

Family Worship Study Notes: Psalm 74

These study notes are designed to guide your family through a careful, reverent examination of Psalm 74. As you gather together, use this material to instruct your children, reflect on God's covenant faithfulness, and lead your home in honoring the Lord.

Scripture Memory Verse

"Remember Your congregation, which You have purchased of old, The tribe of Your inheritance, which You have redeemed— This Mount Zion where You have dwelt." (Psalm 74:2, NKJV)

Devotional Reading: The God Who Remembers His Covenant

There are times in the life of a believer, and in the history of God's people, where it feels as though God has completely abandoned us. Psalm 74 is a cry from the depths of what the old Puritans used to call divine desertion. Historically, this Psalm points us to the tragic events of 586 B.C., when the Babylonian army invaded Jerusalem. They destroyed the holy city, captured the people, and burned the temple of God to the ground.

To understand the weight of this, we must remember what the temple meant to Israel. In God's order, in God's way, the temple was the visible pledge that God was present with His people. It was a picture of Christ and His redemptive work. It was the dwelling place of God's name. When the enemies burned it down, they were not just destroying a building. They were setting up their own banners and mocking the God of Israel. They were saying, "We have defeated your God. He is powerless to stop us."

What do we mean by this? Well, we mean that God's people were left in darkness. To make matters worse, the psalmist cries out that there is no longer any prophet. God had dried up all self-revelation. There was a famine of the preaching of the Word of God. Without a word from God, the people felt completely rejected, wondering if His anger would smoke against the sheep of His pasture forever.

And yet, right in the middle of this despair, the psalmist makes a glorious turn. He says in verse 12, "Yet God is my King from of old, Who works salvation in the midst of the earth." He stops looking at the ruins of the temple and starts remembering the character of his God. He remembers the great Exodus, how God parted the Red Sea and destroyed the Egyptian army. He looks at creation and remembers that God established the sun, the moon, the summer, and the winter. A God who is this sovereign over creation and history does not abandon His chosen people forever. God is too smart to make mistakes, and He is too good to do wrong.

We live in a world full of enemies. Teach your children to understand that. We do not live in a culture of religious pluralism where everyone can just get along. The enemies of God want to eradicate biblical truth. But notice the primary concern of the psalmist. He is not complaining about his lost wealth, his lost home, or his physical discomfort. He is brokenhearted because the name of God is being mocked. He prays, "Consider the covenant." He begs God to act, not simply to make the people comfortable again, but to vindicate His own holy name.

When God brings afflictions upon us, or when He seems silent, He is not destroying us. As the Puritan Richard Baxter wisely noted, the Good Shepherd is not drowning His sheep when He washes them. He is cleansing us. He is stripping away our idols so that we will lean entirely on His everlasting covenant.

Questions for Children

Gather your children and ask them these simple recall questions to ensure they understand the historical reality and the spiritual truth of our lesson. It is important to teach our children about the war we are in, and that God and His people have enemies in this world.

1. What happened to the temple in Jerusalem? (Answer: It was burned and destroyed by the Babylonian enemies.)
2. How did the people feel when the temple was destroyed? (Answer: They felt sad and worried, thinking God had forgotten them or left them forever.)
3. Did God really leave His people forever? (Answer: No. God always remembers His covenant and His promises to His people.)

By answering these simple questions, our children learn that even when things seem very dark, God is still our King and our faithful Father.

Parent and Adult Reflection Questions

As parents and mature believers, we must look deeply within our own hearts. These theological reflection questions are designed to help you examine your own prayer life and your primary concerns in a world that often hates the things of God.

1. When you face hardship or read the news today, is your primary concern your own comfort and economic status, or are you truly grieved that God's name is being disrespected in our culture?

2. Have you ever prayed the words, "Lord, remember the covenant"? How does understanding God's unshakeable promises change the way you pray during times of deep affliction?
3. The Puritans taught that divine desertion is often God washing His sheep. How have you seen God use painful seasons to draw you into a closer, more constant dependence upon Him?

Take time to discuss these truths together. Let them correct your perspective, holding fast to the truth that God causes all things to work together for our good.

Family Prayer Prompt

Almighty God and heavenly Father, we bow before You today acknowledging that You are our King from of old. You are the sovereign Creator who set the boundaries of the earth, and You are the Redeemer who purchased us by the blood of Jesus Christ. Lord, we confess that we often worry about our own comfort more than we care about the honor of Your holy name. Forgive us. When our culture mocks Your truth, and when the enemies of God roar against Your Word, we ask that You would arise and plead Your own cause. Remember the covenant, Lord. Remember the promise You made to save and keep Your people. When we walk through dark valleys and feel as though You are distant, remind us that the Good Shepherd never abandons His sheep. Use our trials to wash us, to humble us, and to make us more dependent upon You. We ask these things in the precious and powerful name of Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.