only you, God, would slay the wicked!
Away from me, you who are bloodthirsty!*
- ²⁰ They speak of you with evil intent;
your adversaries misuse your name.*
- ²¹ Do I not hate those who hate you, Lord,
and abhor those who are in rebellion against you?*
- ²² I have nothing but hatred for them;
I count them my enemies.*
- ²³ Search me, God, and know my heart;
test me and know my anxious thoughts.*
- ²⁴ See if there is any offensive way in me,
and lead me in the way everlasting."*

- * God understands you; He knows you.
- * God is above you, to lift you up.
- * God created you with the life purpose.
- * Today is a good time to marvel at who you are, at the way God has created you.
- * Today is a good time to let God explore the most intimate parts of your being and let him guide you by his Spirit.

Here are some links to songs taken from Psalm 139:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GmsgYY-INf8>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XrYILnOKtXA>



BIBLE STUDY #3: Psalm 136

THEME: *Authentic Love!*

By: Marena González

Introduction:

The history of the people of Israel is one that contains many events, many characters, many difficulties and many obstacles. We see a series of personalities, characters and situations that change constantly, book by book and chapter by chapter. However, the only element in the history of Israel that does not change is the love of God.

In Psalm 136, the author, who is anonymous, uses this space to talk about the faithfulness of God's love in a very unique way. It is expressed through a poem about a love story that is extremely special and extends to all generations. This is a psalm that remembers and emphasizes the life of gratitude that we must carry in the midst of each circumstance of our life. Clearly, for the author, all gratitude and praise should be given as an offering to the Lord, because he is worthy and because his love never fails. So, the psalmist focused on writing a psalm that shows the reasons why we must be grateful to God.

Hypothesis: The faithfulness of God's love covers all areas of our life and is shown at all times and in all situations that we are going through.

ANALYSIS OF THE VERSE:

I. Unique among many (v. 1-4)

- One of the biggest problems of the people of Israel was infidelity and idolatry. Despite seeing with their own eyes the miracles that the Lord preformed for them, the people always ended up straying from him.
- They built temples to other gods in the hills and in the mountains. Some of them were craftsmen by trade who created wooden idols, and some even sacrificed their own children and their belongings to other gods.
- However, the first section of this Psalm talks about the sovereignty of the Almighty God. The psalmist describes the Lord as:

"God of gods" and "Lord of lords" and as the only one who does miracles for his people.

- This refers to another problem that the people of Israel had. Many magicians and pagan people did "miracles" and prophesied to benefit people in order to deceive them.
- Then, in the midst of all the confusion and chaos of Israel, the psalmist presents a single God, who is above all others and performs miraculously acts.
- Therefore, it was necessary for the psalmist to thank God for being the only God who does not disappoint and does not fall.

II. Creator of all things (v. 5-9)

- Continuing along the line of the supremacy of God, the psalmist moves to talk about the creativity of God and how he made all things.
- Throughout Israel's history, we can clearly see how God worked through nature. We see how the Red Sea parts so that the people of Israel can pass through on dry land, how manna and quail came from heaven so that Israel had food in the desert, how a rainbow placed in the sky affirm the promise of salvation, among many other events.
- So, Israel had seen and experienced God's power over the seas, the heavens and the earth.
- In addition to this, the author views creation as a gift from the Lord. Creation inspires us to admire and remember the power and love of God.
- Thank God, Israel had the great brilliance of the sun and the moon, the seas where they could obtain food and, most importantly, they had evidence of the powerful presence of their faithful god.

III. Defender and Victorious Warrior (v. 10-22)

- In addition to performing miracles through nature, God also strongly defended his people.
- Throughout Israel's history, we see kings and empires fall, surrender, and die by the power of God's mighty hand.
- The most curious thing is that many times, these men became kings as a result of Israel's sin. However, the mercy and immeasurable love of the Lord was above all of their sins. Although the people did suffer consequences, the Lord defended his beloved people like a mother defends her children.
- This was more than enough reason for the people to live a life of gratitude to the Lord.

IV. Savior of the soul (v. 23-26)

- Although Israel defeated many nations and God saved them time after time, none of their enemies were as threatening as sin.
- Sin was the source of all evils, of all evil nations, that wanted to destroy Israel. Sin ran freely in Samaria, in Babylon, in Rome, in Egypt and in every nation that mocked the God of Israel. This same sin infected Israel and corrupted God's covenant with them.
- But regardless of the fact that sin flooded the world, God sent someone who would overcome sin forever, Jesus Christ.
- Jesus was the one who remembered the weaknesses of his people; both past and those that would come later. He remembered all the pain that the people caused the heart of God, and he forgave them. He is the true Savior of Israel and of the whole world, because he not only saves the body from the enemy, but he saves the soul of all who believe.
- Jesus was the provision and nourishment that Israel and the world needed, the forgiveness that redeemed the entire world.
- He is the worthy, unique, creator and maker of the heavens and the earth, the eternal defender and victorious warrior who beat death and sin and above all things, is pure evidence of God's faithfulness. That is our Lord Jesus Christ.

QUESTIONS FOR TODAY:

- ? What things has God done for me? Why should I live a life of gratitude to the Lord? How can I honor what the Lord has done in my life?
- ? Is God the only one exalted in my life? Do I have things that distract me from giving him genuine worship?
- ? Jesus already paid the debt for your sins and today extends his arms of salvation to you. Are you ready and willing to accept his forgiveness and live a life worthy of his sacrifice?

APPLICATION:

- ★ During our life, we face problems that overwhelm us, that confuse us and bring us pain/unhappiness. In fact, sometimes these situations are so strong that we forget that they are temporary. Especially as women, we tend to let it make us feel weak and despised.
- ★ As women, we experience economic crisis, we live through tragedies, pain, loss, temptation, and many other things that challenge our faith.
- ★ We also come across things that make us very "happy" maybe too "happy." These things can become distractions that take us away from the true joy of the Lord.
- ★ We should never forget that the one who never changes is God. We walk with a faithful and powerful God and his faithful love endures forever!
- ★ Whether we are going through illness, divorce, prosperity, or victory, we can be confident in a love that endures forever. When something is faithful, it is reliable and safe. Therefore, we can be sure that the Lord's love will last forever.
- ★ Jesus Christ brings comfort and peace in all situations because he never changes. In him we can feel confident and safe that he has already overcome the world (John 16:33).

CONCLUSION:

Although it is normal to stumble and be afraid of life's trials, we can find safety in our Almighty God. Where there seems to be instability and insecurity, there is firm footing in Jesus Christ. God has written a great love story that is told through the life of Jesus which shows us his faithfulness. God's love is authentic. Now it is your turn to seek a life sanctified and full of gratitude because "His love endures forever!"

Some songs inspired by Psalm 136:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PYh7ntuCQFU>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oLh0lhqknS4>



BIBLE STUDY #4: Psalm 100

THEME: *Authentic Encounter!*

Objective: May women come to meet the Lord with joy for who he is and for what he has done.

Hypothesis: May each time we gather together as well as every moment of life be a celebration of praise and gratitude to the Lord.

Introduction:

I. CELEBRATION (JOY) IS THE ATTITUDE OF THE KINGDOM (v. 1-2)

¹ *"Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth.*

² *Worship the Lord with gladness;
come before him with joyful songs."*

First encounter with Pharaoh - Exodus 5:1 (GNT)

"Then Moses and Aaron went to the king of Egypt and said, 'The Lord, the God of Israel, says, 'Let my people go, so that they can hold a festival in the desert to honor me.'"

Parable of the Wedding Feast - Matthew 22:1-2 (LEB)

"And continuing, Jesus spoke to them again in parables, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man—a king—who gave a wedding celebration for his son; ...'"

Psalms 81:1-4

¹ *"Sing for joy to God our strength;
shout aloud to the God of Jacob!*

² *Begin the music, strike the timbrel,
play the melodious harp and lyre.*

³ *Sound the ram's horn at the New Moon,
and when the moon is full, on the day of our festival;*

⁴ *this is a decree for Israel,
an ordinance of the God of Jacob."*

- A. From Genesis to Revelation God models a festive, joyful, celebratory attitude.
 - i. The history of Israel, and that of Redemption, are framed in Festivals.
 - ii. The Feasts (of Passover, Unleavened Bread, First Fruits, Pentecost, Trumpets, Atonement, Tabernacles, plus every Sabbath and every New Moon was a feast) had meaning. The feasts said something about the relationship between the people and their God, about who God is and what he has done.
 - iii. The festivities were for all of Israel with songs, trumpets, harps, sacrifices and they were full of symbolism.

- B. Each Festival/Feast had the expectation of an encounter with God.
- i. Joy is demanded. It is not a feeling but an attitude in response to the encounter with God.
 - ii. This Psalm was sung on the way to the Tabernacle or the Temple. There was an expectation, an internal preparation, which was displayed externally.

APPLICATION:

- ★ When you come to meetings like this or when you go a worship service, do you have an expectation to “Encounter” God?
- ★ Do you do anything different that signifies or marks Sunday as a day set apart for the Lord?
- ★ How do you see the “Encounter” on these occasions? As a party? As an obligation? As tradition?
- ★ I remember Professor Jerry Rice used to say that his grandmother did not read the newspaper on Sunday and abstained from certain trivial activities. Why do you think she did this?
- ★ When we are going to travel there is a certain expectation, there is an anticipation, that determines the “tone” of the trip.
- ★ God wants you to participate in all of his festivities.
- ★ We tend to remember the tragic and painful events more than the happy and joyful ones (engrams).
- ★ God calls us, in the midst of “captivity”, to look for opportunities to celebrate.
- ★ Paul and Silas celebrated the Lord by singing in the dungeon, bound hand and foot with chains.
- ★ In the middle of your calendar, celebrate something that has meaning.

II. GOD IS THE CENTER OF THE CELEBRATION (v. 3)

³ *“Know that the Lord is God.
It is he who made us, and we are his;
we are his people, the sheep of his pasture.”*

- A. The psalmist calls for a conscious and rational affirmation of the person of Jehovah; He is God.
- B. Surrounded by cultures where anything was a god, this was very important.
- C. The people gave shape to their gods, by making statues and figures to represent them. They credited climatic events and natural events to their gods. Their gods had human relationships of love, jealousy, infidelity, etc.
- D. The psalmist affirms that only Jehovah is God. He is a belief of faith and reason, not emotion.
- E. He is Creator, King, and Shepherd
 - i. Creator: because he is the one who started it all, he gave the breath of life to all living things. He also sustains that life and shapes it through time.
 - ii. King: because he gave the people his Law, he gave them his commandments to guide them so that they might have a good life.
 - iii. Pastor: because he cares for, protects, and sustains life. Not from afar, but by laying down his life for his sheep (all people).

APPLICATION:

- ★ Everything that defines the use of your time, resources and talents is a god in your life.
- ★ Everything that consumes your thoughts, that you set aside special time for, that is your god.
- ★ Whatever defines your entertainment, the way you use your money, and is the center of your relationships becomes your priority.
- ★ Jehovah holds a unique place in our lives, which has no comparison, nothing is like it, it is different. He created us and shaped us. God has given us direction, sustenance, care, and has shaped us into who we are.
- ★ The people of Israel did not liberate themselves, they did not set their own laws, they did not open the sea, nor did they give direction to themselves. Rather, it was God who did these things for them.
- ★ It's not about who God is to me, but who is God? It's not about who I think God is. It's not about having a humanistic view of God, but is God really?
- ★ When the Bible says that God is Savior, Healer, a Strong Tower, Messiah, Shepherd, King; it is not an interpretation of my experience, but a revelation from God to mankind.
- ★ We must see the hand of God along the way, his benefits and blessings. He not only knit our bones in the womb, attached tissue to our bones, gave us neurons and the ability to analysis, but he has allowed us experiences and the ability to work and serve others. Everything good comes from him.
- ★ We lived without laws, being our own kings, but he gave us identity. He gave us dignity, he gave us family, he gave us belonging and hope to always reach a better place.
- ★ God cares for us like a loving shepherd cares for his helpless sheep.
- ★ God gave us food and a place of safety. He is a gentle voice that comforts us in the dark and a door that no one can force open.

III. A CELEBRATION FROM THE ENTRANCE (v. 4-5)

*⁴ Enter his gates with thanksgiving
and his courts with praise;
give thanks to him and praise his name.*

*⁵ For the Lord is good and his love endures forever;
his faithfulness continues through all generations.*

- A. This is a call to action.
- B. Sacrifices such as sheep, goats, bulls, oil, grain, etc. were brought before the Lord. Sacrifices were the best the person had to give. Hands were also raised in gratitude.
- C. There was merriment and congregational singing.
- D. People came in giving thanks. They came in the entrance, the “opening”. They entered bringing gifts, they did not arrive empty-handed.
- E. Praises y blessings.
 - i. With concrete words and adjectives, the people told who God is. Good. Merciful. Loving. Etc. ...
 - ii. They declared what God had done. He set them free, listened to them, created them, and shepherded them. And he does the same for us.

APPLICATION:

- ★ We usually celebrate everything, we celebrate the announcement that a baby will be born, we celebrate birthdays, graduations, weddings, we celebrate everything.
- ★ Women have the habit of arriving at the home of family and friends always with something in hand. Sweets from the bakery, bread, something to drink, coffee, etc...
- ★ Praise, thanksgiving, blessings to God are not simply emotional, on the contrary, they are actions that must be very well thought out.
- ★ If you don't know what God has done for you, you have no reason to praise him.
- ★ If you don't know who God is, you have no reason to praise him.
- ★ Praise takes the focus off me and puts it on God.
- ★ Praise, blessings, and thanksgiving are an exercise in focus, situation, and identity.
 - FOCUS: I am not the center, nor am I the provider. God is the one who provides me with everything.
 - SITUATION: I belong to the Kingdom of grace, The Kingdom of Heaven. I am not of this world; the world owes me nothing.
 - IDENTITY: I am a daughter, I am a servant, I am a child of the King.
- ★ You don't have to invent reasons to praise and worship God. He's already given them to you in Scripture.
- ★ Your life is a testimony of the wonderful work of God, praise him.

CONCLUSION:

- * Celebrate God with praise, throw him a party.
- * "Celebration" is the attitude of the Kingdom.
- * Recognize, reflect on, who God is.
- * Prepare your heart so that each meeting is a Festival worthy of his Name.
- * Today is a good time to count your blessings and give thanks.
- * Today is a good time to start new habits of praise and worship to bring you to an authentic encounter with the Lord.

Some links for songs inspired by this psalm:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9mCiHOjGC50>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NaL_VeHil6U



BIBLE STUDY #5: Psalm 84

THEME: *Victorious Worshipers!*

Introduction:

This psalm is written for the director of music, and it was dedicated to the Levites descendants of Korah who were the gatekeepers of the temple. They were the security guards of the temple in the time of King David. They knew they were there by the grace of God that spared their lives from death when their ancestor Korah rebelled against God in the time of Moses. The psalm was composed to be played on an instrument called the gittith (this was a lyre or harp type instrument) which is said to have come from the region of Gath where Goliath was from. It is believed that when David was fleeing from Absalom he stayed in Gath and while there he learned to play this instrument. He then incorporated it into worship. It is no coincidence that while David was struggling, he learned to play the gittith. Imagine how impactful it was for the people to go singing this psalm of victory, remembering everything their king had done! There were moments in which adoration and prayer flowed. The verses express trust in God and the satisfaction that we can only find in Him. They teach us that even though there are times of hardship in our lives, or times when we feel crushed like the grapes in the winepress, when we pray, we are transformed into victorious worshippers.

Hypothesis: Victorious worshippers put their trust in the Lord.

What will you find when you worship through a prayer of trust in the Lord?

ANALYSIS OF THE VERSE:

I. The presence of God (v. 1-4) What can we learn from the Sons of Korah?

- They received something especially good in the sanctuary.
- What came out of the sanctuary was something that sustained them in the midst of trials.
- The Psalmist longed for that “something special” that happened in the sanctuary.
- That good and special thing that occurred only in the temple, had nothing to do with the structure of the temple, nor its location or decoration: it was the presence of the living God.
- Korah's family, from the tribe of Levites, knew what it was to be despised by the nation because of Korah's actions. Korah sinned against God and was punished. But his descendants serve God and have a special assignment in the sanctuary of God.
- Remember: In the context of the Old Testament, the Jews could pray to God wherever they were, they could meditate on his word, but true worship, for the Jewish people, occurred only in the temple, because that was where God's presence was.
- Worship was connected to sacrifice and because the sons of Korah sometimes couldn't be in the temple and couldn't worship (sacrifice) they longed for it.
- The temple had two altars, one in the atrium or patio of the tabernacle where the sacrifice of the burnt offering was made. This offering was for atonement, in which a person or family brought an animal (bull, sheep or goat) and it was burned completely. In presenting this sacrifice, the person recognized his sin. The offering of atonement was made so that the relationship with God could be restored, the smoke of the burnt offering rose and when God received it, it was pleasing to God.

- The other altar in the Temple was the altar of incense, which not only is talked about in the Old Testament, but also is mentioned in Luke 1 where we read that Zacharias was offering incense when the angel of God told him that his wife Elizabeth would have a son and that he was to name the child John.
- That altar was inside in the Holy place. This altar was located in front of the veil to the Holy of Holies and the offering was made as a daily and holy worship before God.
- The fire of that altar was taken from the fire of the altar of atonement, which was the altar of grace. And when the incense was burned, the prayers of the people and their praise rose with the smoke of the offering before God.
- The pagan people worshiped dead gods, but they yearned for the God of marvels and wonders, the God who is the giver of life.

II. Power (v. 5-7) When we pray and worship God, he clothes us with power.

- The psalm recounts the times that the Israelites who did not live in Jerusalem would take a pilgrimage to the temple in Jerusalem for the celebrations/feasts mandated by God and even though there were dangers on the way they found their strength in God.
- The pilgrim's heart had only one focus; their goal was to get there and worship, their goal was Jerusalem, but not just Jerusalem, their goal was the temple of God.
- That was their objective and God gave them the power to complete it. The transformational power of God was working in them as their journey progressed.
- This portion of scripture is the second time that God is referred to as "God Almighty", a term that reminds us of God's ultimate power and promises us safety.
- The nations of the earth have their kings, but Jehovah is the ruler of all kings on earth.
- The pilgrims passed through the "Valley of Baca" or in some translations the "Valley of Weeping." It is thought that balsam trees grew in this valley and balsam trees drip resin or weep. The psalmist uses the Valley of Baca as a symbol, illustrating a difficult path in life. The pilgrims would pass through this place of "weeping", but their journey was worth it in the end.

III. Permanence (v. 8-12) The psalmist prays a corporate prayer.

- He tells us about the way to Zion, about that pilgrimage, and urges us to stay. For the psalmist, staying in the presence of God was something of great joy, it was extravagant, it was being in the house of his God.
- He contrasts with the abodes of evil, which are places of self-sufficiency and self-reliance, of pride and selfishness.
- "Better is one day in your courts than a thousand elsewhere." The doorkeepers, the sons of Korah, would rather guard the doors to the house of God than to not be there at all. It was a very important ministry!

QUESTIONS FOR TODAY:

- ? What is your desire? Is your longing for God, the source of life? Do you experience the sweet presence of the living God?
- ? As you walk along life's journey, what is your heart focused on?
- ? What challenges do you face today that require more of God's presence, power, and permanence?

- ? What situations do you have that urgently require God to transform your valley of weeping into a fountain of joy?
- ? What situations in your life need the life-giving and healing balm of our Lord Jesus Christ?

APPLICATION:

- ★ Beloved sisters, this longing for the house of God is a longing for to be in the presence of the Lord, it's a longing that we can trust in.
- ★ Today this longing for the presence of God can find complete satisfaction in the cross and ministry of Jesus. In the Old Testament, a burnt offering was required in order to be reconciled to God. Today, Jesus intercedes from the throne of God for all believers.
- ★ What the psalmist longed for is true for us, the presence of Christ is transforming. Something different happens when we are in Christ.
- ★ The psalmist says: "my heart and my flesh cry out", but Christ transforms our entire being.
- ★ What God has done is more than enough for songs to flow from our lips.
- ★ Paul enjoyed the presence of God in such a way that he completely dedicated himself to letting others experience it so that they would become holy worshipers of God regardless of the cost to their own lives (Philippians 1:9-11).
- ★ Pray to God because he has given you direct access to the throne of grace. He has provided everything you need for you to experience his Divine presence in your life. His presence will transform you so that you can enjoy a special relationship with Jesus and with mankind.
- ★ The longing of the world is for the things of the world, not for the presence of God. The framework of the world invites us to find power in money, security in what we acquire, protection in the house we have or in the job we attained or in the education we've earned. I invite you to put everything in perspective.
- ★ If your relationship with the Lord is not your priority, the house, the money or what you have saved is worthless.
- ★ God makes a parody of the world's systems: When Peter was approached about the temple tax he came to Jesus, and Jesus told him, "...go to the lake and throw out your line. Take the first fish you catch; open its mouth and you will find a four-drachma coin. Take it and give it to them for my tax and yours." (Matthew 17:27)
- ★ You can trust in the Lord, because his is almighty and he gives power to his people.
- ★ Trust in God and use his power to heal. The power of God comes wrapped in the presence of his Spirit and his Spirit is a healing balm for our lives.
- ★ The victorious worshipers pray to God and find true treatment for their wounds, illnesses, weaknesses, failures, defeats . . . that does not fail: their precious spiritual balm.
- ★ When you pour out your heart before God, he assures you that the healing balm of the saving power of his Spirit will flood your life and heal everything you ask of him.
- ★ The blessing that will come into your life is so glorious that, the psalmist says, from what was dry now becomes "a place of springs."
- ★ Dry relationships are reconciled, dry ministries are revived, and dry bones are made alive.
- ★ The "house of my God" speaks of a Christian lifestyle and experience that is different from the world.
- ★ The "house of my God" is the place where you have everything because Christ is enough.
- ★ You are a daughter of God, you are member of God's family, you can trust the Lord at all times.
- ★ God helps us in our life commitments.

- ★ The believer's life is a journey, it is not a roller coaster, it is a journey supported by the grace of God in which we strive for the goal, the prize, the supreme call of God in Christ Jesus (Philippians 3:14).
- ★ There is permanence, it is God's commitment to his people. Our commitment to him is to remain in him, not static but doing his will, living out faith that expresses itself through love (Galatians 5:6).
- ★ Remaining in Christ results in the reward of his favor (John 15:8)
- ★ Jesus made the connection between permanence or Christian commitment to a life of prayer. Ask and it will be done for you.
- ★ The psalmist says it in the following way: "...no good thing does he withhold from those whose walk is blameless." God does not withhold any blessing from his children. He grants us the privileges of his glory by his grace.

Conclusion:

Today God does something new for women who put their trust in Him. Perhaps you are going through the "Valley of Weeping" on your pilgrimage and sometimes God allows us to go through hard things. But if your heart is focused, not on the circumstances, but on the God who goes with you, he will change that valley into sources of healing and blessing. Perhaps you have seen relatives go through the "valley of weeping" fighting an illness, but they never lost sight of God's goodness as their final destination. Perhaps you are tired, and your strength is drained as you go through the "valley of weeping,"; the presence of God does not fill you with power and then drain the power from you, it fills you with power to power so that you can continue taking the next steps. Why? Because when your life is a life of worship and prayer, the Lord will fulfill his purposes in you. You will walk victoriously in his presence, full of power and abiding in Him. Let us reflect on what it is to be a victorious worshiper while we are on our pilgrimage.

Let us pray to God for his power in our lives.

Attached are some links to songs inspired by this Psalm.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vEPAKmwHhdg>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W4Fj9bbEmVk>



BIBLE STUDY #6: Psalm 46

THEME: *Strengthened!*

Introduction:

We must be attentive to what is happening in other parts of the globe. The earth is groaning, nature itself is groaning, because from the beginning of creation earth was fastened and tied in a mysterious way, to God himself, to the designs and purposes of human beings. At the beginning of time, it was intended for humans to subdue it, but after the fall of humanity, the earth itself was cursed because of our sin. And we see today that human beings suffer corruption, as does the earth; human beings suffer weakness as does the earth, and it becomes a vicious circle, which will gloriously have a happy ending for all who love the Lord and hope for his coming.

One day we will all be transformed as will the earth. There will be a new heaven and a new earth for all those who groan before the Lord and in whom the Spirit dwells. The Spirit also intercedes for us with groaning.

Today is a good time to pray together, groaning and crying out to God for the earth, for our country and for our families, that we be strengthened by the God who is with us.

Hypothesis: You can be a woman of strength when God is in your life.

ANALYSIS OF THE VERSE:

- I. **Depending on the strength of God's power (v. 1-3)** - This Psalm of the descendants of Korah, was a score to be sung by sopranos or female voices, but the important thing here is that it indicates the trust the people of Israel had in God in the midst of adversity.
 - The nation of Israel was threatened with extinction on many occasions, even in current history, but God has always sustained them and is faithful to his covenant with them.
 - This specific psalm remembers the attack by Sennacherib, king of Assyria in the days of Hezekiah, king of Judah (2 Kings 18-19) and the miraculous way in which God delivered them and killed 185,000 Assyrians in battle.
 - God himself is the psalmist's strength. The Hebrew word for strength is "ōz" meaning power, might, fortress, and strength, whether material or physical, personal, social, or political.
 - Jehovah is the refuge of the psalmist. Refuge is the Hebrew word "maḥšê" which means shelter, literally or figuratively, it also means hope and trust.
 - A refuge for the Israelites was a place to find shelter from inclement weather or a place to hide and regain strength in the middle of the war.
 - A refuge could be a cave, a tower, a remote desert. The Canaanites built cities of refuge on the steep cliffs of the mountains.
 - The psalmist makes his prayer based on the omnipotence and omnipresence of God.
 - The psalmist is calling God's people to hide, find refuge, in God, at all times, but especially in the midst of problems.
 - This is a recurring theme throughout the Old Testament (e.g. Ps. 9, Isa 32:2).
 - Jehovah is described as a strong place where we can hide and be safe, not only from temporary evils, but also from eternal ones.

- An ever-present help - God is the ever-present help (Isa. 1:24-25).
- The confidence of the psalmist is to pray in his tribulation with full confidence in Jehovah since Jehovah is in control (Gen 50:20-21).
- The text illustrates the use of powerful strength in nature. "though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging..."
- The psalmist is presenting some possible scenarios of things that could happen.

II. The river gives strength and peace in the midst of the storm (v. 4-6)

- The river here is a symbol of God's merciful presence; it's alive, it moves, it's in the middle of the city, and it's powerful (Revelation 22:1, Ezekiel 47:2-5 and John 7:38).
- The river brings joy to the city of God, the sacred home of the Most High.
- The river cleanses what it encounters as it flows. Scripture talks about the Spirit of God in much the same way; the Spirit is living, real, and the holy presence of God in his covenant people. It's the purifying presence of God through his Word.
- The acknowledgment that God is in the midst of the city strengthens the psalmist's faith.
- It declares that nothing what happens in other nations (v. 6) such as political unrest, natural disasters, corruption, and injustices can alter the confidence of God's servants in his power.
- The psalmist asserts that God is with us and he will help us. He takes it for granted and it's of great comfort to the Israelites.

III. God provides the substance of all trust (v. 7-11)

- For the psalmist, God's work is so real that he invites everyone to come and see it.
- God's nature is to protect and bring peace (v. 9a)
- There is an invitation to wait on God because he is trustworthy, God is faithful.
- One of the ways in which the people waited on God was by waiting to hear the instructions of his word through his prophets.
- "Be still" here can mean; stop fighting, stop striving, or relax.
- God is sovereign, the one who knows the Israelites, but he also knows their enemies.
- He is worthy to be exalted. He is the one who destroys all opposition.

QUESTIONS FOR TODAY:

- ? What would happen if our world were turned upside down, if we were hit by a hurricane or earthquake or any other catastrophic event? How would we react today?
- ? Would we be confident that God is our refuge and our strength?
- ? Who do you listen to when the storm waves come and the wind blows uncontrollably around you?
- ? What are you battling today? Can you stop fighting and put it in the hands of our strong and powerful Heavenly Father?
- ? Can you "be still" and surrender?
- ? Can you answer the call to stop fighting, let go, and believe that He is in charge?
- ? Do you fully trust Jesus?

APPLICATION:

I. Do not fear, because God is our refuge and strength.

- ★ It is not wrong for women to recognize that we have physical limitations, but the source of our strength is found in the Lord. That is being authentic.
- ★ On his way to Jerusalem for his final week, before actually arriving, Jesus stops when he sees the majesty of the city. Jerusalem was the city of God, the chosen city, walled, and strong. But Jesus laments over her (Matthew 23:37). The Israelites did not understand that God was their refuge and strength. That their power was found in having God as their refuge. And in the year 70 AD, Jerusalem was destroyed and not a single stone remained of the temple. They could have taken refuge under the mighty hand of God (as Jesus said, under her wings like the hen gathers her chicks) but they did not want to.
- ★ God has offered himself as our ever-present help in trouble because he is present in our lives. He is available, for you, for your children, for your parents, for your husband, for your ministry. God is not far away; he draws near to humanity through his Son. He has made himself accessible, and is here through his Holy Spirit, he reveals himself to us at the precise moment when we need him most.
- ★ Jesus is God made flesh; exalted and glorified, who has sent his Spirit to live within us.
- ★ Jesus Christ is the Son of God who came to save the world from their sins and it's a privilege to be able to have fellowship with him.
- ★ We will go through adversity, but united as the body of the Lord on earth we can endure it until he returns.
- ★ In difficult times, women have a special way of showing solidarity with those who at other times would be difficult to approach. God calls his people to unity. This psalm speaks to us of unity. God is our strength, he is our refuge, he speaks to all of us. Not just single individuals.
- ★ Tell the world that your faith comes from God "...for his mercies never end. They are new every morning; ..." And confidently wait for the glorious morning when Jesus the Savior returns for his people.
- ★ It is useless to resist God. It's useless. Even if the nations rebel, says the Psalm, even if they resist, at the voice of God, because of his strength, the earth melted. When you surrender and don't resist, he will give his great strength to you too.
- ★ God is crying out to us through nature to return to him. We need to recognize that even though we are Christian women and we love God, sometimes we are negligent and get caught up in busyness and put God second in our lives.
- ★ We need to pray more, seek his face more, and even if this earth is moved we will not fear because God will be with us if we seek him with all our hearts.
- ★ Women, God is a refuge that you can run to for cover in the midst of your battles! He will give you strength and be an ever-present help in the midst of trouble.

II. Testimony

In my neighborhood there are some people who would not greet me. I thought maybe they didn't see me, that could happen, it's possible that I might not see someone, so I don't greet them. At other times I thought they were too busy and couldn't say hello. I passed them every day and I always waved, with my hand in the air, alone, because they never returned my greeting. When it was announced that a hurricane was coming, I invited all the neighbors to join me in a neighborhood prayer circle. These neighbors quickly told me that would come. They were very excited! We met on the corner of the street, and I shared some words from Scripture and we prayed. Suddenly, it started to rain, and these neighbors were going to leave, so I told them, "Let's run to my house". They ended up staying there for about an hour, sharing. These days, when we pass each other, they greet me with affection. The presence of God made this change take place. In it, I see the hand and purposes of God. The Church of God should not be a hidden Church. We, the church, are the salt and light of this earth. The church enlightens others with the extraordinary presence of our Extraordinary God.

Conclusion:

Today humbly, but with great love for God, we celebrate and remember with gratitude that God shows mercy to us, always.

God is not a means of escape when there are storms, God is Lord over the storms. He is not an escape from what is happening to us, he can strengthen us with his power and change our history. We can be sure that God is with us. Our security and confidence in the face of adversity is that we can depend on God's power to sustain us in the midst of problems and struggles, and we can expect that he will do what is best for his people. We are extremely grateful for that. He is our hope at all times. This is a good time to pray for strength for:

1. The victims of hurricanes.
2. The victims of earthquakes.
3. The victims of abuse and violence.
4. People who live in dangerous or war-torn cities, regions, or countries.
5. The all people on earth, that they recognize that Jesus Christ is Lord and choose to serve him.

- * Reflect on the things that you know God can accomplish and the ways in which He has already guided and directed your life.
- * Plant in your memory the ways that God has freed, helped, and sustained you so that when you face difficult situations, you can remember his unfailing love and strength. There's no need to crumble or run away! Be still, stop striving or fighting in the midst of problems. Remember His promises to you.

Here are some links to some songs inspired by this psalm.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zPETiZPNrFU>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ky1dIJjvcs>



BIBLE STUDY #7: Psalm 42

THEME: *Authentic Hope!*

Objective: That women can put their hope in God at the same time that they recognize and express their feelings and frustrations, and that in the midst of this, they don't lose hope in the God of their salvation.

Hypothesis: The bigger the challenge, the greater my hope is in God.

I. WHY? (v. 9)

*I say to God my Rock,
"Why have you forgotten me?"*

*Why must I go about mourning,
oppressed by the enemy?"*

- A. The psalmist speaks from the bottom of his heart.
 - i. At the same time that he refers to God as "rock", that is, a safe place and refuge, he claims that God has forgotten about him.
 - ii. He feels a great loneliness, because at one time he was acclaimed and celebrated by all, but today he is hated and despised.
- B. The psalmist has lost everything.
 - i. What did he experience? The psalmist experienced mourning. Mourning at having lost his family, his friends, his position, his ministry.
 - ii. His mood was as if he walked in mourning and oppression. The enemy mocks him and does not give him a truce.

APPLICATION:

- * Feeling forgotten is feeling that no one cares about you, that you could cease to exist and no one would notice.
- * But has God really forgotten about you? If he had forgotten you, you would not be here listening to this word.
- * There's nothing you can do to make God forget about you.
- * What is your reality today? How do you feel in relation to God?
- * There are moments of loss when it seems that everything is gone, family, friends, work, the car, the house, even the dog leaves us.
- * I dare to tell you that sometimes it is not the enemy who speaks to you, but rather you ask yourself: Where is your God?

II. HOW DO I FEEL?

As the deer pants for streams of water... *(only God satisfies it)*

My tears have been my food day and night *(they ask him, where is your God?)*

These things I remember as I pour out my soul *(he was leading worship)*

My soul is downcast within me... *(exiled, from afar)*

Deep calls to deep in the roar of your waterfalls; *(God is the one who whips him)*

My bones suffer mortal agony... *(he suffers at the challenge and mockery of the enemy)*

A. The soul of the psalmist seeks and thirsts for God.

- The psalmist does not say that he needs God's army, his palace or his riches.
- The psalmist longs for a time of worship, a time to bring thanksgiving offerings to the Tabernacle along with all the people.
- The “panting” deer is a Jewish metaphor that speaks of the female “doe” seeking water as an image of the psalmist longing for the water of hope that gives communion with her God.
- The “streams of waters” is an illustration the psalmist uses to manifest the divine activity available (Isa. 12:3).
- The “living God” as in Hosea 1:10, John 5:26, 1 Thess. 1:9, gives eternal life in Rom. 6:23; His eternal life comes to us through the Son (1 John 5:11).

B. The psalmist is not on the Holy Mount, in Zion.

- He is an exile, he is far from home, far from what gives him security.
- The psalmist is on the run, without having a safe place.

APPLICATION:

- ★ What are you thirsty for, why do you feel this way? The Psalmist tells us why he feels the way he does: because he needs to go to worship, fulfill his ministry, he is far from home, he suffers the mockery of the enemy, and he feels that God has forgotten him.
- ★ How can you stop feeding feelings of contempt and true alienation and start looking for the water that refreshes and gives true hope?
- ★ The center of everything for the psalmist and his relief was to return to worship with the people. What do you feel would be your relief: that no one makes fun of you? that God does not leave you in shame? that God does something to show that he is with you?
- ★ When we let our being speak to us, it almost never tells us good things. We must take direction and speak to our being.

III. SPEAKING TO MYSELF (v. 11)

Why, my soul, are you downcast?

Why so disturbed within me?

Put your hope in God,

for I will yet praise him,

my Savior and my God.

- A. Taking control.
- He asked his soul, “why are you so sad and disturbed?”, but then followed that up with, “why would you be worried ... God is here!”
 - This tells us that HOPE in God is greater than the feeling of the moment.
 - Hope is the expectation that all that God has promised will soon come to pass. Hope has been fulfilled in Jesus Christ (Col. 1:27; 1 Pe 1:13) (Beacon 260).
- B. The psalmist has not yet reached where he wants to be, but he is walking towards that goal.
- Does he feel successful? Nope.
 - Does he feel accompanied or satisfied, ready to celebrate with thanksgiving? Nope
 - However, he tells himself that he will still worship. This means that in the midst of chaos, God is still Savior and God.

APPLICATION:

- ★ We cannot ignore how we feel.
- ★ We cannot ignore the situations that makes us feel this way.
- ★ Nor can we ignore that we are not where we want to be.
- ★ Above all, let's not stop putting our hope in God.
- ★ The world offers "supposed hope, vain, ephemeral hope," but the only hope that satisfies us is found in Jesus. (Beacon, 259).
- ★ STOP and speak to yourself; let the Holy Spirit be the voice you listen to, your guide.
- ★ Maybe you don't even have the strength to give thanks, but don't stop longing for that time.
- ★ The psalmist says: I will put my hope in God, I will praise... It is the only course of action that we have for sure.

CONCLUSION:

- May your faith be greater than your feelings.
- Remember that what God has done is greater than what any person has done to you, or can do.
- Long for the time when you can return stronger, with a stronger faith, with a deeper testimony, with a more convinced love for God.
- Tell yourself: why do you worry? Wait on God, he is my Savior and my God.
- Today is a good time to look to the future with real hope.

Some links for songs inspired by this psalm:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wGgsmCEgf4w>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q1Gd-FoNLul>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SuvddPLM-Jc>



BIBLE STUDY #8: Psalm 32

THEME: *Authentic Forgiveness!*

Objective: That women turn to forgiveness as the first action to deal with any relationship affected by discord.

Psalms 32

- ¹ Blessed is the one whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered.*
- ² Blessed is the one whose sin the Lord does not count against them and in whose spirit is no deceit.*
- ³ When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long.*
- ⁴ For day and night your hand was heavy on me; my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer.*
- ⁵ Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the Lord." And you forgave the guilt of my sin.*
- ⁶ Therefore let all the faithful pray to you while you may be found; surely the rising of the mighty waters will not reach them.*
- ⁷ You are my hiding place; you will protect me from trouble and surround me with songs of deliverance.*
- ⁸ I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you with my loving eye on you.*
- ⁹ Do not be like the horse or the mule, which have no understanding but must be controlled by bit and bridle or they will not come to you.*
- ¹⁰ Many are the woes of the wicked, but the Lord's unfailing love surrounds the one who trusts in him.*
- ¹¹ Rejoice in the Lord and be glad, you righteous; sing, all you who are upright in heart!*

I. FORGIVENESS IS LIBERATING (v. 1-2)

- A. The psalm begins with the word "blessed" meaning happy, joyful.
 - i. The Psalmist is happy that he no longer bears the weight of his sins. He recognizes that he sinned, that he disobeyed God's law.
 - ii. He offended God, but God did not hold a grudge against him. He is guilty and he admits it.

- B. He does not try to justify his actions but accepts his guilt.
- i. Justify comes from the Latin *jūsti* (just) and *fiācre* (fy). It means to show satisfactory reason or excuse for something done.
 - ii. However, it works differently with the Lord. In Christ, whoever does not justify himself (make excuses) and acknowledges his sin, will receive justice through faith in Jesus Christ. Jesus justifies them before the Father.
 - iii. Justification in the Greek is *dikaiósis* - Romans 4:25, 5:18. In the Old Testament justification was received through human merit, but in the New Testament it is an act by which God declares the repentant sinner free from guilt and punishment. It is the result of God's forgiving grace, and the believer enters a "state" of being righteous, made right before God.
 - iv. The woman who forgives and is forgiven walks with her face held high. She sees hope in life, she has been reconciled with her beloved Creator and can reconcile with others.

APPLICATION:

- ★ Forgiveness is received, it cannot be earned or bought.
- ★ The biggest critic that we have is ourselves.
- ★ If it were up to us, we would not forgive our own sin. That is why it is so difficult for us to simply receive God's forgiveness.
- ★ The one who constantly justifies themselves becomes numb and their conscience hardens. They come to a point of believing that it was necessary for them to sin.
- ★ Blessed are you, be happy, God has forgiven you!

II. HEALING FORGIVENESS (v. 3-4)

- A. By not forgiving, nor having been forgiven, the psalmist withered inside.
- i. Guilt was consuming him. His life had stopped. He wasn't progressing.
 - ii. He was depressed. He wasn't bearing fruit, he lost his purpose, his direction.
- B. He confesses his sin and repents.
- i. Without understanding sin will control us like a horse is controlled with a bridle v. 9.
 - ii. Confession is not just admitting our sin out loud, but truly being sorry for what we've done, and not doing it again. It's changing our attitude toward the sin we've committed. We now see sin as reprehensible (deserving of reproof, rebuke).
 - iii. Repentance is a change of thinking. It's when a person becomes aware of their sin, its consequences and they acknowledge their sin (Romans 3:23). In repentance the person experiences sorrow and anguish for having sinned against God (2 Corinthians 7:9-10). Repentance does not end the believer's anguish, but a change of will and purpose in the person's life has to occur. The person turns from their sin to God (Psalm 51:7:10). The person participates in repentance and the Holy Spirit helps and directs them (Acts 5:31). Repentance involves confession and restitution (Exodus 22:1-4). (Beacon Theological Dictionary)
 - iv. In verses six and seven, the psalmist begins to see God act in his life. He re-involves God in his life and rests in God.

APPLICATION:

- ★ How do you feel when you know you've done something wrong? When have you let someone you love down, but you haven't asked for forgiveness?
- ★ Silence separates us, makes us sick, consumes us.
- ★ When we are committing sin, we see God as a merciless judge. However, he has already forgiven us. By accepting his forgiveness our image of him also changes.
- ★ Resentment is a time machine that always takes us to the past, to the moment of the offense.
- ★ Forgiveness allows you to look to the future with hope.

III. FORGIVENESS IS RECONCILIATORY (v. 8-9)

- A. It creates a reciprocating love relationship.
 - i. God affirms himself as a teacher, as the one who knows what is best for the psalmist.
 - ii. Now the psalmist receives instruction and guidance from God when before he was alone, without direction.

- B. God focuses his eyes on the psalmist.
 - i. God draws near and assures him of his care.
 - ii. God does not want him as a slave, but for him to come of his own will. He is not interested in the psalmist being by his side out of obligation, because of sin.
 - iii. The sinner recognizes that only by God's side will he be okay.

APPLICATION:

- ★ What great power the Lord gives us through forgiveness!
- ★ Forgiveness is pure mercy, since God knows that we are at fault. It is not pretending nothing happened to avoid confrontations.
- ★ Forgiveness is very valuable because we acknowledge that we have sinned, we willingly humble ourselves and ask to be forgiven. Christ willingly paid our debt because of his love, grace, and mercy.
- ★ Many times we distance ourselves because we do not know how to forgive or how to ask for forgiveness.
- ★ The Father presents himself as a patient teacher, a Father who lovingly sits and waits, who does not want a child who serves him out of fear or blind fanaticism, but one who seeks growth and enrichment in their relationship.
- ★ God seeks worshipers who worship in spirit and truth. People with all their senses working. Sin is the result of ignorance, stubbornness, mastery of emotions, suppressing good judgment, and lack of love for God and others.

“Whatever weakens your reason, impairs the tenderness of your conscience, obscures your sense of God, or takes off your relish of spiritual things; in short, whatever increases the strength and authority of your body over your mind; that thing is sin to you, however innocent it may be in itself.” —Susanna Wesley

The heart of forgiveness is found in the character and love of God.

- God forgave us.
- God initiates forgiveness.
- Forgiveness is an act of love and mercy.
- Jesus' death nailed all our offenses to the cross. Above his head it said, "King of the Jews." Above our heads is a long list of offenses against God.
- Forgiveness is a provision for our past and present sin. We are justified, not by the good things that we do, but by faith in Christ. Christianity is the only religion that does not require physical sacrifice to atone for sin.
- Forgiveness is central to the formation of God's people because it is part of God's loving relationship with humanity.

How does all this apply to us?

- We need to acknowledge our sin.
- We can't justify the sin we've committed.
- We must turn away from sin.
- We can't try to buy forgiveness or pay for it with things or service. That is an insult to divine Grace. When a client offers to buy something well below what the product is worth, they are saying that the product is not worth the price presented. God's forgiveness is of such great value that you cannot put a price on it. How much is a child worth? How much is the talent you have worth?
- God's forgiveness is not something that is separate from God. It is not an end in itself, but a divine means of reconciling us to God.

How does all this apply to our relationships with others?

- Can we extend this love to others? To whom? (Give examples).
- Can we free others as we were freed?
- Can we be prepared to forgive others?
- Do we understand that any sin that is committed against us must be forgiven?

Psalms 103:8

*"The Lord is compassionate and gracious,
slow to anger, abounding in love."*

Colossians 3:13-14 (ICB)

"Do not be angry with each other, but forgive each other. If someone does wrong to you, then forgive him. Forgive each other because the Lord forgave you. Do all these things; but most important, love each other. Love is what holds you all together in perfect unity."

CONCLUSION:

- Receive the forgiveness that the Father offers you today.
- Let go of guilt and fully experience the joy that forgiveness gives.
- Confess your guilt, if you feel that you are wasting away, your strength is sapped, talk to the Father and talk to those you have offended.
- In humility, be reconciled to God and others, through forgiveness.

Here are some links to songs inspired by this psalm:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iVvzIBYeogQ>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3ZHOeXHrsbg>



BIBLE STUDY #9: Psalm 23

THEME: *My Authentic Shepherd!*

Objective: That women will understand that in the Lord they can find the authentic shepherd of their hearts, where care, provision and comfort is always available, as well as direction for everything in their lives. In the Lord they will find encouragement and certainty.

Hypothesis: The shepherd of our lives comforts us and cares for us.

Introduction:

- A metaphor used among people in ancient times was that of a king as their shepherd (New Beacon Bible Commentary, 136). The Bible presents us with God referring to some of the kings of Israel as their shepherds, but above all he refers to himself as the shepherd of his people (Ezekiel 34:11-24).
- The Lord is the personal shepherd and king of the psalmist. His strength is in stark contrast to the psalmist's fears and weaknesses.
- The psalmist has no idea where to go get his needs met. He needs include hunger, illnesses, and loneliness.
- The psalmist is completely dependent on someone who will guide and direct him where to go and what to do. The shepherd is his guide through the darkness and leads him to contentment.

IT IS GOOD TO KNOW THAT AS WOMEN WE HAVE GOD AS OUR SHEPHERD

I. SHE IS NOT ALONE (v. 1-4)

- The psalmist compares the relationship that God has with his person to the relationship a shepherd has to his sheep. He describes God as the good, wise, loving, steadfast, and a faithful shepherd, while he describes himself as a sheep being cared for by his shepherd.
- He who is Eternal, who always does what he says, he is like a shepherd to me, I will never lack anything that is good for me.
- The psalmist describes God as the rightful shepherd of his life. What do you think about this?
- The shepherd is always watching over the sheep, that is his main job. Being with them and seeking their well-being. Sheep are never left alone.
- Sheep are not wild animals, they are the property of their shepherd. Sheep are unique and need special care. (They need to be fed, guided, administered medicine to when sick or to rid them of parasites, etc.).

APPLICATION:

- * Even if you feel alone, your good shepherd is always shepherding you. "I will not leave you nor forsake you" says the Lord. (Joshua 1:5)
- * In what ways do you believe the Lord is the true shepherd of your life?

- * You belong to the Lord. The relationship is intimate and personal. God is your shepherd, Christ is your shepherd, the Holy Spirit is your shepherd. The concept of sheep and shepherd was conceived in the Trinity.
- * It is in God's nature and ability to care for and nurture you, and being your shepherd is his idea of how his relationship with you works.
- * You are the object of his affections! Therefore, like a shepherd is aware of his sheep, the Lord your shepherd is aware of your nourishment, your state of mind, your health, your weight, your fleece, your whole life.
- * The shepherd anoints you with oil to remove anything that may bother you and prevent you from thriving, to free you from illness and evil.
- * Jesus said, "Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted." (Matthew 5:4)
- * Our God is the shepherd who wants to spend time with you. Like Jesus did when he entered Jericho and Zacchaeus, believing that he was unseen, was seen by Jesus and Jesus said to him, "I must stay at your house today."
- * As Jesus hung on the cross, two criminals hung next to him, one to his left and one to his right. One of them said to him; "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom," in other words, don't leave me here alone. Jesus answered him, "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise." (Luke 23:42-43)
- * Jesus, our Shepherd, continually lays down his life for his sheep (us). He left us the Holy Spirit who will guide us. The Holy Spirit guides us into all truth, he convicts us of sin, he encourages us in faith, he fills us with power to complete his mission.
- * We sometime have feelings of loneliness and abandonment that feel very real, but they can often deceive us. There is another, greater reality expressed in the Word of God. You are sheep of his pasture. You are sheep of his flock. So, above all else, you are not alone.

II. SHE IS GUIDED BY GOD

Where is the psalmist led? Constantly towards God himself!

- The Psalmist says that the shepherd guides him to green pastures, a place to rest under the shepherd's watchful eye and be renewed.
- "Green pastures" refers to a permanent place, a home, a place of refuge where we find everything we need.
- For a person their home is their palace, that is their green pastures.
- Home is the place where you take refuge to do what delights you, the place where you rest.
- Home is the place where you eat what you like, where you are relaxed and confident, since nobody judges you there.
- For the believer, the only one who can guide us to our true home is Jesus Christ.
- Jesus guides you to your true home, where there is provision, where there is fresh food that is not stale.
- How does Jesus guide you to your true home?
- By reflecting and meditation on God's Word which is fresh every day. The Holy Spirit guides you to his home, to find refuge exclusively in him.
- In the Old Testament, we see that God was angered because the Israelites rejected His words that were proclaimed by the prophets.

- Jeremiah 25:3 says, “For twenty-three years ... the word of the Lord has come to me and I have spoken to you again and again, but you have not listened.” And Jeremiah 25:5 continues, “Turn now, each of you, from your evil ways ..., and you can stay in the land the Lord gave to you and your ancestors for ever and ever.”
- Is the Israelites would not turn from their sin, Jeremiah 25:37 prophesizes that: “The peaceful meadows will be laid waste because of the fierce anger of the Lord.”
- Green pastures - We understand that green pastures were where sheep found food. But more than being a place of food, it was a resting place, as the sheep slowly chewed the grass they rested from their long journey to the green pasture.
- We can calmly “chew” the Word of God, meditating on it, contemplating it, resting in its promises, refreshing ourselves in it and living satisfied by God’s presence.
- Psalm 22 is considered the psalm of the cross.
- Every believer who takes up his cross and is a true disciple of Jesus can say, “The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing. He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, he refreshes my soul.”
- The Good Shepherd will lead you into his truth, so that you may rejoice in it. So that you chew it calmly.

III. HER NEEDS ARE MET BY GOD

- The text says, “he leads me beside quiet waters”. It is a place of refreshing water, which are gentle and calm.
- John 7:37 and 38 say: “On the last and greatest day of the festival, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, ‘Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them’.”
- When you examine the Gospel passage of John 7:37-38 in light of Psalm 23, what does it mean to you?
- Christ can provide that “living water”. All we have to do is believe.
- The multifaceted grace of God comes into our lives in different ways, according to how the Holy Spirit gives it, like streams that flow along different paths but have the same source.
- Neither the sheep nor you can get the water by yourselves. The water is supplied by the shepherd.
- The shepherd who owns the flock supplies everything.
- He guides us, with the help of the Holy Spirit and His Word, along the journey that leads us to Him and a strong relationship with him.

CONCLUSION:

- Women can live with confidence because God cares for, provides for, and protects his people.

Illustration:

In a mother's womb were two babies. One asked the other: "Do you believe in life after delivery?" The other replied, "Why, of course. There has to be something after delivery. Maybe we are here to prepare ourselves for what we will be later."

"Nonsense" said the first. "There is no life after delivery. What kind of life would that be?"

The second said, "I don't know, but there will be more light than here. Maybe we will walk with our legs and eat from our mouths. Maybe we will have other senses that we can't understand now."

The first replied, "That is absurd. Walking is impossible. And eating with our mouths? Ridiculous! The umbilical cord supplies nutrition and everything we need. But the umbilical cord is so short. Life after delivery is to be logically excluded."

The second insisted, "Well I think there is something and maybe it's different than it is here. Maybe we won't need this physical cord anymore."

The first replied, "Nonsense. And moreover, if there is life, then why has no one has ever come back from there? Delivery is the end of life, and in the after-delivery there is nothing but darkness and silence and oblivion. It takes us nowhere."

"Well, I don't know," said the second, "but certainly we will meet Mother and she will take care of us."

The first replied "Mother? You actually believe in Mother? That's laughable. If Mother exists, then where is She now?"

The second said, "She is all around us. We are surrounded by her. We are of Her. It is in Her that we live. Without Her this world would not and could not exist."

Said the first: "Well I don't see Her, so it is only logical that She doesn't exist."

To which the second replied, "Sometimes, when you're in silence and you focus and you really listen, you can perceive Her presence, and you can hear Her loving voice, calling down from above."

– a parable from Your Sacred Self by Dr. Wayne Dyer

ACTIVITY:

Read John 10. List characteristics of the good shepherd which are also attributes of God/Jesus.

What characteristics of sheep do humans also share? Read Isaiah 53:6, John 10:1-18, Psalm 49:13-15, Psalm 119:176, Jeremiah 50:6-7, Ezekiel 34:5-6, Zechariah 10:2, Matthew 9:36.

In what ways can I surrender to God and have contentment in my life?

Here are some links to songs inspired by this psalm:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A-qLa_2GPcM

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jAa2Pl0CjdY>



BIBLE STUDY #10: Psalm 15

THEME: *Authentic Heart!*

Introduction:

Psalm 15

A psalm of David

- Psalm 15 is a liturgical chant. It's called the "Entrance Liturgy," and it describes how we are to approach God in His Tabernacle. (The Tabernacle was a tent where God dwelt before the Temple was built). This was a common practice in many holy places and among many cults in the ancient world, and it was important to know what was expected before a worshiper could be admitted into a sanctuary.
- In the kingdom of God, the conditions of "entrance" have to do with the condition of the heart of the worshiper. A heart cleansed by the Lord has free entrance to the mountain of God.
- This psalm is about what a true believer needs to be on the inside, which will affect what they are like on the outside.
- Priests were not allowed to approach God with bad attitudes, or for personal gain, or as a mere ceremonial act; rather, they were to draw near to God with virtuous hearts (Leviticus 10; 22:2).
- For us, how we worship and behave towards God is key. Do we come before Him with a pure heart? Do we interact with others in a way that pleases God? Or does our personal agenda get in the way of his work in us? (Psalm 1; 24:3-6; 33:14 -16)

*v.1 Lord, who may dwell in your sacred tent?
Who may live on your holy mountain?*

- The psalm starts with two questions: Who may live in you sacred tent (Tabernacle)? Who my live on your holy mountain? Both are places where the glory of God was manifested.
- Where did King David find safety and peace? Close to God, under the shadow of his wings.
- Who may dwell? Where is your holy mountain? Jerusalem? Sinai?
- This psalm is an antiphonal chant, it was sung while walking towards the temple. The people asked the question and the priests answered.
- The words "dwell" and "live" are not referring to something that is temporary, having a beginning and an end, but to a permanent state.
- The mountain is declared "holy" as is the tabernacle (sacred tent).
- The question then leads us to think that whoever wants to live in one of these places must live up to God's standards (ceremonially clean). They could not have touched or come into contact with anyone or anything that was considered unclean.

*v.2 The one whose walk is blameless,
who does what is righteous,
who speaks the truth from their heart.*

The response of the priests (Positive actions):

- “whose walk is blameless and who does what is righteous.” These are not two separate things; they go hand in hand. To be blameless is internal holiness. Righteous is its outward manifestation. The psalmist does not say that those who dwell and live “are blameless”, but rather that their “walk is blameless”. This implies that the conduct and holy character of the person is expressed in their daily life.
- “speaks the truth.” The words of the one whose walk is blameless are well thought out, they are firm, not wavering, they come from the heart, they are truth.
- This response of the priests tells us about holy character.

*v.3 whose tongue utters no slander,
who does no wrong to a neighbor,
and casts no slur on others;*

The response of the priests (Negative actions):

- “utters no slander.” To slander is to make accusations against someone with a malicious intent to hurt them. It can include gossiping and spreading rumors to upset others. Can you give examples of types of slander.
- “who does no wrong to a neighbor”. The person who does no wrong measures the impact of his actions, words, and decisions on others. They don't change lanes without signaling. They don't leave the bright lights on at night (blinding the one whose coming towards them). They stay in the right lane if they are going slow.
- A neighbor could be someone who lives next to you, who is not going to move, who plays the music very loud, who parks their car in front of your house. A neighbor can also be a coworker, or a classmate. We are to love our neighbors.
- Selfishness and fear can lead us to make decisions that may harm others.

*v.4 who despises a vile person
but honors those who fear the Lord;
who keeps an oath even when it hurts,
and does not change their mind;*

- “...who despises a vile person.” They hold in contempt, reject (despise) those who are deliberately wicked, who have no morals. They reject sin and anything that goes against the laws of God. They do not exalt sinners.
- They honor, respect, recognize and hold in esteem the person who fears the Lord. In order to do this, they have to know how to discern between the life a sinner leads and the actions of a faithful person.
- The life of one who is faithful to God is not always understood, and their decisions do not always appear to be sympathetic. (Examples?)
- They tell the truth, even if it costs them.
- There is no wavering in this person.

v.5 who lends money to the poor without interest; who does not accept a bribe against the innocent. Whoever does these things will never be shaken.

- It was not uncommon in Bible times for money lenders to charge excessive interest rates. People who did this were taking advantage of others. This implies a lack of empathy on the lenders part.
- The psalmist is telling us that our way of doing business and managing money must be in obedience to God.
- There is nothing in my life that is separated or closed off from the Lord. He is Lord of all.
- “who does not accept a bribe against the innocent.” This refers to someone who might be tempted to take money to testify against someone who was innocent.
- “Whoever does these things will never be shaken.”
- The Living Bible translation says, “... such a man shall stand firm forever.”
- Remember, we are walking towards the sacred tent/the holy mountain (heaven) to live there, but our walk is crooked, we don't have enough strength, the wind knocks us down, we cannot climb the mountain, because we don't have the character to get there.
- Our walk isn't blameless, we are prevented from entering the sacred tent because of our sin. We haven't done what God requires.
- We can't reach the holy mountain because we slip up.
- This is where God's grace is evident, when we were slipping down the mountain, Christ came to get us out of the muddy hole of sin.
- Who then can dwell in his presence? No one can do it by their own strength.
- Only the one who responds to God's saving grace and lives a life that honors what Christ has done for him can dwell in the sacred tent/on the holy mountain.

QUESTIONS FOR TODAY:

- ? How do you feel when a Christian is dishonest or gossips about you? Why is this bad?
- ? How well can you relate to these principles from Psalm 15? Are they realistic and practical for us, today? Why or why not?
- ? Read James 2:14. Compare and contrast it with Psalm 15. How are they different? How are they the same?

Here are some links to songs inspired by this psalm:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qzk0JhJQmUk>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pc8_sMN3sEw



BIBLE STUDY #11: Psalm 1

THEME: *Women on the Authentic Path*

Introduction:

The psalms are more than a collection of worship songs. They were used in the Old Testament by the priests to lead the congregation in their worship to God and in the New Testament, the apostle Paul places them at the forefront of worship for the early church exhorting the Colossians and the Ephesians to sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs.

The Psalms talk about Christ, they point to Jesus, the Messiah, and the fulfillment of the psalms is in Christ as he himself said after his resurrection in Luke 24:44, "This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms."

Psalm 1 has no recorded author or date of origin. Perhaps it goes back to the first years of the pilgrimage of the Israelites through the desert. It begins with by teaching who will be blessed and goes on to make a contrast between two groups of people: the just and the wicked, those who are committed to God and those who have rejected God. For those committed to God there is great blessing, for those who reject God's offer of grace, there is a warning.

Today the Lord also presents us with two paths with the hope that we will choose the correct one, the one with the reward of authentic blessing.

I pray to God, the same God who inspired Psalm 1, that today he will inspire you to love the one who loves you more and that he will encourage you to follow him and do or go wherever he leads you to.

Hypothesis: There is only one path of blessing for everyone in this world.

What are the characteristics of the path of blessing?

PSALM 1:

I. It is a different path than the path of the world (v. 1-2)

Self-centeredness vs. the path to God

- The first word of the book of Psalms is "blessed". Although when we say it, it sounds like it's in the singular, but it's actually a plural noun.
- The first word of this psalm is "blessed" which begins with the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet, and the last word of this psalm is "perish" (or destruction depending on the translation) which starts with the last letter of the Hebrew alphabet. It is a deliberate and creative play on words.
- Blessed has nothing to do with self-focus, it has nothing to do with your happiness or pleasures, it has nothing to do with your feelings or personal disposition, it has nothing to do with your mental attitude, that is, it has nothing to do with circumstances nor with the feelings that you may be experiencing.
- "Blessed" here means perpetual blessings, or happiness. Happiness results from our choice to follow God's direction in our life.
- The word "blessed" speaks of a different path. The psalmist explains that the people of God cannot travel the same path as the world and cannot have the world as a teacher of life (e.g. Job did not take the advice of the world [Job 1:21-22]).
- There are blessed people and wicked people. The wicked are mentioned four times in this

psalm. Here we can see that there are multiple categories of evil people and only one category of blessed people.

- The psalmist, from his own experience, warns everyone not to “walk in step with the wicked” or other versions say, “take the advice of the wicked”. The word wicked comes from the Old English word “wicca” meaning wizard. In Leviticus God tells the Israelites to have nothing to do with wizards.
- That path of the wicked is of the “world” or of sin, and sin is deceitful. Sin distorts the thoughts of human beings and conspires to get their attention and make them fall.
- Some scholars say that the verbs in this portion of scripture, “walk”, “stand” and “sit”, denote three levels of estrangement from God and communion with the things of this world. Such as accepting the world's advice, sharing its desire to have “stuff”, and agreeing with the world's attitudes.
- The Word of God (law or torah) is a delight, it is a source of intense pleasure, it produces something extraordinary in the senses and lifts the spirits.
- Following the exclusive directions of God's Word brings us blessing.

II. God's way is productive (v. 3-4)

God supplies the optimal conditions for us to be productive and grow.

- The psalmist describes the path of blessing as one that involves processes that produce fruit.
- The blessed one is on a productive path: she is a tree planted by streams of water.
- It's understood that in order for a tree to bear fruit there must first be some work done; planting, care for, and giving the tree attention. The tree has been and is being tenderly cared for.
- The psalm does not refer to a wild tree. This tree was not planted randomly, it was planted in a chosen place, in a place near water where it can put down strong roots.
- The phrase "streams of water" serves as a metaphor to indicate the constant nourishment that the “water” supplies which is the Holy Spirit. In John 7:38-39a Jesus said, *“Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them. By this he meant the Spirit...”*
- Under the optimal conditions of divine provision, the blessed one *“is like a tree that has been planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season”*. It is productive, is not dry, and it will grow properly.
- The “streams of water”, the Holy Spirit and the “Law of the Lord”, the Word of God provide the best and necessary nutrients to sustain the “tree” that is the believer.
- It is the path to salvation, to hope. The leaf that does not wither prospers. The word prosper means to thrive; to flourish.

III. Walk with God for a blessed life (v. 5-6)

- This blessing is for those who turn to God, those who do not reject the law of the Lord and therefore face dire consequences.
- He says that they are like chaff (straw), chaff has no root, has no weight, it does not grow, it has no strength, or freshness. It bears no fruit.
- The chaff will be separated from the wheat in Matthew 3:12.
- Those who obey God's law are called righteous.

QUESTIONS FOR TODAY:

- ? Who are you? Who is God? How can I know God?
- ? Where can I find happiness? How can this psalm help me make good decisions?
- ? Which path should I choose in life?
- ? Do I want to see my life prosper, my marriage prosper, my children prosper, my job prosper, my home, how does God's Word make my life prosper?
- ? Do you think you lack something you need to be better?
- ? How can my life be fruitful?
- ? What does a life lived for God look like?

APPLICATION:

- * The first man and the first woman had the blessing that the psalmist describes, they knew God and walked with him when they lived in the Garden of Eden. They had a plentiful life, until they rebelled, disobeyed God, and ended up living among thorns and perishing.
- * Jesus offers a different path from that of the world, it is a path to blessing. He is the only way to the Father (John 14:6).
- * Jesus wants you to enjoy a truly blessed life.
- * You are NOT wild nor were you an accident. You were planted. And since you were planted, you were not left to chance, you were not planted just anywhere, you were planted next to streams of water in a good place to take root, nourished by the water of God's Word, and streams of the Holy Spirit, where you receive the best nutrients. This means that the one who planted you was God and the one who takes care of you and sustains you is God. He has done everything according to his purposes and he has a purpose for you here, where he has planted you. Are you carrying out the purpose for which he has planted you? Are you bearing fruit?
- * There is a direct relationship between following God and receiving God's blessings (Deuteronomy 27:11-28:6 and Matthew 5:3-11).
- * The woman who meditates on the Word of God day and night, allows the law of God to be the cornerstone of her thoughts, decisions, and actions. Therefore, no matter the context, no matter where she is, the blessed one responds to life according to the Word of God.
- * The "blessed one" who walks the authentic path (John 14:6-7; Matthew 7:14) will prosper and grow, she knows and obeys the Word of God.
- * He who delights in the Gospel message prospers.
- * In essence this psalm presents us with two paths we can follow; one leads to blessings, delight, and what we do will prosper, but the other leads to curses, unhappiness, and destruction.
- * The path to blessing is available to us through the grace of God and by believing in Christ.
- * When you follow the blessed path, the Holy Spirit can fill you and give you a transformed mind to respond differently to the demands of the world.
- * Today you can begin along this path that is Jesus, you can also renew yourself in Him.
- * God will help all those who want to escape from the wrong path.
- * God will also help all those who want to establish themselves on the right path and who want to delight in his Word.
- * The Lord provides you with everything you need to bear fruit and prosper spiritually.

Conclusion:

Today is a good time to be blessed and start walking along the right path.

If you have already been walking on the path of God's grace for some time, today you can renew your commitment and receive the refreshment from the streams of water that the Holy Spirit brings to the life of the blessed. God provides a new path so that sinners can return to him, Jesus is the Way. By his grace, Jesus paid for our sins so that we would not have to pay, and we can receive full forgiveness and a clean heart to live as blessed children of God.

We need to come to the new path that is Christ and begin our journey. If we have already started our journey, we can continue to delight ourselves in the Word of God and be fruitful in his kingdom. Just as the path of evil progressively leads us along a path of rebellion and away from God, so also being on the right path brings us closer to God and our relationship with him grows closer every day. We will be planted, bear fruit, and prosper. This is the progression in a relationship with God in everyone's life as we are shaped to the image and character of Jesus. Isaiah calls this the Path of Holiness and says the unclean will not walk on it, only the redeemed will walk there. "Gladness and joy will overtake them, and sorrow and sighing will flee away" (Isaiah 35:8).

Here are some links to songs inspired by this psalm:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8yUcC93khzU>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bfo7ulAOdZg>



BIBLE STUDY #12: Psalm 19

THEME: *Worshipping Authentically!*

Introduction:

The psalmist's life was completely transformed by God upon seeing the glory of God in his creation and his Word. My hope is that we will be transformed by the power of the Holy Spirit of the Lord; that he will work through the message of his Word. I hope that you will allow God to work in your heart because he wants to be the center of your life, to transform your whole life, your house and your family. Let us focus only on God as he is revealed in his Word. I hope that you will return to the study of God's Word. I fear that many of God's people are not studying the Bible, but are listening to what someone else studied from the Bible, and they're not giving themselves up to the worship of God through his Word. I want to encourage you today to resume the study of God's Word as part of a life of worship. Psalm 19 shows us the kind of worship that God accepts and how God transforms us through his Mighty Word.

Do you need a change of vision? When you see the glory of God, and focus on the message of his Word, you will find the lasting change you are looking for. Some have attended the church for many years, perhaps they have become so familiar with the things of God, with nature, and perhaps even with the Bible itself, that they have forgotten how glorious God really is.

This is similar to what sometimes happens to us Puerto Ricans who live on this beautiful and wonderful island. I was looking at a list of the top ten most beautiful beaches in the world, some of which are on my island. But those of us who live here are so used to seeing them that sometimes their beauty goes unnoticed. However, recently the Encuentro team was here, and we took them to the beach. We couldn't take them to the most beautiful beaches because we didn't have much time and they are a bit far away. However, when they climbed the dunes and saw the calm blue sea, their jaws dropped. They were impressed with our beach.

They saw the glory of God. The beauty of our beach is so familiar that we take it for granted, but evidently the fingerprints of a careful and truly involved Creator are illustrated in the beautiful landscape that we had in front of us.

Let's see how the psalmist saw it, beginning with the proclamation of the Majesty of God as seen through all that he has created (vv. 1-6). Then we see the celebration of the Word of the God of grace. And finally, the psalmist is confronted by God's Word, inviting him to sanctification, meditation and repentance (v. 14) because in the end everything points to a new life provided by the love of God.

Hypothesis: The revelation of God in creation and in his Word demands a response of worship.

ANALYSIS OF THE VERSE:

I. God is revealed in the glory of His creation (v. 1-6).

- Imagine the psalmist, the shepherd, the musician, the worshipper, outside contemplating the brilliant starry night that is created by God.
- God has not stayed aloof.
- For the Psalmist, creation bears witness not only to the existence and majesty of God, but also to his creative nature and his power.
- The psalmist looks at the heavens and says that the vast expanse of stars and galaxies is there for a purpose, it is not just static material, but they are declaring the glory of God.
- For the psalmist, God is the artist, and the heavens are his work of art.

- Through His creation, God's voice is proclaimed over all the earth. His message is universal, it is for everyone. God's influence, glory, and presence are all around us.
- The rising and setting of the Sun is a hymn to the glory of God.
- What does glory mean? In the most basic sense, glory means great praise, honor, resplendent beauty, or magnificence. The heavens are literally declaring the magnificence of God, the significance of his work, and the importance of who God is.

II. God is revealed in his laws, statutes, precepts, commands, and decrees (v. 7 –9)

- In Psalm 19 all the expressions used to describe the law, statutes, etc. of God are affirming.
- The life that God gives humanity is a good life, an abundant life, a life of freedom, a peaceful life, a holy life, and the psalmist expresses it this way.
- The Word of the Lord is faithful. It is practical and safe. It is the foundation of life. Scientists have many theories, but life is only found in God and his Word (his law, his statutes, his precepts, his commands, his decrees), especially as they are interpreted by Jesus. God's Word is love.
- God's law and statutes give us direction to life. God's precepts are superior to any opinion (they are right, giving joy to the heart). The psalmist considers God's commands and decrees. "You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself an image [idol]... You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God... Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy... Honor your father and mother ... You shall not murder. You shall not commit adultery. You shall not steal. You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor. You shall not covet your neighbor's house." (Exodus 20:3-17a).
- Which of these is confusing? Which one don't you understand?
- Jesus simplifies it when he said, love God and love your neighbor as yourself. These are enough to clarify our priorities.
- The fear of the Lord is pure. The person who fears the Lord will obey His laws. This is not a fear of impending danger, evil or pain, this to have reverential awe of.
- The Lord's decrees teach us to discern and how to choose between good and evil. They are truth that guides our moral compass to live life in its entirety.
- The Holy Scriptures have a purpose, they teach us how to live a life that glorifies God and they testify about Jesus (John 5:39).

III. God is revealed in His Word which leads us to repentance and worship (v. 10-14)

- Psalm 19 invites you to respond personally.
- The Psalmist understood that his own heart hides "things" (v. 12).
- The Psalmist recognizes that only God can truly know him and deliver him from evil, even from his own evil.
- The psalmist sees the contrast between the order of all creation and his disorderly life, so he turns to God to be redeemed, that is, rescued from his sinful condition.
- God's Word reveals God's love for us and his desire for us to be his children, which leads us to repentance and worship. We see it in the adulterous woman in John 8:1-11, the possessed man in Mark 5:1-20, the apostles of Jesus, Nicodemus, Paul, and many others.
- Christ is the fulfillment of the law for everyone who believes (Romans 10:4).

QUESTIONS FOR TODAY:

Someone said that sin has a way of shrinking God in our minds and puffing us up in our own opinion. But the Bible teaches us that one look at his creation can change our perspective of God and of life in general in a heartbeat.

Let me ask you:

1. Is the way you see God worthy of what the heavens say it is?
2. Is your daily life consumed by the distractions of life or by worshipping the glory of God?
3. How does the law of the Lord refresh the soul?
4. How does God's statutes make the simple wise?
5. How do God's precepts give joy to the heart and make our hearts rejoice?
6. How do the commands of the Lord give light to the eyes (make things clear)?
7. Do you have "things" hidden in your heart?

APPLICATION:

- ★ By observing nature, we are receiving the wordless witness of God through His creation, which gives credibility and clarity to God's written Word.
- ★ For the psalmist, seeing creation was like reading Genesis 1, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." The psalmist looks at the sky and sees a God who spared no resources in his creativity, who did not create a small heaven.
- ★ Our solar system is only a small part of the Milky Way galaxy. And it is already known that there are millions of millions of galaxies in the universe, all created by God.
- ★ The existence of day and night is speaking to you. The celestial bodies are not indicators of your destiny; they are made by the hand of God.
- ★ People in ancient times looked to astrology and refused to look at God. The woman who seeks God does not look for happiness or destiny anywhere else, only through the Word of God.
- ★ As women, we like to have everything in order, because we learned it from our Heavenly Father. In nature there is an order that points to the Creator.
- ★ God clearly reveals himself to us and teaches us through his Word. People try to hide his truth, but God has always allowed himself to be clearly seen and understood through his creation (e.g. Romans 1:19-20).
- ★ We are truly blessed to have such an abundance of God's revelation and we can't say, "I just didn't know."
- ★ God is revealing himself to all people even before they hear his voice or read the Bible (prevenient grace). By reading the Bible God continues to reveal himself and, every day, he reminds us of His message in creation, which is His Glory.
- ★ God is not hidden, even the heavens declare His glory. Day by day His grace continues to invite us to worship.
- ★ When you look at creation, you should see the word "GLORIA".
- ★ Ask the wife of the alcoholic who has stopped drinking, how has she learned to appreciate God's law? Talk to the woman who has managed to keep her marriage together despite serious conflicts and she will tell you that God truly changed her life. They were dead in their sins and the Lord brought them back to life, he revived their souls.
- ★ When women come to the Lord hurt, the Lord refreshes them through his Word, when they come bruised the law of his love restores them.

- ★ The Word of God is a GPS for our lives. There are times when the desires of a woman's heart are the complete opposite of the direction in which God would guide her, but the perfect path is God's path (Matthew 7:13-14).
- ★ God's commandments shed light in the midst of darkness. They enlighten our eyes, they remove confusion, they remove doubt (Psalm 19:8).
- ★ The God-fearing woman will be open to God's instruction.
- ★ The worshipping woman is reverent before God. Reverence for God helps us build solid and stable lives which will help us through life's difficulties.
- ★ When it would be easy to give in to temptation or despair, our reverence (fear, awe) of God can keep us from falling (Proverbs 1:7).
- ★ The one who does not fear God is corrupt, the one who does fear God is holy; the one who does not fear God has no shame, the one who does fear God obeys; the one who does not fear God is arrogant, the one who does fear God is humble.
- ★ The psalmist says that God's Word is sweeter than honey. In Old Testament times, they didn't use sugar as a sweetener, they used honey.
- ★ Honey becomes a metaphor for the sweetness and abundance of God's grace that we receive through his Word.
- ★ All of Old Testament Scripture points to Jesus!
- ★ Jesus is the ultimate message of God's revelation to the world through his holy Word. We can find the path to life in God's Word. The path to eternal life is through Jesus.
- ★ The "sweetness" of God's Word, (His law, statutes, precepts, commands, decrees) is the promises of God and everything concerning our (mankind's) fellowship with Him and the promise of salvation through Christ.

Conclusion:

God's Word is used by the Holy Spirit to prescribe us directions for life. For example: Doctors sometimes prescribe us medicine and tell us to take all of it until it is finished, because if we don't, we could relapse. So, we take the medicine, or at least we should take it.

Likewise, the prescription for the life of the believer is to worship God through daily reading and meditating on the Word of God so we can know His word, not just for today, but for a lifetime! And in knowing God's Word we will get to know Jesus and grow our relationship with Him.

Today you are invited to begin to meditate on the Bible, to reflect on Christ and His teachings, to be aware of the reality of his presence. Look to the Word of God to receive the grace of repentance and to grow in faith. You are invited to surrender in worship to the Lord as he is molding you to be more like him every day. Authentically worship God in every aspect of your life.

Below are some links to songs inspired by this psalm.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W63PVM5AuZU>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sJNnPbKu6tw> (Psalm 19a)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NedPq_bkNL8 (Psalm 19b)

GAMES



Games and Icebreakers

Games and icebreakers provide great opportunities for the women in your group to relax, laugh, and discover shared interests and experiences.

Use them to:

encourage conversation,
break the ice,
lighten the mood,
inject some fun.

Games and icebreakers should not:

be boring,
exclude anyone,
cause division.

What's on your phone?

Give yourself one (1) point for each item found on your phone.

Contacts

- Starts With the Letter "O"
- Every School My Children Attend
- Every Doctor Our Family Visits
- Restaurant

Photos

- Meal I Ate
- Wedding
- Selfie
- Rainbow
- Flower
- Animal (not a dog or cat)

Songs (On Your Phones Playlist)

- From a Musical
- From the 80's
- Classical
- Starts with the Letter "L"

Texts (Sent or Received)

- Bible Verse
- Grocery List
- Directions
- Gibberish (Nonsense)

Apps

- Games
- Social Media
- Weather
- Bible
- Shopping
- Music

Other

- Set Alarm
- Screenshot of a Recipe
- Book

I PREFER...

To play this game, divide those participating into groups of 3 or 4. You will need to print a worksheet for each member of the group. First, each person will write their name in the box under what they prefer. (For example: if I prefer to Lead Prayer rather than Lead a Bible Study, I will put my name in the box that says "Lead Prayer"). Then, they will write the names of the members of their group in the boxes that they think each person prefers. (You could write the names of each member on the sheet before making copies.)

If you're feeling especially competitive, you could award 1 point for each correct answer. The person who is able to make the most accurate number of guesses about what their group members prefer will receive bragging rights or a small prize.

Lead a Bible Study	Lead Prayer
Listen to the Teachings of Jesus	Watch the Miracles of Jesus
Read the Bible in A Year	Memorize 30 Bible Verses
Study the Bible Book By Book	Study the Bible By Topic
To Be Like Martha	To Be Like Mary
The Old Testament	The New Testament
Contemporary Choruses	Classic Hymns
Christmas	Easter
Share my Testimony	Invite New People to Church
Serve My Neighbor	Serve in Missions