



LESSON 6: THAT'S NOT FAIR!

PSALM 37

BACKGROUND

But that's not fair! is the first thing children learn to say when they began to realize that good is not always rewarded and bad is not always punished. We may not verbalize it like children do, but as adults, we echo the same cry in our hearts when we see people who do dishonest and spiteful things not only get off scot-free, but actually seem to benefit from their wrong behavior. Where is God, anyway? Doesn't he see what is going on?

Psalm 37 addresses this very issue. People who live ungodly lives often prosper, while those who try to obey God often suffer. This Psalm was written in David's old age (37:25), after years of experience and meditation. David doesn't try to provide an explanation for this dilemma, but he does teach us how to respond to this seeming injustice.

This makes **Psalm 37** is a Song of Wisdom. It gives us advice about living life and relating to God. In this Psalm, we see that God *is* aware of what's going on; he *does* care and he *will* eventually act. We can trust God's righteousness and justice, David assures us. In the end, things will be "fair."

The main message of this Psalm is found in the first eleven verses. Verses 12-41 reinforce and expand the meaning of the Psalm by giving specific examples of the truths already stated. In this lesson, we will look closely at **verses 1-11**.

DISCUSSION STARTER

- What do you worry about the most?
- Share a time when you or your family were deeply affected by the unjust actions of another.

PREPARATION

1. Before you read **Psalm 37**, 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 37:1-11** 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. Write out a verse from **Psalm 37** that would be good to remember and perhaps memorize.

QUESTIONS

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

WHO'S WHO? The Psalms often speak of the *righteous person* (godly, blameless, upright) as compared to the *wicked person* (evil, ungodly, unrighteous). In the Psalms, the *wicked* are people who care nothing for God; they are self-centered and live life by their own rules, without regard to the concerns of others. The *righteous*, on the other hand, are in relationship with God and live life to please God, not themselves. They are concerned for others because they reflect God's righteous and loving character.

- ♥ According to the above explanation, which definition describes you?
5. From **37:7**, put into your own words the main problem that this Psalm addresses. (Consider all the Bible versions.)
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.
7. How does it make you *feel* when evil people prosper and are successful because of their wicked schemes?

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

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**

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

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

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

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

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

10. Instead of fretting, how are we to respond when evil people prosper and are successful because of their wicked schemes?

VERSE	POSITIVE ACTIONS AND ATTITUDES
37:3	
37:4	
37:5	
37:7	
37:8	

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

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

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

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*.

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

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*.

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

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?

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

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.

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

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

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?