

Leader Notes – Lesson 9 – "God Talk" Psalm 19

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

Facilitator: You many want to provide index cards for your group so that everyone can participate in the exercise given the Response section.

BACKGROUND

Did anyone go to the Hubble website? What was their reaction to the pictures? How did the images speak to them of God?

DISCUSSION STARTER

- What is the most beautiful, breath-taking view of nature that you have ever seen? Did it speak to you of God? How?

PREPARATION

1. Before you read **Psalm 19**, 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 19** 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.

Read Psalm 19 together:

Reader A – Verses 1-6

Reader B – Verses 7-13

All – Verse 14

3. If we were to divide this Psalm into three parts called, *Knowing God through His World; Knowing God through His Word; and Knowing God through Living His Way*, where do you think the **verse divisions** would fall?
God's World – verses 1-6
God's Word – verses 7-11
God's Way – verses 12-14
4. Would you type Psalm 19 as a *Song of Wisdom, Song of Praise and Worship, Song of Lament* or *Song of Trust*? Why? (Definitions for these Psalms can be found on the first page of the Overview Lesson.)

Psalm 19 is considered a Wisdom Psalm because it mainly instructs us how to live life and relate to God

QUESTIONS

KNOWING GOD THROUGH HIS WORLD

- ♥ Read 19:1 in all four versions of Scripture. When you hear or read the words “heavens” and “skies” what images come to mind?

Have several share

5. What, specifically, do the heavens and the skies do? **19:1,2**

The heavens declare or tell of God's glory. They display or proclaim God's handiwork, craftsmanship and creativity. The heavens and skies continuously (day and night) "speak" of God and who he is

The *glory of God* is the beauty and excellence of his multiple and diverse accomplishments. The glory of God is an attempt to put into words what God is like in his magnificence, beauty and purity. It refers to his infinite and overflowing fullness of all that is good. God's glory is his majesty and splendor. His glory is his beauty that inspires feelings of wonder and joy. It is the perfect harmony of all God's characteristics into one infinitely beautiful and personal being.

♥ Why do you think God "shows off" this way?

Because he wants to be known. He is revealing himself and who he is. God created humans to be in relationship with him and creation is one way he universally communicates with every human. God enjoys showing his creativity, just as we do. God loves beautiful things and he made us to enjoy them too. (Your group may have other reasons as to why God "shows off".)

6. How, in particular, do the heavens *declare* the glory of God? **Romans 1:20** may help you in your answer.

Creation shows God's excellence, magnificence, intelligence, creativity, etc. When a person observes the created world, especially the heavens, it is obvious that something bigger than ourselves created all this. All of this is so obvious that God says no one is without excuse when it comes to knowing there is a God.

The faithfulness of creation also declares God's glory. The sun rises and sets everyday in the same way. The seasons come and go year in and year out. God has purposely made his existence obvious to everyone.

♥ Read **19:3** in the *NLT and Amplified versions*. What kind of communication does the heavens use? Do you think this type of communication is effective? Why or why not? Can this type of communication be used between God and us? If so, how?

The heavens use nonverbal communication. There is no words, concepts, thoughts. Instead it's visual communication which is very effective. We say, "A picture is worth a thousand words." God can use all sorts of things to communicate with us and us with him. He can give us pictures or direct us by circumstances. We can show our love to him by how we live – our obedience and actions.

7. To *whom* do the heavens and the skies speak? **19:4**

To all the earth and the ends of the world – no one is excluded

Is the truth about God's glory and handiwork obvious to everyone? **Yes**

Why do some people hear and see it and others don't?

We can choose ignore the evidence and provide other explanations.. God won't force a person to believe. People will continually ignore the evidence because if they admit that God made the heavens and the earth, they have to admit that God also made them. That leads to responsibility. If we are created by a personal God, then we are not our own. If I admit there is a God behind everything, then I have to admit that I came from that God and I will probably return to him or at least I will be accountable to him after I die. Admitting that will effect the way I live.

Once a person admits that God created our world, the admission automatically leads to all sorts of unavoidable implications. You cannot admit that God created with a

design and a purpose and then ignore or call untrue everything else that fact leads to; it would be illogical and intellectually dishonest. That is why we see people in our culture now who are absolutely adamant that "Intelligent Design" cannot not be taught along with "Evolution." If they open the door just a crack on Intelligent Design, their worldview would crumble.

Case in point:

U.S. District Judge John E. Jones on Dec. 20 delivered a stinging rebuke to the Dover Area School Board, saying its first-in-the-nation decision in October 2004 to insert intelligent design into the science education curriculum violates the constitutional separation of church and state.

The ruling was a major setback to the intelligent design movement, which is also waging battles in Georgia and Kansas. **Intelligent design holds that living organisms are so complex that they must have been created by some kind of higher force.**

Jones decried the "breathtaking inanity" of the Dover policy and accused several board members of lying to conceal their true motive, which he said was to promote religion.

A six-week trial over the issue yielded "overwhelming evidence" establishing that intelligent design "is a religious view, a mere re-labeling of creationism, and not a scientific theory," said Jones . . .

"ID is an interesting theological argument, but ... it is not science," Jones wrote in a 139-page ruling. "Our conclusion today is that it is unconstitutional to teach ID as an alternative to evolution."

This is a case of God allowing people to ignore the overwhelming evidence and to choose to believe the way they want. Love and faith cannot be forced – not even by God.

8. What we create as personalities and persons is a reflection of who we are. What do we know about God from observing the work of his hands in the heavens? Consider the heavens and list as many of the revealed characteristics of God that you can think of.

For starters:

Powerful, intelligent, eternal, beautiful, orderly, radiant, vast (BIG), creative, faithful, regularity, incessant, universal, brilliant, diverse, majestic, grand and awesome

I'm sure your group will have even more words!

9. Reflect on the vastness of the heavens. Some of the starlight we see today left the stars thousands and thousands of years ago. Our galaxy, the Milky Way, has 200 billion stars. The nearest galaxy, Andromeda, is 200 million light years away. David describes the heavens as the work of God's "hands". What is David implying about God by using the image of God's hands?

The implication is that if God's "hands" made the vastness of the heavens – heavens that our probes have not even come to the end of yet, than God must be so much greater and powerful and bigger and awesome than the heavens that he created. If we cannot even wrap our minds around the heavens, how much more so the God that created those heavens with his "hands."

- ♥ When a person truly sees the work of God's hands, what would be a reasonable response?
- ♥ How can you become more attentive to what God is declaring through creation?

10. In **19:4-6**, David describes the sun and its role in the heavens as a metaphor for God. Why is the sun a good *metaphor* for God and how is God "like" the sun?

The sun is a good metaphor for God because it is the source of our light and heat and without it we would die. The sun is powerfully brilliant. David says in 19:6 that nothing is hidden from the sun's heat. This, too, is a picture of God. Nothing is

hidden from him and no one can avoid him. The sun is also "faithful" and "regular" and unchanging. It makes its daily triumphant sweep across the whole extent of the heavens and pours out its warmth on every creature. This, too, is what God is like.

♥ What is the advantage of David focusing on the *heavens* and *skies* to demonstrate God's majesty and glory rather than some earthly beauty? Everyone sees the heavens and the skies no matter where they live on the globe. The heavens, basically, are "untouched" and unpolluted by humans and more purely declare God's glory.

♥ What in creation impresses you most with a sense of God's glory? What effect does it have on you?

11. When we realize the vastness of the heavens, it naturally makes us feel small and insignificant. David responds to this dilemma in **Psalm 8:3-9**. Are we insignificant? What is our place in creation?

5 For you made us only a little lower than God, and you crowned us with glory and honor. **6** You put us in charge of everything you made, giving us authority over all things—

When compared to God, we are insignificant – yet God does not view us that way at all. We are made in his image and creation is a gift to us – to rule and take care of. God has given humans authority over his creation! Humans are very important in God's plan!

12. List two or three of the biggest concerns you are dealing with in your life right now, either personally or with your loved ones. (You won't be asked to share these unless you want to.)

Is the intelligent, powerful, creative God that made with his "hands" the vast and beautiful universe able to "handle" the problems you've listed above? Are any of these situations too difficult for him? Do any of them baffle his intelligence, creativity or power? *Write a short prayer* praising him for his abilities as you place these concerns in his "hands" for him to work out.

Have some share in your group if they would like to

♥ What images come to mind as you picture your problems passing from your hands to God's hands?

KNOWING GOD THROUGH HIS WORD

13. God revealing himself in nature wonderful, but it is limited. What are some things we would never know about God and our relationship to him through nature alone?

Nature tells us that God exists and reveals some of his person and characteristics. But we need the words of God to meet him and know him have a personal relationship with him. God reveals himself in his written word. We can know his plan for us and our purpose for living. We would know nothing of salvation from sin if we only knew God through nature. Jesus is the Living Word of God. Nature is wonderful, but it's not enough.

14. Besides creation, what other ways has God revealed himself and his truth to us?

Spoken word, visions and dreams to the prophets who then wrote down what they heard so that we have the written Word of God. God gave Moses the Law. God also revealed himself in Jesus, the Living Word of God, who is the exact representation of God. All Scripture was written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

15. What synonyms does David use for God's Word in **19:7-9**?

Law, statutes or decrees, precepts or commandments, commands, ordinances or laws

♥ Why do you think David uses several synonyms for the Word of God? What do these words reveal about the role of Scripture? **The synonyms show how all inclusive the Word is, shows the variety or purposes the Word has, shows how God's Word can be used. We benefit in many different ways from God's Word.**

16. What *adjectives* does David use to describe the *character* of God's Word in **19:7-9**?

Perfect, trustworthy, right, radiant (clear), pure, sure and righteous (fair)

♥ Why is it important to know these things about Scripture? **If we are going to base our life on God's Word and trust it, we need to know that it is true and trustworthy. It can't be sort of true.**

17. In **19:7-9**, what four effects can the Word of God have on our lives? (Refer to at least two versions of Scripture.)

Revives the soul or restoring the whole person

Makes the simple wise

Gives joy to the heart

Light to the eyes or insight to life

♥ *Why* and *how* does God's Word affect us this way?

God's Word has this effect on us because it is alive and powerful. You can't separate God's words from God himself. The written word has the ability to speak to our individual hearts. The written word comes "alive" and speaks a personal word to us

♥ What are some specific ways you have been changed through God's Word?

18. Are the effects of **19:7-9** automatic for someone reading and studying God's Word? Consider **19:11, 14** in your answer.

Just reading and studying God's Word does not mean we have an encounter with God. We need to obey, follow and believe (put our trust in) God's Word. We need to live it. We need a heart knowledge not just a head knowledge. It is possible to study and read God's Word and learn a lot about God and his Word, but not know God himself in relationship.

♥ Which of the blessings in **19:7-9** would you like to experience in greater measure? Why?

19. In **19:10**, David expresses the *value* of God's Word in his life. Put this verse into your own words.

Have several share creative ways of describing the value and sweetness of God's Word

♥ Practically, how can the Scripture be more valuable than your most precious possessions and sweeter than your greatest pleasures?

♥ What "wealth" and "luxuries" are you tempted to make more important than God's Word?

20. *Why* does David consider God's Word to be so valuable? **19:11**

God's Word warns us about living harmful ways and there are benefits and rewards when we obey and live life God's way. God created life and the Bible is his instruction manual on how life should be lived.

♥ Give an example of how you have been *warned* or *rewarded* through Scripture.

KNOWING GOD THROUGH LIVING HIS WAY

As we know and experience God through his *creation* and his *Word*, our hearts will desire to please him.

21. In **19:12-13**, what two kinds of sins does David pray to be delivered from?

Hidden faults and willful sins

What is the difference between these types of sins?

Hidden faults are sins we might not even be aware of; sins we don't even see because we are sinful human beings. We may do things that are wrong, but we aren't aware yet that they are wrong. Willful sins are sins that we commit, for whatever reason, even though we know they are wrong. We deliberately choose to go our own way.

♥ Why do we need God's help when dealing with both types of sin?

22. What two things does David request in **19:14**?

That the words of his mouth and the meditation (thoughts) of his heart be acceptable to God

♥ According to **Ephesians 4:29, 5:4** and **Philippians 4:8**, which words and thoughts are pleasing to God and which are not?

♥ What do you think is more important to God: Our *thoughts* or our *words* or our *deeds*? Why?

All are important, but words and deeds or actions always begin and come from our thoughts. If our thoughts are obedient and pleasing to God, our words and actions will also please him.

23. Why does David refer to God as his Rock in **19:14**? **Psalm 18:2**

David sees God as a Rock because He is David's fortress, deliverer, and one that he takes refuge in

♥ How is God your Rock?

♥ We think of Jesus as our Redeemer, but David lived before Christ. According to **Deuteronomy 9:26**, why does David call God his Redeemer? How is God your Redeemer?

RESPONSE

Psalm 19 ends with one of the most beautiful and powerful prayers found in all the Psalms. If you memorized only one verse from the Psalms, this would be a good one! **Write this verse out on a card and keep in visible for one week.** Pray it over and over when your mind is free. Meditate on the phrases in this verse. **Ponder what God desires from you. Ponder on what God wants to give you.** Share with your small group next week how God spoke to you through this verse.

Encourage your group to do this! You may even want to bring index cards for them to write the verse on. When we ponder and mull over God's Word for a length of time, God will speak personally to us! God's Word is powerful and effective, but we have to give it time to do its work.

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.

Romans 1:20 For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.

Psalm 8:3 When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, **4** what is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him? **5** You made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor. **6** You made him ruler over the works of your hands; you put everything under his feet: **7** all flocks and herds, and the beasts of the field, **8** the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea, all that swim the paths of the seas.

Ephesians 4:29 Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.

Ephesians 5:4 Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving.

Philippians 4:8 Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.

Psalms 18:2 The LORD is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer; my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge. He is my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.

Deuteronomy 9:26 I prayed to the LORD and said, "O Sovereign LORD, do not destroy your people, your own inheritance that you redeemed by your great power and brought out of Egypt with a mighty hand.