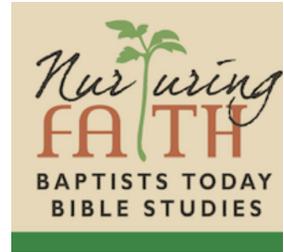


Adult Teaching Resources

February 21, 2016



Transfiguration Sunday

Who Needs a King? — Psalm 99

Season of Lent (February 10-March 26)

Who Needs a Rescuer? — Psalm 91 (RCL 91:1-2, 9-16)

Who Needs a Light? — Psalm 27

Who Needs God? — Psalm 63 (RCL 63:1-8)

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Who Needs a Light?

Psalm 27

FIT Teaching Guide

by Rick Jordan

This adult 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.

Before the Lesson: Print the handout “David Vs. Goliath” to be read by a class member in the Information session. Have blank paper and pens to be used for the Transformational Exercise.

Fellowship Question

Use *one* of the following to break the ice, to begin discussion, and lead into the study:

How many light bulbs do you have in your home?

How many flash lights do you own?

Information

It is hard for us to imagine life without electric lights. We might experience this while on a camping trip or when our community is darkened by trees falling on wires. But, when the sun goes down, none of us go to bed. If necessary, we light candles for short term use. We take for granted the comfort that flipping a switch gives us when we walk into a dark space. Pre-electric civilizations knew the value of candles and of oil filled lamps. From our earliest days, we’ve desired light over dark.

[Have a class member read Psalm 27:1.]

At the end of today’s class period, I am going to ask you to recall dark hours in your life and also hours when the light was bright.

Israel had dark days and light days. One of those dark days was when Israel lived under the threat of the Philistines. David, who is said to have written Psalm 27, was a child when his country was being terrorized.

[Have a class member read these selections from I Samuel 17. Verses 2-4, 10-11, 32, 37, 40-51. There is a handout with these verses. Print it out for a class member to read.]

It may have been a while since you’ve heard this story. Because this passage was selections from the entire chapter, some of the story was left out. Still, did you hear anything that you had forgotten or not heard before?

We can imagine how dark these days were for Israel and King Saul. Then along comes the

Information *continued*

golden child with a sling and a deep trust in God. Suddenly, there is light. (And, in all the excitement, Goliath became light-headed!)

This story may have been in David's mind when he penned this song.

[Have a class member read Psalm 27:2-6.]

In this psalm, there is trust in God and there is need for help. What is the relationship of trust and need?

If there is more need, are we more likely to trust God? Why or why not?

How are prayers for help and intercession signs of trust in God?

David says he'd love to "live in the house of the Lord" and to "inquire in his temple."

Do you remember the song, "If I Were a Rich Man" from the musical, *Fiddler on the Roof*? The main character, Tevya, sings: "If I were rich, I'd have the time that I lack to sit in the synagogue and pray. And maybe have a seat by the Eastern wall. And I'd discuss the holy books with the learned men, several hours every day. That would be the sweetest thing of all."

Maybe David means this literally, as Tevya did. More than likely, however, he is speaking about living in God's presence. When we "go to church," we worship God, but we are also experiencing other things that are very intertwined with worship.

In *Reflection on the Psalms*, C. S. Lewis illustrates this with the farm worker who attends worship after the harvest season: "You would do him wrong asking him to separate out some exclusively religious element in his mind from all the rest — from his hearty social pleasure in a corporate act, his enjoyment of the hymns (and the crowd), his memory of other such services since childhood, his well-earned anticipation of rest after harvest or Christmas dinner after church. They are all one in his mind. This would have been even truer of any ancient man...He never heard of music, or festivity, or agriculture as things separate from religion, nor of religion as something separate from them. Life was one." (C.S. Lewis. *Reflections on the Psalms*. London: Geoffrey Bles. 1958. p. 47.)

Do you experience "life is one" — or does worship/church feel like a separate element in your life ("life is many")?

Up to this point in our psalm, all is well. God is shining divine light, God is nearby when we are in need, God is close by and concerned.

It is wonderful when life is in that place. However, in real life, things are not always so smooth. Psalm 27 takes a sudden turn now — so sudden that many scholars are convinced that this is a separate psalm. Verses 1-6 are one psalm, verses 7-14 are another, in this view. Verse 6 ends with the psalmist offering shouts of joy, "singing and making melody to the Lord." In verse 7 and following, the psalmist is making very different sounds.

Information *continued*

[Have a class member read Psalm 27:7-12.]

THE BIBLE LESSON writer says, “In verses 7-14, assurance is but a memory and God’s presence a distant dream. In the classic form of a lament, the psalmist longs for a sense of God’s presence and pleads for God not to turn away, as if he or she feels abandoned by the same God who once had felt so close.”

Our spiritual journeys are not straight highways to heaven. Life demands that there be detours, speed bumps, and U-turns. Usually, we see these things as bad. They frustrate us from going the direction we want to go and in the speed we want to go. We lose confidence in our way. We grow fearful that we may not get back on our happy journey or reach our joyful destination.

Listen to this quote about losing our confidence.

“The beauty of finding out where we lack confidence or what is the cause of our own fear(s) is that we may then discover how to face them or navigate a way through them. Madeleine L’Engle in reflecting on confidence wrote, ‘It’s a good thing to have all the props pulled out from under us occasionally. It gives us some sense of what is rock under our feet, and what is sand.’ (Paul O. Myhre. http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=1544)

Has this been true in your life? Was there anything good about “having all the props pulled out from under” you? How did it affect your faith?

In spite of his troubles, or maybe as a sign of trusting in God because of his troubles, the psalmist ends this song on a hopeful note.

[Have a class member read Psalm 27:13-14.]

“Waiting for the Lord” could mean being passive, remaining inactive until God does something or gives some direction. It could also mean sitting on edge, prepared, ready to act when the opportunity presents itself. Which do you think the psalmist means?

Transformational Exercise

[Distribute paper and pens.]

I mentioned that scholars debate whether Psalm 27 was originally a single psalm or two psalms that were, for some reason, merged.

The Bible Lesson writes on an online resource, “The combination of two psalms, one of trust and one of lament, may also be seen as an intentional reminder that we all face ups and downs in life. There are times when we feel strong, close to God, and confident in our faith, as in verses 1-6. There are other times when we struggle with various difficulties and feel far from God, as in verses 7-14. In those times, we can look back to former experiences and trust that God’s face will again look to us in favor; we have only to wait for the Lord with strength and courage, trusting past experience for the promise of future deliverance.” [The

Transformational Exercise *continued*

Hardest Question: Is Psalm 27 one psalm or two?]

Our life does have ups and downs. There are “the best of days and the worst of days.” There are days of wonderful light and there are days of somber darkness.

On your sheet of paper, create a map of your faith journey. When did you experience fear? When did you experience confidence in God? When did you experience light and darkness? When did you experience feeling connected to God or disconnected to God?

[Give time for class members to create their spiritual journey map. If there is time, invite them to share their journey with a fellow class member.]

[Close in a prayer something like this: *We trust that you are present with us, God, in the best of our days and in the worst of our days. Give us the faith to wait on you. Strengthen our souls. Encourage our hearts. Amen.*]

Comments or Questions for Rick Jordan? You may send comments to the lesson plan author at rjordan@cbfnc.org. Rick is also available to lead workshops and conferences on Christian Education, with particular emphasis on how best to use the FIT Faith model.

Digging Deeper

by Tony Cartlege

Digging Deeper is designed to support THE BIBLE LESSON by Tony Cartlege, printed in *Baptists Today*. 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 *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.

Two in one — Several old Certs commercials can be found on YouTube, including the one cited in the lesson (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E8zwnXjIjPM>) and this one, which promised that Certs would “keep your breath as sweet as your smile” (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=slXXoQoPHxM>).

Similar psalms — The first few verses of Psalm 27 are often compared to Psalm 23, and for good reason. As the psalmist spoke of God as “my light and my salvation,” Psalm 23 declares: “even though I walk in the darkest valley, I fear no evil, for you are with me ...” (Ps. 23:4).

Similarly, as the poet behind Psalm 27 sought to dwell in God’s presence forever, the author of Psalm 23 claimed: “I shall dwell in the house of the LORD my whole life long” (Ps. 23:6).

Commander-in-chief — When Israel’s elders first approached Samuel with their request for a king, their motive was “so that we also may be like other nations, and that our king may govern us and go out before us and fight our battles” (1 Sam. 8:20).

Saul notably called out an army and led it against the Ammonites besieging Jabesh Gilead (1 Samuel 11), as well as against the Philistines (1 Samuel 13), and the Amalekites (1 Samuel 15), though Samuel was not satisfied with his performance. Saul’s failure to confront Goliath (1 Samuel 17) was perceived as a sign of weakness, opening the door for David’s rise to prominence. Though the village women praised Saul for killing thousands, their adulation was for David “who has killed his ten thousands” (1 Sam. 18:7). Saul ultimately died in battle with the Philistines, and David lamented over him, recalling his military feats and prowess with the sword (2 Sam. 1:21-25).

David, in turn, was portrayed as a warrior king who frequently sought God’s leadership and who never lost a battle prior to his adultery with Bethsheba and consequent murder of her husband Uriah (2 Samuel 12). After that, his son Absalom led a revolt against him. David fled Jerusalem before Absalom’s approaching assault, and when his troops finally confronted Absalom’s on the east side of the Jordan, David’s officers insisted that he stay behind in safety, more important as a symbol than as a soldier (2 Sam. 18:1-4).

Later examples of Israelite or Judean kings fighting (and sometimes falling) in battle include Jehu, Joram, and Amaziah (2 Kings 9), as well as Josiah, who died in an ill-advised sortie against the Egyptians (2 Kings 23:29).

Since David was famed as both a warrior king and a musician, it is not surprising that Psalm 27 was attributed (or dedicated) to him.

Digging Deeper *continued*

Aiming for dummies — The imagery of the psalmist’s enemies stumbling and falling as they attacked calls to mind the early Star Wars movies, in which hosts of the Empire’s masked storm troopers would rush Luke Skywalker, Han Solo, or Princess Leia with laser guns blazing, but never hitting them. I recently saw a chalk drawing outside of bookstore: it pictured a storm trooper reading a book called *Aiming for Dummies*. The psalmist saw his enemies as being like that: he could stand protected as if by a force shield, while his attackers were incompetent.

Shouts of joy — The word translated as “shout” in v. 6 is *teru’ah*, which suggests a cultic shout or battle cry such as soldiers would voice when going into battle. It was no small noise, but a loud exclamation, in this case of joyous praise.

Tent, or house? — The use of apparently contradictory terms to describe Israel’s centralized worship place also occurs with relation to the cultic center at Shiloh when Eli presided as priest. We read of a tent of meeting (*’ohel mo’ed*) in 1 Sam. 2:22, and the temple of the LORD (*hekal Yahweh*) in 1 Sam. 1:9 and 3:3. According to 1 Sam. 3:15, Samuel rose up to open the doors of the house of the LORD (*bet Yahweh*). The imagery suggests that the tabernacle reportedly constructed during the wilderness wandering had come to rest in Shiloh, where it became a more permanent installation.

A parent who doesn’t forsake — Some scholars suggest that the psalmist’s insistence that parents might forsake, but not God, may reflect a royal setting. We have indicated previously that the first part of the psalm fits well with the image of a king celebrating the confidence of divine protection as he goes into battle. One stream of thought in ancient Israel was that the king was “adopted” as God’s son in a sense, as seen in coronation hymns such as Psalm 2: “He said to me, ‘You are my son; today I have begotten you’” (Ps. 2:7).

The Hardest Question

by Tony Cartlege

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Is Psalm 27 one psalm or two?

A surface reading of Psalm 27 reveals what appears to be two psalms in one: the first six verses exhibit the qualities of a psalm of praise or trust, while vv. 7-14 have all the earmarks of a lament. Should we regard Psalm 27 as separate psalms by different authors, or from the same poet in very different situations?

It is not unusual for psalms to be combined or numbered differently. For example, Psalms 9 and 10 are separate in Hebrew, but one psalm in the Greek Septuagint (abbreviated as LXX). Likewise Psalms 114 and 115 in the Hebrew text appear as Psalm 113 in the LXX, and thus in Catholic/Orthodox Bibles. But, Psalm 116 in Hebrew is divided into two (114-115) in the LXX, and Psalm 147 appears as 146 and 147.

Psalm 27 is numbered as one psalm in both the Hebrew and Greek traditions, but should each part be read and interpreted separately, or did the final editor of Psalms intend for us to read them together?

On the basis of form alone, our inclination would be to identify two separate psalms. The first six verses comprise a psalm of trust, not unlike Psalm 23. It is a testimony of what God has done for the psalmist, and declaration of assurance that God will yet act on his or her behalf.

The second part of Psalm 27 is a classic lament. Psalms of lament typically begin with a cry for God to hear the petitioner's plea, usually in a time of distress or trouble when God seems far away. Laments plead with God for deliverance, and usually express trust that God will hear indeed the prayer, frequently closing with words of praise or assurance in advance of it actually happening. All of these characteristics are present in vv. 7-14.

It seems clear, then, that we have what were originally two psalms, but they appear to have been combined for a purpose. Some scholars see the connection in an assumption that the protagonist of the psalm is a king who initially praises God for past victories, but later pleads for deliverance in a more difficult time.

Whether we imagine a royal theme or not, the combination of two psalms, one of trust and one of lament, may also be seen as an intentional reminder that we all face ups and downs in life. There are times when we feel strong, close to God, and confident in our faith, as in vv. 1-6. There are other times when we struggle with various difficulties and feel far from God, as in vv. 7-14. In those times, we can look back to former experiences and trust that God's face will again look toward us with favor: we have only to wait for the LORD with strength and courage, trusting past experience for the promise of future deliverance.

David vs. Goliath

(I Samuel 17:2-4, 10-11, 32, 37, 40-51)

² Saul and the Israelites gathered and encamped in the valley of Elah, and formed ranks against the Philistines. ³ The Philistines stood on the mountain on the one side, and Israel stood on the mountain on the other side, with a valley between them. ⁴ And there came out from the camp of the Philistines a champion named Goliath, of Gath, whose height was six cubits and a span...¹⁰ And the Philistine said, "Today I defy the ranks of Israel! Give me a man, that we may fight together." ¹¹ When Saul and all Israel heard these words of the Philistine, they were dismayed and greatly afraid...³² David said to Saul, "Let no one's heart fail because of him; your servant will go and fight with this Philistine." ...³⁷ David said, "The Lord, who saved me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear, will save me from the hand of this Philistine." So Saul said to David, "Go, and may the Lord be with you!"... ⁴⁰ Then he took his staff in his hand, and chose five smooth stones from the wadi, and put them in his shepherd's bag, in the pouch; his sling was in his hand, and he drew near to the Philistine.

⁴¹ The Philistine came on and drew near to David, with his shield-bearer in front of him. ⁴² When the Philistine looked and saw David, he disdained him, for he was only a youth, ruddy and handsome in appearance. ⁴³ The Philistine said to David, "Am I a dog, that you come to me with sticks?" And the Philistine cursed David by his gods. ⁴⁴ The Philistine said to David, "Come to me, and I will give your flesh to the birds of the air and to the wild animals of the field." ⁴⁵ But David said to the Philistine, "You come to me with sword and spear and javelin; but I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. ⁴⁶ This very day the Lord will deliver you into my hand, and I will strike you down and cut off your head; and I will give the dead bodies of the Philistine army this very day to the birds of the air and to the wild animals of the earth, so that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel, ⁴⁷ and that all this assembly may know that the Lord does not save by sword and spear; for the battle is the Lord's and he will give you into our hand."

⁴⁸ When the Philistine drew nearer to meet David, David ran quickly toward the battle line to meet the Philistine. ⁴⁹ David put his hand in his bag, took out a stone, slung it, and struck the Philistine on his forehead; the stone sank into his forehead, and he fell face down on the ground.

⁵⁰ So David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and a stone, striking down the Philistine and killing him; there was no sword in David's hand. ⁵¹ Then David ran and stood over the Philistine; he grasped his sword, drew it out of its sheath, and killed him; then he cut off his head with it.

When the Philistines saw that their champion was dead, they fled.