

Small Groups – Praying through the tough times of life.

By Pastor Dick Braun

Date: _____

Week _____

Icebreaker

Do our hopes and dreams about life ultimately determine the outcome of our life? Why or why not?

Opening Prayer – Psalm 117 – Please read and pause for a short silent prayer before beginning

¹ Praise the LORD, all you nations;
extol him, all you people.

² For great is his love toward us,
and the faithfulness of the LORD endures forever. 1

Open It

1. Do you feel worthy to speak to God directly? Where do you think that attitude came from? Was it learned in childhood, early adolescence, or adulthood? Can you recall who influenced this concept?
2. If you felt unworthy when answering #1 above, do you think that is a healthy place to be? Explain
3. As we learn in Col 1:12-15, Christ made us worthy; we are not worthy on our own. Tell the group how you would explain this concept to a 5 – 7-year-old asking about God, prayer, and life.
4. We know from experience God doesn't always give us everything we ask for in life. What is something you have wanted, prayed for, and hoped for, and yet it seems it continues to be out of your grasp? Have you ever examined why this might be? If you can, please share it with the group.

Explore It

1. Prayer changes things. What is the most critical change that has occurred in your personal prayer life?
2. As humans, as Christians, we often pray in various ways. What is the most effective way for you to pray? Is it in a group, by yourself, out loud, silent, using the Bible, off the top of your head, or other?
3. Sometimes, we can be significantly inspired by prayer, but sometimes prayer seems empty. With your own prayer life, how have you been able to keep it meaningful & alive? What could help make for a more fulfilling personal prayer life if you haven't?
4. When things are going well, with plenty of money, no struggles, and no unmet needs, do you pray more or less? Why do you suppose this pattern exists in your life? Is it the same way for most people?
5. What is your prayer life like when your life is in turmoil, full of pain, and full of hardship? Do you personally pray more or less? Do you sense the presence of God more in this situation? Why?

The story of David and Bathsheba from II Samuel 11:1-27

¹It happened in the spring of the year, at the time when kings go out *to battle*, that David sent Joab and his servants with him, and all Israel; and they destroyed the people of Ammon and besieged Rabbah. But David remained in Jerusalem.

²Then it happened one evening that David arose from his bed and walked on the roof of the king's house. And from the roof, he saw a woman bathing, and the woman *was* very beautiful to behold. ³So David sent and inquired about the woman. And *someone* said, "Is this not Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite?" ⁴Then David sent messengers, and took her; and she came to

1 *The New International Version*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House) 1984.

him, and he lay with her, for she was cleansed from her impurity; and she returned to her house. 5And the woman conceived; so she sent and told David, and said, “I *am* with child.”

⁶Then David sent to Joab, *saying*, “Send me Uriah the Hittite.” And Joab sent Uriah to David. 7When Uriah had come to him, David asked how Joab was doing, and how the people were doing, and how the war prospered. 8And David said to Uriah, “Go down to your house and wash your feet.” So Uriah departed from the king’s house, and a gift *of food* from the king followed him. 9But Uriah slept at the door of the king’s house with all the servants of his lord, and did not go down to his house. 10So when they told David, saying, “Uriah did not go down to his house,” David said to Uriah, “Did you not come from a journey? Why did you not go down to your house?” 11And Uriah said to David, “The ark and Israel and Judah are dwelling in tents, and my lord Joab and the servants of my lord are encamped in the open fields. Shall I then go to my house to eat and drink, and to lie with my wife? *As you live, and as your soul lives, I will not do this thing.*” 12Then David said to Uriah, “Wait here today also, and tomorrow I will let you depart.” So Uriah remained in Jerusalem that day and the next. 13Now when David called him, he ate and drank before him; and he made him drunk. And at evening he went out to lie on his bed with the servants of his lord, but he did not go down to his house.

¹⁴In the morning it happened that David wrote a letter to Joab and sent *it* by the hand of Uriah. 15And he wrote in the letter, saying, “Set Uriah in the forefront of the hottest battle, and retreat from him, that he may be struck down and die.” 16So it was, while Joab besieged the city, that he assigned Uriah to a place where he knew there *were* valiant men. 17Then the men of the city came out and fought with Joab. And *some* of the people of the servants of David fell; and Uriah the Hittite died also.

¹⁸Then Joab sent and told David all the things concerning the war, ¹⁹and charged the messenger, saying, “When you have finished telling the matters of the war to the king, ²⁰if it happens that the king’s wrath rises, and he says to you: ‘Why did you approach so near to the city when you fought? Did you not know that they would shoot from the wall?’ ²¹‘Who struck Abimelech the son of Jerubbesheth? Was it not a woman who cast a piece of a millstone on him from the wall, so that he died in Thebez? Why did you go near the wall?’—then you shall say, ‘Your servant Uriah the Hittite is dead also.’”

²²So the messenger went, and came and told David all that Joab had sent by him. 23And the messenger said to David, “Surely the men prevailed against us and came out to us in the field; then we drove them back as far as the entrance of the gate. 24“‘The archers shot from the wall at your servants; and *some* of the king’s servants are dead, and your servant Uriah the Hittite is dead also.” 25Then David said to the messenger, “Thus you shall say to Joab: ‘Do not let this thing displease you, for the sword devours one as well as another. Strengthen your attack against the city, and overthrow it.’ So encourage him.”

²⁶When the wife of Uriah heard that Uriah her husband was dead, she mourned for her husband. 27And when her mourning was over, David sent and brought her to his house, and she became his wife and bore him a son. But the thing that David had done displeased the LORD²

Get It

1. What do you think of David’s behavior here in 2 Samuel? Why do you suppose God chose to include this account in the Bible?

2. God was not pleased with David’s behavior. Have you ever done something that was so out of character and distasteful that you never want to talk about it or think about it again for the rest of your life? What did you learn about God during this difficult time of pain in your life?

3. What is one thing we can learn from this story of David? I think there are many things we can learn, so go around the group and have each person try to come up with something new.

Apply It

1. Sometimes, we can see how God works in our lives by keeping a prayer journal. Psalms is somewhat like that for David. Many scholars believe David wrote a good many of the Psalms (Acts 4:25), and from them, we can see some of the internal struggle going on inside of David.

A psalm of David. When he fled from his son Absalom.

- ¹ O LORD, how many are my foes!
How many rise up against me!
- ² Many are saying of me,
“God will not deliver him.” *Selah*
- ³ But you are a shield around me, O LORD;
you bestow glory on me and lift up my head.
- ⁴ To the LORD I cry aloud,
and he answers me from his holy hill. *Selah*
- ⁵ I lie down and sleep;
I wake again because the LORD sustains me.
- ⁶ I will not fear the tens of thousands
drawn up against me on every side.³

If you’ve never read the Psalms through, it would be a good time to do that. Now that you can see some of the difficult times going on in David’s life, they may have more meaning. I’d encourage you to take one per day and read all of them until finished. Perhaps you could use them as an end or beginning to your daily devotions.

Closing Prayer - Psalm 121 – please ask for praise reports or items needing prayer

- ¹ I lift up my eyes to the hills—
where does my help come from?
- ² My help comes from the LORD,
the Maker of heaven and earth.
- ³ He will not let your foot slip—
he who watches over you will not slumber;
- ⁴ indeed, he who watches over Israel
will neither slumber nor sleep.
- ⁵ The LORD watches over you—
the LORD is your shade at your right hand;
- ⁶ the sun will not harm you by day,
nor the moon by night.
- ⁷ The LORD will keep you from all harm—
he will watch over your life;
- ⁸ the LORD will watch over your coming and going
both now and forevermore.⁴

³ *The New International Version*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House) 1984.

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