

Youth Teaching Resources

January 27, 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”

www.nurturingfaith.net

Subscribe to *Nurturing Faith* to access the core Bible content for this lesson.

Find links and videos related to this lesson.

A Prayer for Goodness

Psalm 19

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

Our students have a lot of competing voices in their heads vying for time and space to be heard. Some of what they hear is subconsciously heard and some is overtly heard. Either way, what they hear influences who they are and what they do. There aren't many times when I students stand up and say "I heard from God today," but there are ways in which God still communicates with them. Many times it is as simple as translating what is being done and helping them realize that it was God speaking to them through someone or something else.

TEACHING THE LESSON

Fellowship

Begin your session by showing the clip "God is trying to tell you something" from *The Color Purple*. 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 God speak to the people out by the lake?
- 2) How does God speak to the pastor?
- 3) What is God trying to tell the two different groups?
- 4) Have you heard God speak to you? If so, in what way did you hear God?

Information

Transition to the next section of the session by reading Psalm 19. 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 trying to tell the hearers of this psalm?
- 2) How does the psalmist reveal that God speaks to people?
- 3) How can God speak to people without using words?
- 4) What was the purpose of the law of God for the people of Israel?
- 5) How do the laws of God reveal who God is?

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) What do the repeating lines in Psalm 19 reveal about God? Why would the psalmist repeat this idea?

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 many ways can you say law?

Transformation

Conclude your time together by leading your group through the ancient practice of *Lectio Divina*. If you are unfamiliar with leading a group through this practice, familiarize yourself with the practice before leading your group through the experience. Use Psalm 19 as the passage for your group as you experience *Lectio Divina*. After completing the exercise, allow students to share what they heard from God.

Close with a prayer thanking God for speaking to us in ways that we can understand.

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 first time—Can you remember the first time you flew on a jet plane that flew above the clouds? I will never forget the first time I flew. It was 1971, and I was en route to BSU summer missions orientation at what was then the Foreign Mission Board in Richmond, Va. As the Braniff jet and burst through a thick layer of cumulous clouds and flew among the giant columns of fluffy white vapor, I imagined angel children hopping from one cloud to the next. When one has a heart for sensing God’s presence, few places speak louder than the sky.

A numbering conundrum—It is not unusual for psalms to be combined or split apart over time. For example, in the predominant Hebrew text of the Old Testament (called the Masoretic Text, or MT), Psalms 9 and 10 appear as two psalms, but in the early Greek translation known as the Septuagint (LXX), they appear as one. Likewise, Psalms 114 and 115 in Hebrew appear as Psalm 113 in the Greek. But, Psalm 116 in Hebrew is divided into two psalms (114 and 115) in the LXX, and Psalm 147 appears as Psalms 146 and 147. The LXX also contains a psalm not found in the Hebrew Bible, numbered as Psalm 151.

A second numbering oddity is that the verse numbers are different in Hebrew and English. The Hebrew text counts the superscription as a verse, so that v. 1 of the English text is actually v. 2 in the Hebrew version, which has 15 verses instead of 14. In the commentary, we’ll use the English verses.

Repeating ones’ self—The basic characteristic of Hebrew poetry is repetition between two or three lines of a verse. Scholars refer to this as “parallelism,” though it does not always indicate the repetition of the same thought: we find cases in which the second line repeats the first line in different words (synonymous parallelism), the second line states something opposite of the first (antithetic parallelism), or in which the second line expands upon the first or expresses a related thought (synthetic or formal parallelism).

Examine the parallelism of Psalm 19. Which type is most common?

Gushing speech—The verb behind “pours forth” usually means something like “gushes forth,” like a powerful spring of water emerging from the earth.

Digging Deeper *continued*

Starlight—I can remember, as a boy, going into the backyard of our country home and looking into a sky filled with stars, with the Milky Way being a distinct and very visible band. Most of us live in urban settings now, or have outdoor lights even in rural areas, and such sights are harder to see.

I recall an amazing, cold night in Armenia when some companions and I made our way through a mountainous region. At 2:00 a.m., we stopped for a break at about 10,000 feet. With no light pollution from below and less atmosphere above, the sky seemed to explode with more stars than I had ever seen. It's no wonder the ancients – who had no TV or other electronic devices – spent much of their time stargazing.

Great transgression—The expression at the end of v. 13 could be translated as “great transgression” (NRSV) or as something like “blatant rebellion” (NET). The word translated as “great” could also mean “many,” but the noun is singular, indicating a characteristic state of transgression or rebellion, rather than a single horrid act.

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 many ways can you say “law”?

In vv. 7-9, the psalmist uses five different words to describe God’s revelation of rules to live by for those who want to have a right relationship with God.

The first is *torah*, the same word Jews use to describe the first five books of the Bible, also known as “the law.” It is a general word, while the synonyms that follow have more specific attributes.

The word for “decrees” (*’edut*) can be translated as “testimony,” “law,” or “decree.” It carries the sense of a rule being given by God.

“Precepts” (*piqqudim*) comes from a word describing a person who has been appointed as an overseer. In this sense, precepts are guide to proper behavior, appointed by God.

“Commandment” (*mitzwah*) means what it says. The psalmist uses the singular form, giving it a collective sense. “The commandment of the LORD” comprises all of God’s commandments, and not just the 10 spelled out in Exodus 20.

The word “ordinances” in v. 9 translates the plural form of the word *mishpat*, which typically means “justice.” It is the judgment of a judge (*shaphat*). As court rulings can become the basis on which laws are interpreted, the judgments of God determine proper behavior: to follow them is to “do justice,” as Micah 6:8 encourages us to do.

Some writers read *marot* in place of *yir’at* in v. 9, assuming an error in the copying of the text. Coming as it does in the midst of a sequence of synonyms for the law, one would expect to see another synonym, rather than “fear of.” The proposed *marot* means “utterances.” The statement that it is pure and endures forever fits better with an expression like “utterances of the LORD” than “fear of the LORD.” (for the alternate reading, see John Durham, “Psalms,” in the *Broadman Bible Commentary* Vol. 4 [Broadman Press, 1971], 208).

The English language has even more words to describe the law, or laws. In addition to the words above, we may speak of acts, edicts, rules, regulations, dictums, orders, pronouncements, injunctions, directives, principles, and more. The words are different, but the idea is the same. Though a free people, we are not free to do as we please: there are laws to guide our behavior in ways that are beneficial for individuals and for society as a whole.

We may shake our heads at the some of the strange legalisms that may affect (or afflict) life in our city, state, or nation. And, we may look askance at some of the peculiar rules that the rabbis concocted in an effort to “build a hedge about the law” to try and keep people from breaking the bigger laws.

The Hardest Question *continued*

When we think about the laws, precepts, or principles that God has revealed in nature and in our hearts, however, the proper response is not a shaking of the head, but obedience from the heart.