

Adult Teaching Resources

September 1, 2024



Some Things Never Change

September 1, 2024—Psalm 15—Who Gets Close to God?

September 8, 2024—Psalm 125—Presuppositions and Prayer

September 15, 2024—Psalm 116 (RCL 16:1-9)—When the Answer Is Yes

September 22, 2024—Psalm 54—Same Old Same Old?

September 29, 2024—Esther 7:1-10, 9:20-22—Celebrating Vengeance?

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Who Gets Close to God?

Psalm 15

FIT Teaching Guide

by David Woody

This adult teaching outline is designed to support THE BIBLE LESSON by Tony Cartledge, 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.

Key Verse

O LORD, who may abide in your tent?

Who may dwell on your holy hill? (Ps. 15:1)

Opening

After everyone arrives, form smaller groups of 3-4. As each group gets settled, give each group a piece of paper. Ask each group to think about what it means to gather for worship and the attitude and intentionality folks should have when they worship. Ask them to write down their list of expectations and behaviors that should be followed in worship—both from the individual standpoint and the corporate standpoint. For example, how should an individual behave in worship? What should the group attitude be in worship?

Give each group time to create their list. Then, have each group share what they have written. Discuss each group's list, especially as it relates to gathering for worship today.

What on the list(s) do you think should be expected for worship?

What on the list(s) do you think should be removed from worship?

How much from these lists do we actually follow?

What is the ideal list of expectations and behaviors we should follow as we worship God?

Spend time in conversation and discussion before moving the Bible.

Reading the Bible

What is the psalmist concerned about? (Who may abide in God's tent? Who may dwell on God's holy hill?)

How will they be know by their actions and words? (Those who walk blamelessly and do what is right and speak the truth from their heart)

How do they talk about others? (They do not slander with their tongues)

How do they treat their friends? (They do no evil to their friends)

How do they treat their neighbors? (They heap no shame upon their neighbors)

How are the wicked viewed? (The wicked are despised)

Reading the Bible *continued*

Who are the righteous? (Those who fear the Lord; who stand by their oath even to their hurt)

How do they treat money matters? (They do not lend money at interest and do not take a bribe against the innocent)

What will happen to those that live this way? (They shall not be moved)

Making Connections

Who do you like to keep company with? Who do you like to hang around? What qualities do they possess? What outlook on life do they have? What is their philosophy and theology? What is it about them that you like so much

Where do you most often experience God's presence? How often are you able to be in that place?

What do you think it means to "walk blamelessly?" How do we know when we walk that way?

How do we know what is right and what is wrong? How much of that is learned from books and outside sources? How much of that is wired into our DNA?

Our Lesson Writer says, "Walking rightly before God is not a performance of duty, but the living out of a relationship of grace, a result of knowing God's spirit." What do you think?

How should we behave when relating with others who aren't believers and aren't living the same way we are? What do our actions toward others reveal about our relationship with God?

How often do we speak the truth from our heart? Why is that?

How do we know what is truth and how do we know what is deceit? How can we be faithful to the truth?

Our Lesson Writer says, "Those who know God's presence speak truth not from fear, but because it is in their nature: it comes 'from the heart.'" When have you had the courage to speak the truth that comes from God? What did you say? How was it received? Why do you think fear is a part of speaking the truth?

Does the heart lie? Why do you say that?

How do you want to be treated and spoken about by those who know you? Why is that? How do you treat and speak about those around you? Do you treat others the same way, or even better, than you are treated?

What are some ways we exploit the poor? What are some ways we can change that?

What responsibilities do we have to loving and treating those around us? How can we live more into those responsibilities?

So What?

Gather back in the small groups from the beginning of class. Once settled, ask each group to think about today's psalm and think about our current situation in the world. If they were the psalmist, writing for generations to come about living righteously in order to experience God's presence, what would they write?

What do you think we need to do, say, act, believe in order to experience God's presence in our lives?

What ethical requirements do you think are necessary in order to be in front of God?

How are we to treat ourselves?

How are we to treat others?

How are we to treat God?

What words of wisdom do you think needs to be passed on to future generations?

Give each group time to share within their small group, then open the floor for larger group conversation and discussion, spending time digging deeper into the answers given.

The Challenge

This week, pick one section of our psalm and do the best you can to live it out everyday of the week. For example, if you choose to walk blamelessly, do your very best to do everything in the way of God, so that God can find no fault with you.

Prayer

Loving God, thank you for giving us the way to live so that we might prepare ourselves to experience your presence. Give us the strength and endurance to live in your way so that we have nothing to be afraid of, but having the confidence that we are doing things right. Forgive us when we fall. Restore us as we keep trying. Amen.

Digging Deeper

by Tony Cartledge

Digging Deeper is designed to support THE BIBLE LESSON by Tony Cartledge, 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.

Tents—Traditions vary concerning the wilderness “tent of meeting.” Most often, it seems to be synonymous with the tabernacle said to be located in the center of the tribal encampments, where the ark was kept and sacrifices were offered (Exod. 27:21; 28:43; 29:4, 10, 30, and many more). Another tradition, however, describes it as a separate tent that Moses pitched outside of the camp and repaired to when he wanted to commune with God (Exod. 33:7-11).

An old problem—Interest gouging is not a new phenomenon. Nuzi tablets from ancient Iraq, among other cuneiform documents, show that interest rates of 33 percent to 50 percent were not uncommon in the ancient Near East.

In Israel, wealthy landowners commonly charged high interest on loans to destitute neighbors. When they were unable to pay, their homes and lands could be confiscated. Sometimes, the poor themselves were sold into slavery to pay their debts. The prophets routinely and roundly condemned such practices (e.g., Mic. 2:1-2, Isa. 5:8).

The Hardest Question

by Tony Cartledge

The Hardest Question is designed to support THE BIBLE LESSON by Tony Cartledge, 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.

Are we complicit in the exploitation of the poor?

Unconscious complicity is a hard thing to think about, so we usually don't. We don't like to consider ways in which we may have profited—and continue to benefit—from the oppression of others.

Consider the antebellum mansions found in many southern towns, often with names like the “Historic (family name) House.” A sign may credit the original owners with contributions to the town, land for a park, the building of churches, or other charitable efforts. Local schools may be named for them. What is overlooked is that the benefactors' wealth may have been gained largely through slave labor, which involved robbing human beings of their freedom, buying and selling them like cattle, and forcing them into a hard life of hard labor and poverty.

Current generations may continue to benefit from the economic development or donations made in those past eras without ever thinking about many people suffered to make it possible.

In a broader sense, even after slavery was officially abolished, white families through the years have benefited from the privileges of being white and having greater financial or political resources. Discriminatory laws and practices have led to generational divides between those born with and without such privilege, and promoters of white nationalism desperately seek to maintain their positions of power.

Similar exploitation continues. Untold millions of people born into poverty have little chance of escaping because economic systems are designed to benefit the wealthy on the backs of the poor. Poorly educated or less privileged people, no matter their ethnic background, are often stuck in minimum wage jobs find it extremely difficult to get ahead. They are much less likely to ever own a home or put away savings for a comfortable retirement. Meanwhile, those of us who are better off benefit from cheap fast food and ride the escalating value of homes we were able to purchase.

We often don't stop to think that the clothes we wear and even many of the technological gadgets we use were manufactured by people in third-world countries who are paid a mere pittance. The meat we eat may have been slaughtered by packing house workers who routinely suffer job-related injuries brought on by demands for greater speed. Rare metals in our computers or batteries may have been mined by poorly paid workers in dangerous conditions.

Human nature being what it is, it's unlikely that endemic systems of oppression will change any time soon. We may not be able to find a grocery store or big-box retailer that doesn't

The Hardest Question *continued*

carry goods made in exploitive ways. We cannot easily escape the privilege that gives some of us a built-in advantage in life. But we can seek to be more conscious of ways in which others suffer for our benefit, do what we can treat others justly, and look for ways to give back to communities that historically been oppressed.

It's complicated, but it's also important if we truly care about issues of justice, if we truly want to be among those who experience and share the presence of God.