

**PLEASE DON'T READ THESE NOTES UNTIL YOU HAVE COMPLETED YOUR LESSON.
YOU WILL ROB YOURSELF OF THE JOY OF DISCOVERY!**

**In case you don't have time to discuss all the questions,
be sure to ask your group which questions
they want discuss.**

BACKGROUND

Psalm 90 is distinctive for two reasons: First, it is the oldest Psalm in the Bible and second, it is the only Psalm authored by Moses.

Knowing the background and setting of this Psalm will help us understand its meaning.

Psalm 90 is a prayer written by Moses while he was leading the children of Israel as they wandered in the wilderness for 40 years. Because of their disobedience and lack of faith, God would not let Israel enter the Promised Land until everyone over twenty years old had died. (Read the story in **Numbers 13 & 14.**)

Even if we know the facts of this story, we often fail to comprehend the reality of it. **Did you ever think how many Israelites died in those forty years?** Bible scholars estimate that over a million adults had to die – about half of the population.

If you do the math (a million deaths in 40 years), it means that the children of Israel were experiencing seventy to eighty funerals a day! Added to their wandering and waiting was death and dying. It was the stuff of their everyday life. Death was knocking at their door – literally!

Even though our present-day experience differs from that of Moses and the children of Israel, Psalm 90 still has plenty to say to us today. Psalm 90 is a *Song of Wisdom*; it teaches us how to live life and relate to God. **This Psalm is about time – God's time and our time. The truth is that Times Flies and Life is Short! Each of us needs to evaluate how we use the precious gift of time. We need to regard each day as a valuable gift from God. We need to make the most of what little time we have!**

DISCUSSION STARTER

- If you only had two weeks to live, what is one thing you must do?
- Would you want to know the exact date you'll die? Why or why not?

PREPARATION

1. Before you read **Psalm 90**, ask the Holy Spirit to teach you and guide you into all truth (John 16:13). We have been using the prayer, *Holy Spirit, think through me until your ideas become my ideas*, or King David's prayer, *Open my eyes to see the wonderful truths in your law*.
2. Read **Psalm 90** slowly and thoughtfully in at least two translations. As you read and reread, mark any words or phrases that are meaningful to you and put a question mark by anything that you don't understand.
Since this is poetry, read Psalm 90 out loud using the following pattern:
Reader A: Verses 1-8
Reader B: Verses 9-16
All: Verse 17
3. What words would you use to describe your first impression after reading **Psalm 90**? (Be honest!)
Encourage several to share
4. What different images of God do you see throughout this Psalm?
Encourage several to share

QUESTIONS

5. What metaphor for God does Moses use in **90:1**? (*Metaphor* is explained in question 4 of the *Overview Lesson* for Psalms if you want a review.)

Dwelling place or Home

What does this metaphor or word picture say about our relationship with God?

There are all sorts of possibilities here. Home means we live with God and he wants to always be with us. It speaks of family. Home is where we can truly be ourselves – we don't have to pretend. Home is the place we always come back too. God has placed in every human heart a desire for "home" and therefore a desire for God himself.

- ♥ What kind of emotions does the word *home* (dwelling place) evoke in you? Does this fit your image of God? Why or why not?
- ♥ What are some metaphors for God that we have already seen in the Psalms? Can you think of any that complement the picture of God being our *dwelling place* or *home*?
- ♥ What does **John 14:23**, **Ephesians 2:19-22** and **Revelation 21:2-3** add to your understanding of God as a dwelling place?

Humans were made to live in community with God. Sin ruined what God intended, but Jesus came to restore what was lost. Jesus declared the Father's intention of living in the heart of the one who loves and obeys God. Paul tells us that in Jesus we are members of God's family and household; God not only wants to live in individual hearts, but the Spirit lives in the community of Christ. We are being built together to become the temple of God. In Revelation we see that what God always intended is finally restored forever – the dwelling of God is with people and God will be with us and will be our God FOREVER!

- ♥ How does recognizing God as your *dwelling place* or *home* affect your perspective of your earthly home and family?
6. Moses continues with his description of God in **90:2**. Make a list of everything you can learn about God from this verse.

God created the world and existed before it was created; God is without beginning or end; God intentionally created the world; God is outside of time.

- ♥ What particulars about God in **90:2** do you personally find comforting? Why?
- ♥ What do you think is the significance of God having no beginning and no end? What difference does it make?
- ♥ What impact does God's eternal nature have on the metaphor that he is our *home* or *dwelling place*?

God as our home or dwelling place is not temporary; this is forever!

7. From **90:2-6**, list all the ways you can see how God and humans differ.

God existed before humans

God is permanent and eternal

God is outside of time

Humans have a beginning and an end

God has no beginning or end

Humans live within time and cannot escape it

God controls birth and death

All humans eventually die

Human bodies decay after death

In the scope of eternity, human existence in earth is very short

- ♥ What do you think is the biggest difference between God and people? What difference is hardest to understand?
- ♥ God and humans experience time very differently. What does this difference reveal?

- ♥ Where did "time" come from? (**Genesis 1:5**) What does this add to your understanding of time and our existence in it?

Time is a creation of God, just as humans are. God created time for humans to live in. As a creation of God, time reflects something of his nature, expressed in the regularity and consistency of repeated events whose patterns are expressed in days, weeks, months, and years. While human beings experience these rhythms, the universe is not trapped in endlessly repeated cycles of events. Human beings experience "appointed times" – special moments of God's planning. The past and the future are realities and because God has an endless life span and is able to experience all of time, we can speak confidently about the past and future as he has revealed them to us.

- 8. In a sentence, sum up our existence as described in **90:3-6**.

Encourage several to share. In the span of eternity, our lives are very brief.

- ♥ What word pictures does Moses use in **90:3-6** that emphasize the briefness and fragility of life?

Dust, 100 years like a day or watch in the night; "sweep" men away; "sleep" of death; grass

Can you think of other images or word pictures that would also be effective?

- ♥ Does Moses' description of life in **90:3-6** make you feel optimistic or pessimistic? Why?

- ♥ Does the knowledge of your mortality affect the way you live your life? How?

This is a good question to discuss

- 9. David, too, comments on our earthly life in **Psalms 39:4-6**. In what ways does he agree with Moses in Psalm 90 and what word pictures does he use to emphasize the point?

David says life is fleeting; his days are a "handbreadth" (no longer than the width of our hands); our years are nothing compared to God; our life is a "breath"; we are a "phantom" or "shadow"

- ♥ To whom does David turn to for understanding in **39:4**? How can this help with our perspective on life? David turns to God for his understanding about life. Only God knows the past, present and future. God also knows the purpose for which we have been created and he alone knows how many days we have.

- ♥ Do you think David's perspective on wealth (**39:6**) is still valid today? Why or why not?

- 10. Did God design life to be what Moses and David described? Read **Genesis 2:7** and **3:17-19**. How do these verses help your understanding and perception of our existence?

God created us, but he did not create the consequences of sin that we live with all our lives.

We were created to live forever with God. Sin caused death and separation from God.

The consequence of sin also caused God's world to function differently from how he designed it.

All of the following heart questions can lead to good discussion and insight.

- ♥ Why is it important to remember that life is short?

- ♥ How often do you think about the shortness of our life on earth? What kind of circumstances will bring this topic to mind? Does this knowledge impact your priorities?

- ♥ Discuss how much you agree or disagree with this statement: *You don't really know how to live until you really know you're going to die.*

- 11. Read **90:7-11**. Besides life being short, what is another problem that affects our quality of life?

Our sin and God reaction to it

- 12. Who does the "we" and "our" refer to in these verses? (See **BACKGROUND** information.)

Moses is speaking for himself and the Israelites as they wandered in the desert

Why was this group of people experiencing God's wrath? (See **BACKGROUND** information or **Numbers 14:26-35**)

13. From **90:7-11**, what are some consequences of human sinfulness?

God's displeasure and a broken relationship with him
Pain and suffering in this life
Early death or brief life
Fear and anxiety

Psalm 90:10 - *The length of our days is seventy years – or eighty, if we have the strength. . .* In Psalm 90, Moses is interceding for the Israelites who are wandering in the wilderness waiting for the older generation to die before entering the Promised Land. Moses says most of them are dying at seventy years of age. This number has often been mistaken as a set span of life for all mankind. It was not intended to refer to anyone except those Israelites under the curse during that particular forty years. Seventy years never has been the average span of life for humanity. When Jacob, the father of the twelve tribes, had reached 130 years (Genesis 47:9), he complained that he had not attained to the years of his immediate ancestors. In fact, Moses himself lived to be 120 years old, Aaron 123, Miriam several years older, and Joshua 110 years of age. Note as well that in the Millennium (the 1000 year reign of Christ), a person dying at 100 will still be thought a child (Isaiah 65:20).
Amplified Bible Footnote for Psalm 90:10

- ♥ Even though we are not the Israelites wandering in the wilderness, what can we learn about God, sin and ourselves in **90:7-11**?
- ♥ **Why** is God so angry with disobedience and sin? Do you think his reaction is justified?
It is important to see that God is not angry just because we "broke his rules." God is angry at sin because of the consequences of sin. Sin separates us from God. Sin ruins God's creation. Sin hurts other people and ruins human relationships. Without God we are nothing and we cannot be what God intended us to be. Sin ruins everything. We were created to be "with God", not apart from him.
- ♥ How do you reconcile the view of God in **90:7-11** with the view given in **Psalm 139** (Lesson 12)?

14. To whom does Moses turn to for help in making sense of the human predicament? **90:12-17**

To God

What are some specific things he asks for in these verses?

He asks:

for God to teach them to number their days or make the most of their time
for Godly wisdom
for God to relent and show compassion
for the experience of God's love and joy and satisfaction
for good days to balance the bad days
to see miracles again – and God's splendor and glory
for God's favor and approval
for God to make their efforts (work of their hands) successful

15. Read **90:12** in all four translations. How would you explain what it means to "number our days aright"?

Hopefully you will get a variety of answers. We ask God to make our lives count and to teach us to use our time wisely. We ask that we may live well and with purpose. Without purpose, life has no point. We want to use our time right or correctly!

♥ How does **Ephesians 5:15-16** and **James 4:13-15** help in understanding this concept of making the most of our time?

We can't "make the most of our time" apart from God. We must make the choice to live wisely and making the most of every opportunity God gives us. We don't make our plans apart from God, but rather with Him. We don't know what the future holds, but God does.

16. Who teaches us to number our days aright? **90:12**

How do you envision this happening?

God teaches us this. Have several share how they see this happening.

- ♥ How do you number your days? a) *one at a time?* b) *make each one count?* c) *on a scale of 1 to 10?* d) *with a clock and calendar?* e) *lost count?*
- ♥ Why are our days and our time so important and not to be wasted?
- ♥ How long do you expect to live and how many more years does that give you? (No one, of course, knows for sure, but we all have expectations.) Calculate how many days you have **already lived**. If God gives you a lifespan of at least 85 years (31,025 days), how many days do you have left? How do you plan to live them? What will be your priorities?

17. If we allow God to teach us to number our days aright, what will we gain? **90:12**

Wisdom or heart of wisdom

WISDOM – The ability to judge correctly, discern right choices and to follow the best course of action, based on knowledge and understanding. Wisdom is also the quality which enables the planning and successful achievement of a goal. The Bible speaks of different kinds of wisdom. There is the *wisdom of the world, human wisdom, wisdom of this age* and *God's wisdom*. True wisdom belongs to God and may be given by him alone. It cannot be received by those who put confidence in worldly wisdom which is based upon human cleverness and insight without God's knowledge and revelation. We can ask for God's wisdom (James 1:5) and we can recognize God's wisdom because it is always pure, peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere (James 3:17). A reverential awe of God and respect for his Word is the foundation of Godly wisdom. A person who approaches each decision in life with a trust in God and his wisdom, rather than leaning on their own understanding, is truly wise and will make wise decisions. **Who is the source of your wisdom? God or human reasoning and understanding?**

18. If we live according to God's wisdom, what will God do for us? **90:17**

He will establish the work of our hands or make our efforts successful or confirm the work that we do

What would this look like in your life? **Have several share; we ask that God would grant permanent success of our work. Our life won't last, but our work can have eternal consequences.**

The following are good questions for discussion:

- ♥ When your life is over, what do you want to be remembered for?
- ♥ What "work" or "effort" of yours would you like to outlive you?

RESPONSE:

Take time to evaluate your life and the use of your time. Look at your schedule for the past week and the coming week and consider ways in which you have used time wisely and unwisely. Ask God to help you use your time in a way that pleases and honors him.

Knowing the truths of this lesson won't make any difference in our lives unless we choose to act on them. Encourage your group to discuss HOW they will act on what they have learned.

The gift of time can be used, misused or even abused. We can be too busy and burn our time or we can be too idle and waste our time. The key is balance (Mark 6:31). Where do you fall on the continuum?

Too Busy (Burning Time) ----- Too Idle (Wasting Time)

Life is short and we must value each day. Our choices have eternal consequences. God is the only one who can teach us to live this way. With his help, we can use our days wisely and make the most of our time!

Discuss what it means for our choices to have "eternal consequences"

On the next page is all the "extra scripture" from this lesson in case you want to make copies for your group so that you can easily read together the verses referred to in the questions.

John 14:23 Jesus replied, “If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.

Ephesians 2:19 Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God’s people and members of God’s household, **20** built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. **21** In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. **22** And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.

Revelation 21:2 I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. **3** And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God.

Genesis 1:5 God called the light “day,” and the darkness he called “night.” And there was evening, and there was morning—the first day.

Psalms 39:4 “Show me, O LORD, my life’s end and the number of my days; let me know how fleeting is my life. **5** You have made my days a mere handbreadth; the span of my years is as nothing before you. Each man’s life is but a breath. Selah **6** Man is a mere phantom as he goes to and fro: He bustles about, but only in vain; he heaps up wealth, not knowing who will get it.

Genesis 2:7 the LORD God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.

Genesis 3:17 To Adam he said, “Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, ‘You must not eat of it,’ “Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. **18** It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field. **19** By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return.”

Ephesians 5:15 Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, **16** making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil.

James 4:13 Now listen, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money.” **14** Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. **15** Instead, you ought to say, “If it is the Lord’s will, we will live and do this or that.”

John 14:23 Jesus replied, “All those who love me will do what I say. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and live with them.

Ephesians 2:19 So now you Gentiles are no longer strangers and foreigners. You are citizens along with all of God’s holy people. You are members of God’s family. **20** We are his house, built on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets. And the cornerstone is Christ Jesus himself. **21** We who believe are carefully joined together, becoming a holy temple for the Lord. **22** Through him you Gentiles are also joined together as part of this dwelling where God lives by his Spirit.

Revelation 21:2 And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven like a beautiful bride prepared for her husband. **3** I heard a loud shout from the throne, saying, “Look, the home of God is now among his people! He will live with them, and they will be his people. God himself will be with them.

Genesis 1:5 God called the light “day” and the darkness “night.” Together these made up one day.

Psalms 39:4 “LORD, remind me how brief my time on earth will be. Remind me that my days are numbered, and that my life is fleeing away. **5** My life is no longer than the width of my hand. An entire lifetime is just a moment to you; human existence is but a breath.” Interlude **6** We are merely moving shadows, and all our busy rushing ends in nothing. We heap up wealth for someone else to spend.

Genesis 2:7 And the LORD God formed a man’s body from the dust of the ground and breathed into it the breath of life. And the man became a living person.

Genesis 3:17 And to Adam he said, “Because you listened to your wife and ate the fruit I told you not to eat, I have placed a curse on the ground. All your life you will struggle to scratch a living from it. **18** It will grow thorns and thistles for you, though you will eat of its grains. **19** All your life you will sweat to produce food, until your dying day. Then you will return to the ground from which you came. For you were made from dust, and to the dust you will return.”

Ephesians 5:15 So be careful how you live, not as fools but as those who are wise. **16** Make the most of every opportunity for doing good in these evil days.

James 4:13 Look here, you people who say, “Today or tomorrow we are going to a certain town and will stay there a year. We will do business there and make a profit.” **14** How do you know what will happen tomorrow? For your life is like the morning fog—it’s here a little while, then it’s gone. **15** What you ought to say is, “If the Lord wants us to, we will live and do this or that.”