

**July 7, 2024**

Hope Comes In The Morning or Ceaseless Love  
Lamentations 3:16-24

**Unifying Principle (Focus)**

We experience pain in life. In the midst of profound pain and disappointment, how do we overcome despair? The writer of Lamentations reminds us that God's steadfast love and faithfulness triumphs over despair.

**Goals for the Learner**

1. To explore the situation that gives rise to the pain and despair expressed in the Book of Lamentations.
2. To value the relief that comes when expressing one's pain and despair to God.
3. To confess pain that feels hopeless in our human experience and seek relief in God's steadfast love.

**Challenges for the Week**

1. Study the role of the temple and the impact of its fall in 587-586 BC.
2. Write a letter to God lamenting a bad thing that has happened in your life. Seal the letter and burn it, letting go of the pain as it turns to ashes.
3. Write a letter to yourself from God in response to your lament expressing God's love for you.
4. Study other periods of time when cultures have been decimated by war. How did these cultures recover?
5. What are some encouraging things to do or say for a person who is experiencing sorrow in his or her life?
6. Collect ways we try to relieve physical pain. How are some ways that God relieves our emotional pain?

July 14, 2024

God is Faithful or The Faithfulness of Hope

Psalm 71:12-21

Unifying Principle (focus)

Our interpretation of past events profoundly influences our experience of the present. What helps us interpret past and present situations in ways that are beneficial to us and others? In Psalm 71, the poet's hope is maintained by continual praise for God's past acts of faithfulness and love.

Goals for the Learner

1. To recall past experiences of God's faithfulness even in times of difficulty.
2. To affirm God as a faithful and loving sustainer.
3. To find avenues through which we lead others to a relationship with God.

Challenges for the Week

1. Outline the psalm. How does its structure contribute to its overall message?
2. Reflect on a time in childhood when you felt shame or embarrassment. How did you recover?
3. Reflect on a time in childhood when you learned a lesson from God. How do you carry that lesson with you today?
4. Describe your daily stressors. What contributes to the stress and makes it worse? What helps relieve some of the stress?
5. Imagine you could have a superpower. What would it be? How would it solve some of your life problems?
6. Choose a favorite verse from this psalm. Memorize it. Reflect on how you have "used" this verse in your daily life.

July 21, 2024

God's Word brings Hope or Delightful Precepts

Psalm 119:73-80

Unifying Principle (Focus of lesson)

People are unsure where to seek help and comfort. Where do we find hope, and how do we encourage others in times of need? In Psalm 119, the psalmist finds delight and assurance in God's Word.

Goals for the Learner

1. To explain why God giving the law is a source of hope and comfort.
2. To open ourselves to God's steadfast love working in us.
3. To demonstrate God's comfort and hope to others.

Challenges for the Week

1. Examine traffic laws. What is their purpose? Why do we sometimes disobey them? Does reflecting on traffic laws give us any insight as to why we disobey God's laws?
2. Memorize the Ten Commandments. Does studying them change their meaning or importance for you? How so?
3. Organize a group of people who enjoy reading the Bible. Read the entirety of Psalm 119 aloud with the group, taking turns so as to hear different voices reading the Scripture. Does reading the psalm in its entirety change the meaning or context of our passage for today?
4. Study the civil rights movement and the idea of civil disobedience. Is there ever a time when God's laws and human laws contradict? What do we do if they do?
5. Write a personal poem describing how God helps us stay on the right moral track.
6. Choose one verse to meditate on. Read it aloud, then spend a few minutes in silence. Read it aloud again. What word or phrase comes up during this meditation? Share the word or phrase with the group you have organized. Read the Scripture again. Then share what you think God might be telling through the passage.

July 28, 2024

God Redeems Us or Expectant Watchfulness

Psalm 130

Unifying Principle (Focus)

People are often their own worst enemies. What are ways to address the enemy that is “us”? Psalm 130 reminds us that our sins may drag us down, but the Lord’s power to redeem us will set us on our feet again.

Goals for the Learners

1. To explore connections between God’s hearing, forgiveness, and being revered.
2. To develop confidence in God’s steadfast love and desire to forgive.
3. To express assurance in God’s redemptive power.

Challenges for the Week

1. Sing or read together Martin Luther’s hymn “Out of the Depths I Cry to Thee.” What does this song have in common with the psalm?
2. Examine the psalmist’s comparison of those who wait on God’s answers to “those who watch for the morning.”
3. Write a psalm to God asking for forgiveness.
4. Write a response to that psalm in the form of a letter from God.
5. Outline the psalm according to theme. What do we learn about the psalmist’s perspective on redemption?
6. Explore the “depths.” What does the psalmist mean by the “depths”? What helps others when they are in the depths? Explore the difference between empathy and sympathy.