

Leader Notes – Lesson 6 – “That's Not Fair!” Psalm 37

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

These are suggested responses – your group may have even better answers!
Don't try to include everything and you may not need to use any of the below!
I make these comments to clarify and give some additional thoughts and suggestions.

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

BACKGROUND

Have someone read the Background out loud.

DISCUSSION STARTER

Have a few share their answers. You could add another question: ***Does anyone remember the first time they realized that life wasn't "fair?"*** Often these incidents make a big impression on us and stay in our memories.

PREPARATION

Have someone open in prayer asking the Holy Spirit to guide your discussion.

Read Psalm 37:1-11. If you want to use 2 readers follow this pattern:

Reader A: Verses 1-2; 5-6; 8-9

Reader B: Verses 3-4; 7; 10-11

Have several share what verse they chose to write out and why.

QUESTIONS

4. Give creative names to the two types of people that are described in **Psalm 37**.

Have several share their answers. I would love you to email me if you have some real creative answers!

WHO'S WHO?

The Psalms are simplistic in putting people into 2 large groups. The wicked or ungodly are simply those who are not in relationship with God. It doesn't mean that everything they do is wicked and evil. It just means they live by a different set of values than the person who is in a relationship with God.

5. From 37:7, put into your own words the main problem that this Psalm address. (Consider all the Bible versions.)

The problem is that people do wrong things and not only get away with it, but actually benefit from what they are doing!

6. Give a contemporary or current example of the situation described in 37:7. This could be something you have heard or read about or a more personal example from your own experience.

I'm sure your group will have many personal examples; generally, some examples are:

- Unfair reporting in the media
- People who cheat on taxes or cut corners in other ways
- Someone who spreads gossip or talks behind a person's back
- Someone making judgments and without knowing the whole story
- False accusations; spreading untruths, etc.
- Even Christians who seem to get away with wrong behavior

7. How does it make you feel when evil people prosper and are successful because of their wicked schemes?

Your group will probably share a range of feelings

What do you really want to see happen to those who do evil and yet enjoy success and prosperity?

Be honest! We usually want them to "get what is coming to them."

8. With godly wisdom, David informs us how to react in these circumstances, especially if the offense is against us. From each of the following verses, what are we told NOT to do? 37:1, 7, 8

Don't fret – Don't be envious of the wicked

Don't be angry or wrathful (turn from rage)

FRET is a much stronger word than just *worry*. It is the Hebrew word *charah* (pronounced khaw-row). It means to glow, grow warm or blaze up in anger, zeal or jealousy; to be displeased, grieve or be incensed.

Fretting is allowing yourself to be consumed by anger and rage. It is playing the offense over and over in your mind.

♥ When have you fretted over the behavior or lifestyle of an ungodly person (or group of people)?

Think of political agendas that upset you; groups of people that push their agendas

9. Considering the definition for fret, why do you think God says not to fret over unjust circumstances?

- Fretting doesn't change or resolve the situation
- Negative emotions hurt US
- Anger consumes us and leads to bitterness
- Anger, resentment, bitterness destroy FAITH in God's goodness and justice
- Anger prevents God from working in the situation
- We begin to act like the very ones we are angry with

From your experience, what evil or harm (37:8) does fretting lead to?

Have your group share from their personal experience

Anger is an emotion; we can't control whether we FEEL angry. However, we can choose how to REACT to our anger. God doesn't tell us not to be angry. Instead, he helps us deal with our anger. Fretting is giving into the anger.

♥ Where is our attention focused when we fret? (37:1, 7, 8) Why does this matter?

Our attention is focused on the ungodly person and their actions rather than God and his promises. We cannot have FAITH in God's promises unless we are focused on Him.

♥ One definition of fret is to create a hole or groove in something by constant wear or rubbing. Make a spiritual application of this definition and Psalm 37:1, 7, 8.

When we fret, we make a "rut" or "groove" in our minds (and heart). We create a habit that is hard to break. The fretting begins to consume us. We can't quit when we want to.

- ♥ How does the wisdom of **Proverbs 15:18** apply to the command to not fret?
- ♥ Why might you be tempted to envy those who do wrong? (**37:1; Proverbs 3:31**)

We may wish we could do the same things and reap the benefits! It seems they are getting away with it.

10. Instead of fretting, how are we to respond when evil people prosper and are successful because of their wicked schemes? Notice the different wording from the 4 versions of the Bible

VERSE	POSITIVE ACTIONS AND ATTITUDES
37:3	Trust in the Lord – do good
37:4	Take delight in God
37:5	Commit my way (everything) to God
37:7	Be still or at rest in the Presence of God – wait patiently for Him
37:8	Stop your anger! Turn from rage

11. Read 37:3 (Amplified Bible) and Proverbs 3:5-6. Explain in your own words what it means to trust in the Lord.

Have several share – Trusting is believing God’s promises regardless of your feelings or circumstances. Trusting is relying on God and not on my own thoughts and perceptions and solutions. I bring God into everything in my life.

From 37:1-11, list several things that we are trusting God to do.

- v. 2 – that the ungodly won’t last forever – they will wither and die away
- v. 4 - God will give me the desires of my heart if I delight in Him
- v. 6 – He will make my righteousness (innocence) shine like the dawn; the justice of my cause like the noonday sun
- v. 9 – the wicked will be cut off or destroyed – but those who trust in the Lord will possess the **LAND**
- v. 10 – The wicked will eventually disappear – God is not going to let them get away with what they are doing.
- v. 11 - The godly MEEK will inherit the LAND

Meaning of **LAND** – dwelling in the land, possess and inheriting the land are mentioned several times in the Psalm. Land in the Old Testament was more than just a piece of property. It represents the blessing and presence of God. To make application for us today, to dwell or possess the land would mean that we are enjoying the presence of God in our lives; that we are in relationship with him and experience and enjoy the benefits he gives to his children. We belong to the family of God. We can call God our Father.

MEEK (v. 11) – A meek person is not a weak person or a doormat. Meekness means your strength is under control and you choose how to react. Meekness means you could do something to get even, but you choose not to. Jesus was meek – he was not weak and he was not a doormat. His strength was under the control of the Holy Spirit and the Father.

- ♥ What do you need to trust God for right now?
- ♥ Someone has said, *Faith cures fretting*. Do you agree or disagree? Support your answer.

You can’t trust and fret at the same time; it’s impossible! You can choose to do one or the other. Extra heart question:

- ♥ V. 3 says “Trust in the Lord AND DO GOOD. How does “doing good” help the situation? What effect might it have on trusting and fretting?

12. From what you have learned in the Psalms (especially Lessons 2 & 5 [Ps. 95, 100, 34]), how do you delight yourself in the Lord.

Delighting in God is enjoying him, worshipping him and telling him how wonderful he is. It involves praising him and thanking him. If we delight in someone, we enjoy their company; we spend time with them. When we worship God, He meets us and we are changed.

♥ What connection do you see between *delighting in the Lord* and receiving the *desires of your heart*? Are you earning God's good favor? Why or why not?

We are not earning God's favor but we are changed when we delight in him. The more time we spend with God, enjoying his company, the more our heart changes. Our desires mirror his desires.

♥ What do **Matthew 6:32-33** and **Nehemiah 8:10** add to the meaning of **37:4**?

When we make God a priority – putting him first – he makes sure we have everything we need. Delighting in God is JOY – and the Joy of the Lord makes us strong.

13. Read **37:5** (Amplified Bible) and **Psalm 55:22**, **Proverbs 16:3** and **1 Peter 5:7**. Explain in your own words what it means to commit your way to the Lord.

Have several share. Commit means that give our cares to God for him to carry! I roll off on him my anxiety, plans, dreams and hopes. God invites us to do this! Nothing is too difficult for him. Jesus is yoked to us and he carries the weight. God invites us to commit everything to him – and then he promises success for us! What a deal! It's a win, win situation!

14. Read **37: 6** in all four Bible versions. What is God's promise to us if we commit our way to the Lord?

He will vindicate us in broad daylight for all to see. He will set everything right and it will be as obvious as the DAWN and as bright as the NOONDAY SUN.

15. David uses two word pictures in **37:6**. What do you "see" when you read this verse and how does the imagery enhance God's promise?

Have several share their answers.

DAWN – what was in darkness and hard to see suddenly becomes clear

NOONDAY SUN – At noon there is no darkness or even shadows. It is no brighter time of day.

God will make things clear!

♥ Light is a symbol of truth because it exposes what is wrong or false. According to **1 Corinthians 4:5**, how will God use his light to finally work justice? Is this a comforting or disturbing thought for you?

Comforting when we think of our enemies, perhaps disturbing when we consider ourselves!

♥ How might the imagery in **37:6** be linked to the imagery in **37:2**?

The righteousness and innocence of the godly is compared to the brightness of the hot sun. The hot sun is the very thing that makes grass wither and green plants die (if there is not water.) It is our righteousness that will expose the wicked and show them for who they are.

16. Read **37:7** (Amplified Bible) and **Exodus 14:14**, **Psalm 46:10**, **Isaiah 30:15**, and **Isaiah 40:31**. Explain in your own words why it's so important that we be still before the Lord, resting in him and waiting patiently for him.

Ex. 14:14 – When I cease from striving and trying to solve things myself, God will fight for me

Ps. 46:10 – I can't really know God, trust him and rely on him until I'm still and stop my own efforts and fretting. When I truly see God for who he is – I can trust him and know he will take care of me

Is. 30:15 – repentance means turning and in this case we are turning to God. Rest is letting God do it and he saves us. When we quietly trust and have confidence in him, we are strong.

Is. 40:31 – As we wait on the Lord – we actually become strong. He renews our strength. We will do everything we were doing before (run and walk) but now we won't be tired or defeated.

♥ Why is stillness and waiting so hard? Why does God often refuse to act until we are at rest?

Extra Heart question:

♥ HOW do we rest, be still and wait on the Lord?

♥ Consider the positive actions of *trust, delight, commit, rest* and *wait*. Why are these better strategies than fretting when we are oppressed by the ungodly? Which are you strongest in? Weakest in?

♥ When have you waited for God's answer or solution? Was it worth it? Why or why not?

The above "heart" questions is where you small group can apply what they have learned.

Encourage discussion on these questions.

17. Why can we wait on God when the ungodly succeed in their wicked schemes instead of taking things into our own hands? 37:2, 9, 10

God promises that in the end all will be exposed and the ungodly will not get away with what they have done.

♥ Does God say *when* his justice will be seen? Is it enough to know that someday everything will be made right? Why or why not? We are not promised this justice in our life time – but that doesn't mean we won't see it in this life. The important thing is that God promises to take care of us.

♥ How is the message of this Psalm countercultural? Will this strategy of dealing with personal oppression really work in today's world? Why or why not?

Let several share. Our culture says, "Don't just stand there. Do something!" "Take care of yourself because no one else will." God wisdom is just the opposite. The world will not understand what we are doing.

RESTING IN AND WAITING ON God doesn't mean that you never do anything about injustice. God may call you to do something. The important thing is that we WAIT until God tells us to do something. We don't take things into our own hands and try to work our own solutions. God will never tell you to take revenge on a person. He says the vengeance belongs to him and he will repay the wrong done. (Romans 12:19)

♥ How can God use the suffering of the righteous for his purposes? 1 Peter 1:6-7; 4:12-13; James 1:2-4

The good news is that God uses even the bad things that happen to us for his purposes and good. Nothing is wasted with him. He will work all things together for good. In the end, we are the winners!

RESPONSE:

♥ Since Job, good people have been asking why bad things happen to them. How would you sensitively encourage a Christian who is oppressed because of the schemes of the ungodly?

18. What people or circumstances in your life do you need to stop trying to change or fix and instead trust, delight, commit, rest and wait? How will you start the process?

Most of us have things we have been trying to do ourselves instead of letting God. Let this be a time to encourage each other to trust, delight, commit, rest and wait.

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.

Proverbs 15:18 A hot-tempered man stirs up dissension, but a patient man calms a quarrel.

Proverbs 3:31 Do not envy a violent man or choose any of his ways,

Proverbs 3:5-6 Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; 6 in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.

Matthew 6:32-33 For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. 33 But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

Nehemiah 8:10 Nehemiah said, “Go and enjoy choice food and sweet drinks, and send some to those who have nothing prepared. This day is sacred to our Lord. Do not grieve, for the joy of the LORD is your strength.”

Psalms 55:22 Cast your cares on the LORD and he will sustain you; he will never let the righteous fall.

Proverbs 16:3 Commit to the LORD whatever you do, and your plans will succeed.

1Peter 5:7 Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.

1Corinthians 4:5 Therefore judge nothing before the appointed time; wait till the Lord comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of men’s hearts. At that time each will receive his praise from God.

Exodus 14:14 The LORD will fight for you; you need only to be still.”

Psalms 46:10 “Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth.”

Isaiah 30:15 This is what the Sovereign LORD, the Holy One of Israel, says: “In repentance and rest is your salvation, in quietness and trust is your strength, but you would have none of it.

Isaiah 40:31 but those who hope in (wait on) the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.

1Peter 1:6-7 In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. 7 These have come so that your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.

1Peter 4:12-13 Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. 13 But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed.

James 1:2-4 Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, 3 because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. 4 Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.