

Youth Teaching Resources

January 20, 2019



Epiphany (January 6-March 3)

What Are We Praying For?

Psalm 72 (RCL 1-7, 10-14) – “A Prayer for Justice”

Psalm 29 – “A Prayer for Peace”

Psalm 36 (RCL 5-10) – “A Prayer for Love”

Psalm 19 – “A Prayer for Goodness”

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Find links and videos related to this lesson.

A Prayer for Love

Psalm 36 (RCL 5-10)

YOUTH Teaching Guide

by Jeremy Colliver

This youth teaching outline is designed to support THE BIBLE LESSON by Tony Cartlege, printed in *Baptists Today*. You can subscribe to either the digital or print edition of *Baptists Today* to access the lessons. Please also ensure that each person in your class has a copy of *Baptists Today* so they can prepare before the lesson.

PARENT PREP

Not everyone your student meets will have the best intentions for them. In fact, some of them might come across as flat out wicked and try and use your student. So how do you prepare your students for this? How do you live out “Do to others as you would have them do to you.” Think about this: have your students flip the question around...would the other person want this done to them?

TEACHING THE LESSON

Fellowship

Begin your session by showing the clip “Rey vs Kylo Ren” from *Star Wars VII: The Force Awakens*. If you are unable to show the clip, summarize it to the best of your ability, and then facilitate a discussion using questions like the following:

- 1) How does Rey get the lightsaber?
- 2) What does Kylo Ren tell Rey she needs a teacher?
- 3) How does Rey overcome Kylo Ren’s wickedness?
- 4) What do you do with wickedness when you are confronted with it?
- 5) How does your faith call you to respond to wickedness?

Information

Transition to the next section of the session by reading Psalm 36. Allow the students to ask any initial questions they have about the text. As you answer their questions, you may want to provide some of the information found in Tony’s commentary to answer their questions. When the students have had an opportunity to share their initial thoughts, continue the discussion by facilitating a discussion using questions like the following:

- 1) What is the psalmist’s opinion of the wicked?
- 2) How does the psalmist describe God in this psalm?
- 3) Where is God present?
- 4) How does the psalmist bring the wicked and God together in the final three verses? What will happen with the wicked?

Information *continued*

If your group would like to dig deeper in their discussion, share some of the insights that Tony provides in the “Digging Deeper” portion of his commentary. You may want to use some questions like the following to facilitate your discussion:

- 1) Who wrote Psalm 36? Does it matter who wrote it?

You may also want your group to discuss “The Hardest Question” if they would like to continue their discussion on this passage. Tony poses the following question to consider as “The Hardest Question”: How would Jesus have us respond to people who harm us?

Transformation

Conclude your session by creating small groups of three or four people. Have the small groups ask and answer the following questions:

- 1) Have you ever been bullied? How did the situation occur?
- 2) How did the bullying stop?
- 3) How can you help stop bullying?
- 4) How can you prevent bullying from even starting?
- 5) How can you stand up to people who are after you for the wrong reasons?

After the small groups have had a chance to share their responses with each other, allow time for groups to share what they talked about with the larger group.

Close with a prayer thanking God for the strength to stand up to those people who want to use us for the wrong reasons.

Digging Deeper

by Tony Cartlege

Digging Deeper is designed to support THE BIBLE LESSON by Tony Cartlege, printed in *Nurturing Faith Journal*. Watch for the “shovel” icon in the THE BIBLE LESSON, and then reference that item in this Digging Deeper resource. You can subscribe to either the digital or print edition of *Nurturing Faith Journal* to access the lessons. Please also ensure that each person in your class has a copy of *Nurturing Faith Journal* so they can prepare before the lesson.

The Text—The Revised Common Lectionary text excerpts vv. 5-10 from the psalm, which is fine for public reading alone, but not as appropriate for Bible study. Verses 1-4 and 11-12 strike what appears to be a different theme, but their appearance both before and after the central section of praise makes it clear that the author (or the final editor) wanted to include both messages in the psalm.

Was David the author? The superscription of Psalm 36, added at some point in the scribal tradition, says “To the leader. Of David, the servant of the LORD.”

The tradition that David wrote many of the psalms is quite old, but the Bible makes no claim that he wrote them all. Texts such as 1 Chronicles 16, 2 Chronicles 29:25-30, and Ezra 3:10 all associate David with the establishment of music as an integral part of Israel’s worship, but he is properly seen as a patron and encourager of Israel’s music and liturgy, not its sole author.

No less than 116 of the psalms have superscriptions in the Hebrew text, including 87 of the first 100. These are old traditions but not as old as the psalms themselves: they were added by later scribes and should not be considered a part of the original text. In some cases, what appears to be a superscription for one psalm may originally have been a postscript for the previous one. In the Septuagint (an early translation into Greek), other superscriptions were added to all but the first two psalms. The superscriptions appear to give instructions to the musicians or song leaders regarding which instruments or tune is to be played.

Among the superscriptions, 101 include attributive names, and *l’david* appears 73 times. This doesn’t necessarily mean “by David,” however. The Hebrew prefix *l* more typically means “to” or “for,” rather than “by.” It could mean “of” in reference to a collection. Psalms are also attributed to (or for) Asaph (12), the sons of Korah (11), and Solomon (2), plus Heman, Ethan and Moses (1 each).

More on translating verse 1—Here’s a more detailed description of the difficulty in translating v. 1.

The Hebrew text numbers the superscription as v. 1, and begins v. 2 with the word for “oracle” (*ne’um*), connected to the word meaning “transgression” by a hyphen known as a *maqgef*. If we read it that way, we get something like “An oracle of transgression to/for the wicked is in the midst of my heart,” which may suggest that the psalmist is inspired to utter an oracle against the wicked. The NIV 11 follows this reading: “I have a message from God in my heart concerning the sinfulness of the wicked . . .”

Digging Deeper *continued*

This seems a bit forced. Keeping in mind that verse numbers and punctuation were added long after the text was first written, others judge that the word for “oracle” should be read as the last word of the superscription, beginning the psalm with “An oracle.” A similar occurrence is found in 2 Samuel 23:1.

Some spell out the word “oracle” (as NET), while others don’t translate it at all (NRSV). With support from the Septuagint, Syriac, and Vulgate (all early translations) and several Medieval Hebrew manuscripts, some readers also emend “my heart” to “his heart,” a change of one letter.

The NRSV version reads the pronouns as an inclusive plural (so as not to imply that only men are wicked) and presents transgression as a personified force that “speaks to the wicked deep in their hearts; there is no fear of God before their eyes” (v. 1).

The NET puts it in more modern language while keeping the singular and gender-specific pronouns: “An evil man is rebellious to the core. He does not fear God.”

Either way we read it, it’s clear that the writer has a low opinion of evil people.

Another option—A less-likely scenario to explain the presence of v. 12 is that the psalmist’s oppressors did indeed meet with judgment of some sort, and the verse was added as a later note of triumph.

The Hardest Question

by Tony Cartlege

The Hardest Question is designed to support THE BIBLE LESSON by Tony Cartlege, printed in *Nurturing Faith Journal*. You can subscribe to either the digital or print edition of *Nurturing Faith Journal* to access the lessons. Please also ensure that each person in your class has a copy of *Nurturing Faith Journal* so they can prepare before the lesson.

How would Jesus have us respond to people who harm us?

Jesus famously took current attitudes based on old traditions – even Old Testament traditions – and turned them topsy-turvy. In the midst of his “Sermon on the Mount,” Matthew’s gospel records him as speaking very firm words about how his followers should respond to those who were callous or hurtful toward them:

“You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.’ But I say to you, Do not resist an evildoer. But if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other also; and if anyone wants to sue you and take your coat, give your cloak as well; and if anyone forces you to go one mile, go also the second mile. 42 Give to everyone who begs from you, and do not refuse anyone who wants to borrow from you.

“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be children of your Father in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet only your brothers and sisters, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.
(Matt. 5:38-48)

Luke’s version occurs in his “Sermon on the Plain,” similar to the “Sermon on the Mount” in Matthew. An abbreviated version of both Beatitudes and Woes appears in Luke 6:20-26, followed by these words of instruction, which appear a bit more gentle than Matthew’s account, but remain incredibly challenging.

“But I say to you that listen, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. If anyone strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also; and from anyone who takes away your coat do not withhold even your shirt. Give to everyone who begs from you; and if anyone takes away your goods, do not ask for them again. Do to others as you would have them do to you.

“If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them” (Luke 6:27-32).

The Hardest Question *continued*

There is no question that Jesus' commands to love and do good even to the meanest people are hard to follow. And, they do not mean we are to become masochists or go out of our way to let others hurt us. Nor does it mean that weaker people in real danger of harm cannot defend themselves or seek help: Jesus would certainly not advise children or spouses subject to domestic abuse to just "put up with it," despite the claims of some fundamentalist leaders that women should willingly suffer abuse and simply pray for their husbands to be convicted.

Jesus' teaching should be understood as a general principle: believers should always stand up for what is right and work for what is good, but do it with love.