

Youth 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

YOUTH Teaching Guide by Tyler Johnson

This youth 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.

Gathering

As your group comes together, ask students how they are doing and what their week looks like. Reflect on the previous week's challenge.

Opening Activity

Role Play: Have you ever had an opportunity to ask "Why Me?" to something good happening in your life? We often ask "Why Me?" when things go wrong, but what about when things are good? Maybe you unexpectedly scored tickets to Taylor Swift's tour, or maybe you had your name pulled out of a hat for an amazing prize. There may be times in your life where you are so lucky that you are overwhelmed with amazement. Can you think of any examples like that off the top of your head? Today's passage summarizes how lucky we are to be in the very presence of God, and the writer begs the question "Why Me?" to being in God's divine presence.

Listening to the Scripture

Read aloud Psalm 15.

- If you saw this passage in church, it would probably read like a responsive reading where the leader reads a verse and the congregation responds by reading the following verse. Let's try it!

Leader: O Lord...who can dwell with You on Your Holy mountain?

Group: Those who walk blamelessly and do what is right, and speak truth in their heart.

Leader: O Lord...who can dwell with You on Your Holy mountain?

Group: Those who do not slander with their words nor does evil to their neighbor.

Leader: O Lord...who can Dwell with You on Your Holy mountain?

Group: Those who do not put conditions on their charity and do not take bribes. Those who do these things will never be moved.

- What are some requirements for dwelling in the presence of the Lord? (Doing right, talking right, giving right).
- Do you think the things listed in the Psalm are unrealistic? Why or why not?

Listening to the Scripture *continued*

- Why do you think the Psalmist wrote about those three things specifically? Do you think they encompass the whole Law?
- How do we apply these verses written thousands of years ago to life today? Can we? Do they apply to Christ followers of all ages?

If you would like to continue the discussion, consider *Digging Deeper*.

- Verse one discusses a tent. How should we interpret that? Camping tent? Party tent? The best guess is perhaps tabernacle. You may have heard this word in hymns and scripture, but you do not hear it too much outside of the Church. One way to teach tabernacle to students is to equate it to a temporary structure, like a tent, but sometimes made from stacked rocks, limbs, or whatever was available, and it was meant to mark a place where one had a significant encounter with God. In theory someone could be walking down the road and see a tabernacle and know that God met them in that place. It is fun to think about your own life. Where has God met you? Where would you build your own tabernacles?

If the group is up for a challenge, discuss what Tony poses as *The Hardest Question*: Are we complicit in the exploitation of the poor?

- As there has been money in exchange for goods and services, there has been exploitation. It is a hazard of having money. But why the poor? Why not exploit the rich, because after all, they have more money than the poor. One way to think about exploitation of the poor does not have to do with the money per-se, it boils down to desperation. When your options are few, you make riskier decisions for your needs to be met. Those who understand that can exploit people in desperate situations in order for them to gain more money. This is the heart of verse 5 of Psalm 15. To enter into the dwelling place of God means that we cannot exploit those who are desperate, for we are all desperate for God's presence in our lives. The question is: Are you complicit in taking advantage of those in desperate situations when you see it? Make yourself aware of what exploitation looks like today in order to see the injustice for yourself in order to be an advocate.

Application

This week, find ways to actively speak life and positivity into others instead of joining in on the "tea sessions." Try to find ways to act yourself into who God is calling you to be, and see each person as made in the image of God and worthy of respect and not exploitation.

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

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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 carry goods made in exploitive ways. We cannot easily escape the privilege that gives some of

The Hardest Question *continued*

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.