



LESSON 5: TASTE AND SEE!

PSALM 34

BACKGROUND

Psalm 34 is a *Song of Thanksgiving and Praise*. David wrote this Psalm in thanks and praise to God after a narrow escape when he was running from King Saul. After seeking sanctuary with a foreign king, Achish king of Gath, David found out that the court of Achish was not the refuge he had hoped it would be. In order to escape, David acted like a crazy man. The king was fooled by David's antics and David was able to make his get-away. (**1 Samuel 21:10-22:2**)

After David found refuge in a cave, he was joined by other misfits who were in trouble, in debt or just discontented. These became his "band of brothers" who stuck with him until he became king after Saul's death. The complete story can be found in **1 Samuel 20-22**. It would make a great movie plot!

This Psalm is an acrostic with each verse beginning with a successive letter in the Hebrew alphabet. David begins this Psalm by declaring his intent to praise God and invites his audience to join him. He then shares why he is praising God and goes on to give some advice about living a righteous life. He closes the Psalm by again praising God.

The heading for this Psalm says that it was written when David pretended to be insane before *Abimelech*, whereas the story in 1 Samuel says it was before king *Achish*. These are not two different people; *Abimelech* is just another word or title meaning *king*.

DISCUSSION STARTER

- When was a time you narrowly escaped danger or death?

PREPARATION

1. Before you read **Psalm 34**, 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 34** slowly and thoughtfully in at least two translations. As you read and reread, mark any words or phrases that you like.
3. **Psalm 34** can be divided into 4 sections. Give a short *title* or *summary word* to each section.

Verses 1-3 _____

Verses 4-7 _____

Verses 8-14 _____

Verses 15-22 _____

QUESTIONS

4. What commitments does David make in **34:1-2**?

♥ Why do you think David declared what he intended to do?

5. What do David's words, *I will* (**34:1**), divulge about the activity of praise?

6. What does David say in **34:1** that tells us *when* to praise God?

7. *How* does David praise God in **34:1**?

What activities might this involve?

♥ Can we be forced or compelled to praise God? Why or why not?

♥ Can you think of a time or situation when it would *not* be possible to praise God? Explain.

♥ Do we praise God for his benefit or ours? Explain.

8. What connotation does the word *boast* usually hold?

Why do you think it is okay to *boast* in the Lord? **34:2**

How can we *boast* in the Lord?

♥ How can we "overdo it" when praising another person? How does it make you feel when this is done? Can we "overdo it" when praising God? Why or why not?

♥ What are some specific things that God has done for you this week that you can *boast* about?

♥ What could David have boasted about (**1 Sam. 21:10-15**)? When have you been tempted to take the credit for something God did?

9. What would cause the *afflicted* (discouraged) to *rejoice* (take heart) when they hear someone boasting in God? **34:2**

♥ Can you think of a time that this was your experience?

♥ What might happen if *you* praised God out loud when *you* were afflicted or discouraged?

10. What do you think is the value of praising God *with* someone? **34:3**

♥ Who can you invite to praise God with you? What will you do?

11. David praises God because God is responsive to our needs and our calls for help. Fill in the chart below to discover how God responds to us. Use both the NIV and NLT translations.

	<i>If we ...</i>	<i>God will ..</i>
v. 4		
v. 5		
v. 6		
v. 7		

12. Look at the first column of the your chart. Why do you think God often requires us to "take the first step" before he intervenes in our situation?

♥ What will you do the next time you are afraid or in a difficult situation?

David asked to be delivered from his *fears*. Fear is the unpleasant emotion of dread, fright, panic, worry or terror caused by the presence of evil or danger threatening you or the ones you love. Fear can also be aroused by an anticipation of what might happen (fear of the unknown) to you or your loved ones. This kind of fear often expresses itself in worry or anxiety.

13. What two things did David do when he was controlled by fear? **Psalm 56:3-4, 10-11**

Why or *how* do these two things work against fear?

♥ Do you think these two things would work for you when you are afraid? Why or why not?

♥ Does God ever want us to live in fear? Support your answer.

♥ Is it possible to be delivered from fear and not your circumstances? Explain.

Another meaning of fear in Scripture is a **good** fear - the *fear of the Lord*. David refers to it three times in this Psalm (verses 7, 9, 11). This kind of fear is an attitude toward God which expresses itself in awe or reverence for who God is. To fear God means we reject every competing deity and serve God only. Fear of God is expressed by walking in his ways and loving and serving him with all that we are. To fear God is to trust him and all his promises. The antidote to our fears is the *fear of the Lord*!

14. What are some things that God promises to those who fear him? **Psalm 25:12, 14; 34:9; 103:11, 13**

♥ Think of some ways that you can *express* or *show* an awesome reverence or fear of God.

15. What invitation does David extend in **34:8**?

Why do we taste something before we eat it?

Why is David encouraging us to *taste* God and his goodness?

16. To *taste and see* means "Try it! You'll like it!" What are some specific things mentioned in **Psalm 34** that you could *try* in order to see if God is good and true to his promises?

If a person *tasted* and did experience God's goodness, what would be the next step?

- ♥ Which of the things you listed in Question 16, do you need to *try* or *taste* right now?
- ♥ Share with your group a time you did "try God out" and what the results were.

17. What must we do to experience a good life? **34:12-14**

- ♥ What does it mean to seek peace and pursue it? How does this apply to God? Others? Society?

18. Read **34:15-22**. List all the *actions* of God in these verses.

What one descriptive word could you use to describe God in these verses?

- ♥ The apostle John saw **34:20** as fulfilled in Jesus (**John 19:33-36**). According to **Exodus 12:43-46**, why is this significant?
- ♥ How might these verses (**34:15-22**) be Jesus' testimony, as well as David's?

RESPONSE

19. David began this Psalm with some *I will . . .* statements. Look back over the lesson and write some *I will . . .* statements about things *you* will do concerning praise, fears, trust, tasting, etc.

- ♥ Copy these statements onto a card and put them someplace where you will see them often.

20. Can you give God 15 minutes of undivided attention this week to just praise him? Plan a time to be alone with God with no interruptions. Use this time to just praise God for who he is and what he has done. Don't pray for anyone; don't ask God for anything. Praise him using the language of the heart (music, art, creative writing, imagination or visualization, silence or stillness) to adore him. Let your *soul* boast in God!

Those who look to him are radiant! Taste and see that the Lord is good!