

Gleaner's Sunday School Lesson at First Baptist Church December 27, 2020

Unit of Study: When Emotions Rise. On an emotional spectrum is your life an emotional roller coaster or like a grilled cheese sandwich? Perhaps you and I fit somewhere in between? Grief, fear, anger, worry and depression hit us all--and when they do, how do we respond? How should we respond? This study examines six psalms that speak to these emotions, and in the process, we should discover how to convey our emotions in a healthy, Christ-honoring way.

Topic: Session #4: Redirecting Anger (p.48)

Primary Source/Scripture: *Bible Studies for Life, Sr. Adult Personal Study Guide* page 48. If you do not have a study guide, open your Bible to **Psalm 35:1-3, 13-18**

Prayer: Heavenly Father, we praise Your Name as Lord of our lives and Light of the World as we approach the New Year 2021 with optimism that immunizations against the COVID virus are on the way! Thank you for the scientists and essential workers who are responsible for the vaccine's development and transport. We pray for continued wellness and safety for all the caretakers and encouragers in our world, as well as our families, friends, and pastors. Cover us with your grace Lord as we study your word and learn to *Redirect Anger*. Keep us focused on doing Your will, and forgive us when we fail You. These things we ask in Jesus' Holy Name. Amen.

Author/Setting:

Most scholars agree that David wrote Psalm 35. Some suggest it was written during the time he was being pursued by Saul. This would make the date around 1018-1014 BC. Others suggest it was written when David was in dire straits surrounded by a hostile army during conflict with his son Absalom who tried to seize the throne and kill his father, or possibly it was written when David was about to be attacked by a foreign power. During his latter days as king, David experienced frequent insurrections.

Psalm 35 is one of the imprecatory psalms that deal with personal hurt and anger with the desire that God brings immediate retribution (disaster or misfortune) upon one's enemies. Modern believers understand these psalms are pre-Christian since they do not reflect the ethic taught by Jesus. However the psalms teach us to bring all feelings and emotions to God as the means to rid ourselves of destructive anger and find assurance of His presence and concern.

Question #1: When you were a kid, what would make you really angry? Growing up with three sisters and a brother set the stage for sibling issues. I didn't like it when my older brother would try to hypnotize me, and recall arguments with my sisters over borrowing clothes without permission. So, have to admit, I was angry over petty matters as a kid. As adults we can get angry for equally silly reasons. At other times, we can push the anger button over more serious matters such as slander, threats, theft, or other unjust actions. Do we give in to anger or is there a better way? David had good reasons to be angry in Psalm 35, but took a different route, a route we should consider when anger starts to well up inside of us.

Point: We can experience great joy because Jesus saves.

Read Psalm 35:1-3 (Page 50)

Verse 1: Anything that keeps us from what we want or think we deserve is opposition that can stir up anger. David faced real and serious opposition and is asking the Lord to intervene on his behalf, **Oppose my opponents, Lord; fight those who fight me.** He wanted God to attack his foes, to deliver him from the enemy. We can vent anger inappropriately using hurtful words and abusive actions, or we can vent our anger by bringing it to God which is always appropriate. David exhibited ultimate faith in the power of God to deliver him from all his battles, and took his anger and desire for vindication to God. As believers, we can be assured of God's constant attention to our needs, including any anger we might feel.

Verse 2,3: David was asking the Lord not only to be on his side, but to **come to** (his) **aid** to ward off the attacks. He mentioned **shields--large and small**, and the **spear and javelin**. These were pieces of defensive armor and weapons of war that he wanted God to use against those pursuing him. Lest we think David mean-spirited, two things are worth noting: (1) David had an easy opportunity to kill his enemy Saul twice, once in a cave and another in Saul's camp. (Sam. 24:1-11 and 26:7-12) (2) Instead of harming Saul, David took the matter to God. He begged God to **assure** He was his **deliverance**. Instead of responding to anger, David chose a better approach and gave the matter to God. He prayed and trusted God for deliverance.

Question #2: What might keep us from being honest with God about our anger?
(Answer in class or home)

Engage: (page50) Rank the following forms of opposition from least to greatest:

- ___ 1. Being cut off in traffic
- ___ 2. Shopper with too many items in the express lane checkout
- ___ 3. Receiving no offer to split a bill or expense
- ___ 4. Having to cook AND do the dishes

What are some other “pet peeves” that really make your blood boil?

What’s the first thing you typically do when you feel angry?

Read Psalm 35:13-16 (page 53) In this passage we discover the sense of betrayal that fueled the psalmist’s anger.

Verse 13: Here David expressed compassion. When his enemies **were sick**, he humbled himself on their behalf and wore **sackcloth**, a coarse garment symbolic of discomfort and despondency. This reminded a person of the pain for which he was concerned as he sought the Lord. David humbled himself **with fasting** and **genuine prayer**. David interceded by asking God for his enemies’ healing when they were sick.

Verse 14: David grieved for those who suffered as though they were friends, not enemies. He grieved and prayed for his enemies as though they were his own family-- his **brother** or **mother**.

Verse 15:When David stumbled and found himself in need, his kindness was not reciprocated. Those he had befriended chose this occasion to heap criticism on him. They gleefully delighted in his suffering. His opponents gathered as a group to mock him in chorus, along with **assailants** who didn’t even know him.

Verse 16: **With godless mockery they gnashed their teeth** at him. They amused themselves at David’s expense. What David experienced compares with bullying in today’s culture.

Question #3: **How do you typically respond when you are mistreated?** (Answer in class or at home)

Question #4: **What helps you to trust God when you’ve been hurt by others?** (Answer in class or at home)

Read Psalm 35: 17-18 (page 55)Here we discover David’s response to God even before God acts on his behalf.

Verse 17: In the midst of his isolation, David urged God to make haste to **rescue** him and give him satisfaction. He expressed the idea that God was looking instead of acting.

How long will you look on? David's enemies reminded him of **young lions** who feed on carrion. The image of young lions feeding on their prey is descriptive of the "me first" mentality of selfish humanity. It's the motto of many today who behave like animals rather than those made in God's image.

Verse 18: Despite his impatience and doubts, David had assurance that the Lord would prove Himself faithful in the end. He said **I will praise you in the great assembly; I will exalt you among many people.** The heart of David's prayer and appeal to God was for rescue not retaliation. He knew God would rescue him; he just didn't know when. Like David, we are to respond in love. We honor God when we choose to express trust rather than outrage and retaliation.

Question #5: What makes leaving matters in God's hands so challenging?
(Answer in class or at home)

Summary: When we feel the tug of anger in our hearts, we can let it loose and deal with the consequences later, or we can give the urge over to God and leave matters in His hands: The second choice is healthier, honors God, and you never know who's watching. We are not to respond in anger or retaliation; we are to respond in love. In that way we are able to conquer evil with good. (Rom 12:20-21)

Live it Out (p. 57)

When anger begins to brew, how will you respond?

(1) Vent--to God. Before talking to others about what has upset you, talk to God. Be honest about why you're angry. Ask Him for strength to refrain from anger and the will to trust Him with the situation.

(2) Seek resolution--not retaliation. If possible, find a way to resolve the relationship or situation that has angered you. At the very least, pray for the well-being of the other person. As you pray for another person, God will also work on your heart.

(3) Love--no matter what. Find specific, concrete ways you can show the love of Christ to those who've hurt you or made you angry. Don't take any action to look self-righteous and better than the other person. Show love in order to honor the One who loves you.

Prayer: "Father, we need You as we deal with anger in our lives. Help us to turn to You first and express our feelings."

Watchword: May the Lord watch between me and thee while we are absent one from another. Stay healthy, safe, and have a great week.

