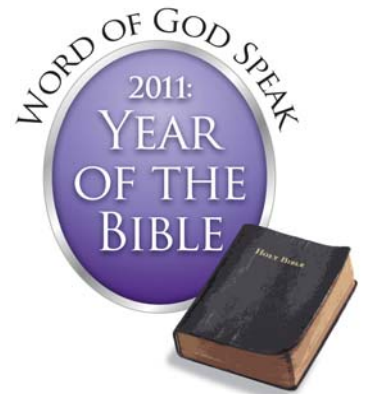


Week 27: Psalms 58-67

Study Guide for the week of July 4-10, 2011



Personal reflection / journaling exercise

This week, spend time with Psalm 58. Do you think that some people are wicked “from birth” (verse 3)? How do you react to the call for vengeance in verses 6-11 of this psalm? See especially verse 10. In the Holman Bible Dictionary this psalm is categorized as a Prophetic Psalm that announces God's will to His worshiping people. Other Biblical commentators categorize Psalm 58 as an **Imprecatory Psalm**. To imprecate means to invoke evil upon, or curse. Imprecatory psalms contain curses or prayers for punishment to fall on the psalmist's enemies. Psalms 7, 35, 55, 58, 59, 69, 79, 109, 137 and 139 all contain prayers for God's judgment on the psalmist's enemies. One commentator says that the imprecatory psalms are not a matter of personal revenge; rather, these “harsh” statements reflect the Psalmist's awareness of God's justice and his intolerance for sin. Walter Kaiser has observed: “They (imprecatory Psalms) are not statements of personal vendetta, but they are utterances of zeal for the kingdom of God and his glory. To be sure, the attacks which provoked these prayers were not from personal enemies; rather, they were rightfully seen as attacks against God and especially his representatives in the promised line of the Messiah.” Do you think there is a place for praying imprecatory Psalms in life of a follower of Jesus? Why or why not? Reflect on a time when you wished evil on someone. Do you think that teachings in the New Testament change our understanding or use of Imprecatory Psalms or the thinking behind them?

Discussion starters *If you are leading a small group, you may not have time for all of these questions. Pick the ones that will work best for your group.*

1. Ice Breaker Question: Describe a time when you fell into wishing evil on someone.
2. Was there something that jumped out at you, surprised you, encouraged you, or disturbed you from the readings this last week (or two)? Why?
3. Psalm 59: 9,17 Describe how God has been your strength and a fortress for you.
4. Psalm 61:5,8 What is a “vow”? In our tradition we have not taught about making vows to or about God. Have you ever made a vow to God? Explain. Think about a vow you would like to make to God. How would you word it? Share your thoughts with the group.
5. Psalm 62:1-2, 5-6 What does it mean for you to find rest in God alone and that God alone is your rock and salvation? Explore with your group what “alone” means in these verses.
6. Psalm 63:1-8 What are some situations or experiences in life where these verses would be particularly helpful?
7. Psalm 66:10-12 Do you want to be tested and refined by God or would you rather bypass that piece of following Jesus? What did the psalmist experience as a result of this testing (verse 12)? Have you ever experienced this kind of testing? What was the outcome?

Bible verse to memorize: Psalm 62:1

Caring Time

It is important to make time in your group to care for each other. Sometimes that happens during the discussion and sometimes it is best to end your time together praying for each other. Share with each other a high and a low that you experienced since the last time you met. As you listen to each other, if there is a situation that calls from prayer, have a person volunteer to pray from that concern. After everyone has shared go into a time of prayer with people praying for the concerns that were expressed.

Also encourage people in the group to get together outside of the group time to foster deeper friendships with each other. Remember that being in a small group is primarily about sharing life together. It has been said that the most important time in small groups is the time people connect outside of the meeting time. Make plans with one or two other members of your small group to get together outside of the group meeting.