



LESSON 13: THE TIME OF YOUR LIFE!

PSALM 90

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.

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.
3. What words would you use to describe your first impression after reading **Psalm 90**? (Be honest!)
4. What different images of God do you see throughout this Psalm?

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!

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.)

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

- ♥ 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?
 - ♥ 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.
- ♥ 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*?
7. From **90:2-6**, list all the ways you can see how God and humans differ.
- ♥ 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?
8. In a sentence, sum up our existence as described in **90:3-6**.
- ♥ What word pictures does Moses use in **90:3-6** that emphasize the briefness and fragility of life? 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?
9. David, too, comments on our earthly life in **Psalms 39:4-6**. In what ways does he agree with Moses in Psalm 90 what word pictures does he use to emphasize the point?

- ♥ To whom does David turn to for understanding in **39:4**? How can this help with our perspective on life?
 - ♥ 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?

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

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?

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?
 - ♥ 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**

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

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

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

16. Who teaches us to number our days aright? **90:12**
How do you envision 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 – 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**

What would this look like in your life?

♥ 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.

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!