

Psalms 40-41 – John Karmelich

1. As I read through this entire lesson, trying to figure out how to best summarize it, I kept coming back to the concept of "worship". That became my one word title for this lesson. Let me start by explaining what worshipping God is and what it includes.
 - a) Worship is more than publicly or privately declaring our loyalty to God. Worship is the concept of telling God that He is in charge of our lives and it is our desire to be pleasing to Him in all that we do. Worshipping is not just telling God in effect how much we love Him or need Him. It is about making a full time effort to be pleasing to Him. Saying we love God but not following through with our actions is a waste of time. That is why worship must include how we act in our lives.
 - b) God is interested in every aspect of our lives and He wants to be in charge of every aspect of our lives. That doesn't mean we have to think about God every moment of the day. It does mean that He cares about the big and little things of our lives and how that affects our ability to be a good witness for Him. In short, it is about caring about our behavior as a Christian and caring how we are to make a difference for Him in our lives.
2. With that said, what I see in this lesson is example after example of giving God our issues. In some ways, this lesson reminds me of the whole "Sermon on the Mount" lecture in the Gospel of Matthew, Chapters 5-7. What I mean by that is the Sermon on the Mount (as a whole) was about letting God be in charge of "this issue" and "that issue" of our lives.
 - a) The mistake we make as Christians is we give God "this issue or that issue", but we still want to be in charge of "x" aspect of our lives. That is why the Sermon on the Mount discusses issue after issue that God wants to be in charge over our life.
 - i) Living the Christian life is about learning to turn every aspect of our lives over to Him. It is about taking the issues we are struggling with (our problems of the moment) and telling God in effect, "This is Your problem as I can't deal with it on my own". I see example after example of that in this lesson.
 - b) Which brings us to these two psalms. They are full of desires to worship God privately and corporately. It is also full of examples of how we let go and give things to God.
 - c) So, given the importance of worship, what am I to take out of this lesson? We have two psalms here written by David full of emotional highs and lows as he contemplates aspects of his life in comparison to what is his desire of his relationship with God the Father.
 - d) The purpose of this lesson and these two psalms is to get us to see aspects of our lives as God sees them. It is to help us let God deal with our lives, so we can live more productive lives for His glory. In other words, it is a summary of how to let God deal with whatever we are dealing with at the present moment and minimize our own suffering over whatever is bothering us at the present moment.
 - e) Confused? Good. That usually means I'm ready to get started. ☺
3. Let's start with Psalm 40. The title is: For the director of music. Of David. A psalm.
 - a) This title is familiar to those of us who have been going through all of the psalms one at a time. It is for the director of music, which simply means that David wrote the psalm and the director of music is to play it assumedly for a gathering of believers.
 - b) If you recall, the last psalm we studied (#39) focused on the confession of sin. A point of the last psalm was that God could in effect discipline us due to our sins. The idea is that we are to accept God's discipline in order for us to mature as believers. This does lead us to the theme of Psalm 40. The point in this psalm is that when we are "down" due to the effects of our sins, God will help us to return to a mental "state of fellowship" with Him.
 - c) That trust, that God will restore our relationship with Him, is also a part of "worship".

4. This actually leads me to a brief discussion of Psalm 41. That psalm is about the realization that we will "win" over our enemies no matter what happens to us in this lifetime.
 - a) Whether our problems are due to mistakes we have made or things others have done to us, we will have victory if we are trusting in God to be in charge of our lives.
 - b) You and I may be dealing with issues with which we have no idea how we are going to solve them. The point is "Without God, we can't. With God, we can't lose." Another way to put this psalm is to say in effect, "God has gotten me this far, so why do I doubt in His ability to get me through what I am dealing with today or will deal with in the future?"
 - c) This is a psalm about winning over whatever life throws at us and knowing that if we are trusting in the God of the Universe, not only do we get to spend eternity with that God, but He is also watching over every aspect of our lives and helping us to deal with whatever we are facing at the moment.
5. I also want to mention that before I actually start the psalms, know that both Psalm 40 and 41 are considered "messianic" psalms. That means the psalms are quoted in the New Testament and are considered predictive of Jesus.
 - a) I will get into the specifics of the references in these psalms as we get to those verses. For now, just know that both Psalm 40 and Psalm 41 have verses that are tied directly to Jesus and in one case are even quoted by Jesus Himself.
 - b) It is important to understand that every aspect of Jesus' birth, life, death and Second Coming is discussed (or predicted) somewhere in the Old Testament. Having such references offers great proof that Jesus is, who He claims to be. We happen to have several of those types of references in these two psalms.
 - c) With that said, let's start Verse 1 of Psalm 40.
6. Psalm 40, Verse 1: I waited patiently for the LORD; he turned to me and heard my cry.
 - a) So what does it mean to wait patiently for God? How do we know when He is answering say, our plea for help anyway? A sign that God is working behind the scenes to help us is when the problems we are dealing with suddenly get better.
 - i) It never ceases to amaze me how things can just get better after prayer. Waiting patiently for God also means we trust that He will intercede in the situation.
 - ii) To state the obvious, God works on His timing and not ours. To wait patiently means we are trusting in the God that does care for us and wants to help us through whatever we are dealing with. Faith involves waiting on His timing.
 - iii) Let's suppose we have prayed and prayed and still don't know what we should do in our present situation. Sometimes God may just want us to "move forward" and trust that the results will happen on His timing.
 - b) The point of this verse is that we should not just jump into a significant situation without praying about it. The verse is saying in effect, "Give God a chance to do something about our issues before we just give up over that particular situation."
 - i) It doesn't mean we ignore our problems and just sit there and wait for God. It means we give the situation over to Him and let Him work through whatever methods are necessary to deal with the situation at hand.
7. Verse 2: He lifted me out of the slimy pit, out of the mud and mire; he set my feet on a rock and gave me a firm place to stand.
 - a) In this verse, I don't know if David is being literal or simply describing the feeling of being so low, it felt like he was in a deep mud pit with no way to climb out.
 - i) Most of us can relate to times in our lives where we feel like we are walking knee deep in mud and can't make any significant progress in a situation. It would be the feeling that our situation is hopeless and all that we do, leads "nowhere".
 - b) Then comes the second part of the verse that says that God "set my feet on a rock".
 - i) This is not about rock climbing. It is about comparing the idea to being stuck in mud to all of sudden in a place where one can move about.

- c) OK John, I get the idea that this verse is using a comparison of walking in mud and then walking on firm ground. How does it help me practically? Let me explain:
 - i) In life some of our most desperate cries to God are when we feel like whatever we do, we can't get out of a "muddy pit". What God is waiting for, in such situations is for us to give up trying to solve our problems without His help. I find that God works best when we truly let go of a situation and cry out in effect, "I don't know what to do here God, and my only hope is if You take over this situation."
 - ii) What we discover over and over again in life is when we truly let go of a problem and let God take over our issues of the moment is "all of a sudden" a solution to our problems comes forward. All God desires in return is to show Him some gratitude for getting us through that situation.
 - d) Let's suppose we pray and pray and nothing gets better. Most of us have had moments like that in life. This comes back to Verse 1 and waiting "patiently on God". Sometimes in life we have to trust in the fact that 1) God cares for us, 2) God is aware of our situation but He just wants us to move forward and "do the next logical thing" and trust that He will work out the situation for His glory.
8. Verse 3: He put a new song in my mouth, a hymn of praise to our God. Many will see and fear and put their trust in the LORD.
- a) It appears that whatever David's problem was in Verses 1-2, it is over in Verse 3. This verse says that God "put a new song in my mouth" to praise Him. (I told you this lesson revolves around worshipping Him, and I meant it. ☺)
 - i) It could mean that David was so happy at this moment he wrote a psalm.
 - ii) It could just mean that in David's gratitude to God for getting him through his problems of the moment, he was just walking around praising God for His help.
 - b) Remember that praising God is not for His benefit, but for ours. God does not have emotions where He has a need for us to praise Him. A purpose of praising God is for us to realize how He has gotten us through our problems of the moment. We are so happy of what God has done, praise just comes out, and that is a new song of praise to Him.
 - c) All of this leads to the second sentence of this verse. That sentence states that when we publicly praise God, many will see that act and put their trust in Him.
 - i) The point of this verse is that praise of God is contagious. When we sing out to God in praise, it does make others want to join in that praise.
 - ii) There are moments in a church service during the music portion, where my mind is off wandering somewhere else. Then I hear the sound of others around me praising God, and well it inspires me to get my focus right and join in.
 - a) I believe that is a point of the second sentence of Verse 3. When we are praising God, it does encourage others to want to join in that moment.
9. Verse 4: Blessed is the man who makes the LORD his trust, who does not look to the proud, to those who turn aside to false gods.
- a) This verse is part of the praise to God that David is just "singing out" at this moment. David is saying in effect, the person who trusts in God will have a blessed life.
 - i) The Jewish concept of a "blessing" is all encompassing. It means that God will take care of our physical needs as well as our spiritual and emotional needs.
 - b) The middle part of this verse mentions the "proud". That refers to those who have too much self-pride to look to God for help. The "proud" are those who trust in their own ability to handle problems and refuse to give God a chance to work in their lives.
 - c) Now let me briefly talk about "false gods". In David's time, false gods were common. There were many living among the Israelites that believed in all sorts of gods.
 - i) The Christian definition of a "false God" is anything and everything that turns us away from the true God of the world. It can be anything from another religion to a lifestyle that centers around things other than God being in charge of our life.

- d) Did David grasp the concept that His salvation is based on a future Messiah who would die for His sins? I believe David understood about a Messiah, but not His full purpose.
- i) I believe David did grasp the idea that our salvation is not about our good deeds outweighing our bad deeds. He got that salvation is about being perfectly forgiven because God Himself has completely forgiven us of our sins. Out of gratitude for that forgiveness, we turn and dedicate our lives to serving Him.
10. Verse 5: Many, O LORD my God, are the wonders you have done. The things you planned for us no one can recount to you; were I to speak and tell of them, they would be too many to declare.
- a) David continues his positive outlook mood through Verse 5.
- b) A few verses ago, I talked about how we can be in a good mood during the moment when we realize God has seen us through our problems of the moment. We, like David can sing out of the wonderful things God has done. We too can realize that we can lose count of the blessings God has for those who choose to follow Him with their lives.
- c) OK so David got rescued and is now in a good mood. ☺ How does that help me?
- i) The answer is, even when one's situation seems hopeless, it is beneficial to praise God. I find that the person who is regularly praises God will never run out of reasons to praise Him. It is almost as if God is telling us, "I want you to have a positive outlook on life. If you (that is us) make it a regularly habit of singing praises to Me, I will always give you a reason to be grateful."
- ii) That doesn't mean when life is falling apart we have to fake being in a good mood and sing praises to God. It means we can sing out in advance that God will rescue us through our troubles and we trust that He will do so.
11. Verse 6: Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but my ears you have pierced; burnt offerings and sin offerings you did not require.
- a) I have to admit, I have struggled with this verse. It appears contradictory to the whole Jewish (Old Testament) system of animal sacrifices for the forgiveness of sins. Why would David, a religious Jew put in a psalm, the idea that God does not desire offerings, when such offerings are such an essential aspect of the Jewish system of worship?
- b) To understand this verse one has to key in on the phrase that says, "my ears you (God) have pierced." Translation: David was shocked by what He wrote here (about God not desiring sacrifice) and it was shocking to David's ears as He took "dictation from God" as to what to say at this point in the psalm.
- i) God is not saying to abandon the system of sacrifices. God is teaching about putting certain things in perspective to that Old Testament system of offering.
- ii) David is saying that the important thing in life is obedience to what God has called us to do. That is far more important than offering sacrifices for the sins we have committed. (For the Christian, Jesus was the ultimate sacrifice for sin, which is why we don't practice animal sacrifices today for our sins.)
- c) In the previous few verses, David was praising God for who He is and what He has done to help him through all of the difficult situations of his life. Now David is saying in effect, I understand why animal sacrifices are offered for our sins. However, it is better to be obedient to God in the first place, then to mess up and to offer a sacrifice for one's sins.
- i) For those who have never studied the animal sacrifice laws of the Old Testament (mainly the book of Leviticus), a key point is God required innocent animals suffer for our sins to remind us that the innocent suffer when we commit a sin.
- d) Ok John, but we as Christians are not under the Old Testament law. How does this verse apply to us? To love God includes the desire to want to please Him. Even as Christian believers it should be our desire to be pleasing to God in all that we do. Some parts of the law obviously do apply today (e.g., killing and stealing) while other parts do not (eating certain types of food). The New Testament is our guide to our obedience to God.
- i) Now that I've cleared that up, I'm ready for the next verse. ☺

12. Verse 7: Then I said, "Here I am, I have come-- it is written about me in the scroll.
- a) We now come to the most famous verse-- in the psalm. This verse is quoted in the New Testament (see Hebrews 10:7) and it is considered a prediction about Jesus.
 - i) Let me quickly state that I don't think David is writing about himself and saying in effect, "This bible scroll is about me (David)."
 - b) My Jewish (non Christian) friends will argue that this verse is talking about God the Father and how "He has come". They argue that the scrolls of the bible are about Him.
 - i) If there was no "Verse 8", I could see the merits of that argument. With that said, let discuss Verse 8 and then I'll discuss the New Testament reference to Verse 7,
13. Verse 8: I desire to do your will, O my God; your law is within my heart."
- a) In the book of Hebrews, the full quote about Jesus is all of Verse 7 and the first part of Verse 8. That is why Hebrews 10:7 reads, "Then I said, 'Here I am – it is written about me in the scroll – I have come to do your will, O God.'" (NIV Translation.)
 - i) Christians read all of Verse 7 (here in Psalms) and the first part of Verse 8, all as one sentence. Putting those phrases together, it reads like someone other than God the Father saying, "I have come to do your will, oh God."
 - ii) To put it another way, Christians argue that David may not have fully grasped what he was prophetically predicting, that a Messiah would come and that the "volume of the scroll" is about the promised Messiah (Jesus).
 - b) In Jewish thought, they see Verse 7 and Verse 8 as separate thoughts. They read Verse 7 as being about God in that the "scroll of the book" (i.e., the bible as it existed at that time). They argue that Verse 8 is David responding that knowledge of God being all over the "scroll" and David saying in Verse 8 that it was his (David's) desire to do God's will.
 - i) While the religious Jewish version can be technically correct, I don't see it as being the most likely interpretation, which is one reason I believe the Gospel.
 - c) Now let me comment on the last part of Verse 8. It says that "O my God; your law is within my heart." Is that phrase for David, for us, or just for Jesus? That is another good question. The best answer is all three. Let me explain:
 - i) Let's start with Jesus, which is always a good place to start. ☺ Christians correctly teach that Jesus came to fulfill the law. At the same time, He never violated any of biblical laws, just some of the Pharisee's interpretations of the law. Therefore Jesus can correctly say that the Old Testament law was always on his heart.
 - ii) David could say it too. David sinned, but David cared about pleasing God.
 - iii) For Christians, it is not about obeying every Old Testament command. We please Him by regularly studying the bible as to what He wants for our lives.
14. Verse 9: I proclaim righteousness in the great assembly; I do not seal my lips, as you know, O LORD. ¹⁰ I do not hide your righteousness in my heart; I speak of your faithfulness and salvation. I do not conceal your love and your truth from the great assembly.
- a) David is not claiming to be perfect in these verses, just forgiven. The point of these verses is that David is not afraid to speak up in "worship service" to claim how good God is.
 - b) Is David claiming that he wanted to be the religious leader in Israel? No, but as a king he had the privilege of speaking up in the religious service to claim God's goodness.
 - c) The point is that we shouldn't be afraid to speak up in church to proclaim how great God is, and our love for Him. It doesn't mean we speak out of turn or interrupt the church service. It just means that we sing out our love for Him based on the qualities spoken of in these verses. Those qualities include God's righteousness (His perfection in the way He is and acts), His faithfulness to us, His love for us and His truth as revealed in His word.
 - d) OK John, how exactly do I proclaim those things in my "great assembly"? It might be as simple as singing out when the audience sings. If somebody asks us after church why we were so happy in the service today, we could share that the love of God was just coming out of us this day. The attitude is more important than the exact words.

15. Verse 11: Do not withhold your mercy from me, O LORD; may your love and your truth always protect me.
- a) Why would David ask God to not withhold mercy from him? Isn't the God of the bible always merciful to us? I thought God is unchangeable.
 - i) I believe the idea here goes back to the last psalm about David feeling a sense of guilt over his sins and he does not want to receive God's discipline.
 - ii) Like I stated in the last lesson, it would be like a child asking a parent to avoid punishing them even though they deserve to be punished.
 - iii) David's prayer request here is to help him avoid sin so that he could avoid having to suffer from God's discipline. It is also a reminder to David and us that God is always looking out for our best, but at the same time, He wants to see us live the type of life that He desires. That does not mean we have to be perfect, but at the same time, we should aspire to live the type of life that He desires of us.
 - b) That does lead us to the second phrase of this verse. God's "love and truth" are always there. God does not change. However, because of our free will, we have to ask God if we are willing to be "covered" (for the lack of a better term) by His love and His truth. When we ask God to cover us with love and truth what does that mean practically? How are we different when we make such a request?
 - i) The idea here is we want things to go well in our life and we want God to get the credit when things do go well. What God desires of us more than anything else is a close personal relationship with Him.
 - ii) OK John, now I am more confused. What does God's love and truth have to do with our relationship with Him? It means we regularly seek Him (through prayer and through His word) and work to figure out what He desires of our lives. The answer is going to vary from person to person. Let's face it, God does not call most of us to be kings in this lifetime. But all of us have the privilege of drawing close to God to ask Him what He wants of our lives and then just going forward and letting Him guide us. That is the essence of this verse.
 - iii) If one is not sure what God desires of you, ask Him. If there are certain things we enjoy doing, ask God how we can do them for His glory. If our local church needs help in some area, ask how we can help. Other times, it involves special projects where we believe God is leading us. The point is we ask for His love and His truth (The truth of His word and His Spirit) to guide us.
16. Verse 12: For troubles without number surround me; my sins have overtaken me, and I cannot see. They are more than the hairs of my head, and my heart fails within me.
- a) Here we move from David saying in effect how great God is to complaining about his sins. OK, why did David get in such a bad mood all of a sudden here?
 - i) I believe what is happening is when we start focusing on the "goodness of God", it makes us realize how imperfect we are in comparison to Him. It did get David to think about His sins at this point.
 - ii) In those rare times when I start to think about being in the presence of God, I can't help thinking how unworthy I am to be there due to my own faults and sins.
 - iii) To really appreciate the grace of God, one has to realize how short we fall of His standards based on our own goodness. I believe that if you took a survey of most nonbelievers, they will argue that they deserve to go to heaven because their good deeds are greater than their bad deeds. They don't believe that God's standards are perfection and not graded on their good deeds outweighing their bad ones.
 - a) It is the realization of God's perfect standards which makes us realize how much we need "the cross" in order to be with God and just how short we come to His standards. That is why David is describing himself as being so low after just describing how wonderful God is.

17. Verse 13: Be pleased, O LORD, to save me; O LORD, come quickly to help me.
- a) This is another verse that needs to be read in perspective of the surrounding verses. Verse 12 just stated how low David feels as he contemplates all the sins he has committed in his own life while at the same time wanting to be pleasing to God.
 - i) With that said, David cries out to God here in Verse 13 for God to come save him.
 - b) But wait a minute you might say, didn't David already believe he was saved? Why is he crying out here for God to save him when he already trusts in God's salvation?
 - i) Let's start by remembering that David was a king. Dealing with enemies was part of David's life. Even before David was a king, he spent a good portion of his life being on the run from King Saul. David realized that He needed God's constant protection and he regularly (like here) cried out for God's help.
 - ii) OK John, good for David. What does this have to do with me? We may be saved and trust in Him daily, but we still need (and should desire) God to get involved in our lives daily and help us from whatever we are dealing with.
 - a) Being a Christian is far more than trusting in being saved. It is about getting God involved in our daily lives to help us and guide us so that we can make a difference for Him. That is what David is asking for in this verse and what we should desire from God as well.
18. Verse 14: May all who seek to take my life be put to shame and confusion; may all who desire my ruin be turned back in disgrace. ¹⁵ May those who say to me, "Aha! Aha!" be appalled at their own shame.
- a) Getting back to David's life, even if he trusted in God daily for protection and guidance, there is still the matter of David's enemies trying to harm him.
 - b) The lesson of these verses is that it is ok to ask God for protection from those who want to hurt us or put us down. Even if you don't believe you have any enemies at the moment, remember that if we are a good witness for Jesus, there are going to be spiritual forces that want to prevent us from being a good witness for Him. At the least, we should pray daily for protection against the spiritual forces that want to do us harm.
 - i) Every morning when I pray, I pray for God's protection for me and my family. I may have no idea how I am better off and what pain I have avoided by such prayers. Let's say I am wrong and it doesn't make a difference. Well, then how much harm have I done by spending a few minutes every day asking for God's protection? I am convinced that prayer is what protects us and makes a difference whether we face enemies we are aware of, or enemies we are not aware of.
 - ii) Let me address those who face literal human enemies. The point is no matter what happens, we in effect, "win" because of our trust in God. The worse that could happen is we die and get to be with God forever in heaven. If we don't lose, we can know that we are making a difference for God in our lives.
19. Verse 16: But may all who seek you rejoice and be glad in you; may those who love your salvation always say, "The LORD be exalted!"
- a) OK David "jumps again". From a previous verse asking God to help him deal with his enemies, David now asks that "all" trust in God and say, "The LORD be exalted!"
 - i) What is happening here is David realized that God is going to win no matter what happens in his life. Therefore, David realizes he can rejoice with God and be happy "in Him" for his salvation and for his life making a difference for Him.
 - b) Trusting in God means that we know we are on the winning side. It means that if we live to make a difference for Him, we have already won, whether we realize it or not.
 - i) That is why David can jump from being worried about his enemies and before that worried about his sins, because He realizes that God is in charge, God is going to win, and no matter what happens in this lifetime, David (and us) get to spend eternity with Him. We cannot lose.

- c) OK John, with all of this "happy talk", what about the real pain and suffering of this life? How can I (or someone I know) who is in a lot of pain pray a "victory prayer" like this despite all that they or we are going through?
- i) The point is not about avoiding suffering in this lifetime. The point is we get to share in the eternal victory with God the Father based on our trust in Him. That is how (and why) we should give praise to Him no matter what we are dealing with.
 - ii) Think of David this way: Despite his praise to God, were David's enemies still out there? Of course. David could show praise to God despite whatever he has to deal with, because he understood the ultimate outcome of those who did and did not trust in God.
20. Verse 17: Yet I am poor and needy; may the Lord think of me. You are my help and my deliverer; O my God, do not delay.
- a) In this final line of the psalm David jumps back from praising God to remind himself that he is still in need of God to help him with whatever he is dealing with at this moment.
 - b) I have often heard that reading David's psalms is often like reading about a man who has a "split personality disorder" or one who lives in extremes as he is constantly moving back and forth between spiritual highs and lows. Let's face it, David was on a high moment the last few verses where he realized how great God is, yet here, David finishes the psalm by saying in effect, He still needs God to help him.
 - i) So John, I am confused. Did David suffer from some sort of personality disorder or is he just jumping back and forth between contemplating God's goodness and realizing His need for God's help in whatever he was dealing with in his life?
 - ii) I think David is no different from you and I in the sense that the realization of how God good is draws us both to Him and at the same time makes us realize how short we fall of pleasing Him and also at the same time, makes us realize how much we need Him in our lives.
 - c) That in effect is why David closes this way: It is the realization of just how much David needs God to help him in his daily life. That in effect, should be our cry as well. We should pray in effect, "Dear God, I know you are perfect and I can't earn your love by my good deeds outweighing my bad deeds. I know that trusting in You means eternity in Your presence. I know that I can have victory over my enemies by trusting in You. Even with all of that in mind, I realize at this moment how much I need You and want You in my life. Help me with what I am dealing with at this moment in time, Amen."
 - i) What we are to get out of this psalm is not only the reasons we can praise God and be grateful for what He has done in our life, but also that we can and should call upon Him daily to help us with our lives. We should never think our problems are too small to bother God. Learning to trust in Him means we put every aspect of our lives in His hands and trust that He is (not He can or will, but is) helping us in whatever we are dealing with at this moment in time.
 - d) OK on that happy note, I'm going to move on to the second psalm in this lesson.
21. Psalm 41, title: For the director of music. A psalm of David.
- a) This is the exact same title as Psalm 40 and some others, so there is not much to talk about here other than to remind ourselves that David wrote this one and it is designed to be sung. As I have stated, the actual music for these psalms are long gone from history.
 - b) I hold the view that if God wanted us to know the music, it would have been preserved for us the same way these words have been persevered through history.
22. Verse 1: Blessed is he who has regard for the weak; the LORD delivers him in times of trouble.
- a) This psalm starts off by saying God will bless those who help the weak. Other versions of the bible will use the word "poor" instead of weak.

- b) OK, does this mean that God blesses us if we help those less fortunate than ourselves?
 - i) Yes, and that is one reason why God calls on us to give of our resources. The idea is that giving is a way of showing our trust that God will provide for our future if we refuse to "hoard" what is ours. This principal has nothing to do with planning for our future, or say, having a savings account.
 - ii) The point is all we have belongs to God anyway, and by giving a portion of it back to God, we are saying in effect, we trust in Him for our future and not our "stuff".
 - iii) John you said this whole lesson is about worshipping God. So what does giving have to do with that principal? The answer is, if we are truly trusting in God, then we must also be trusting in His ability to provide for us for the future.
 - c) If that little speech doesn't inspire you and me to "give", look at the second phrase of Verse 1. It says, the LORD delivers him in times of trouble.
 - i) Now I don't know how God helps us more if we are givers than say, help us less if we are just believers, but personally, I don't want to take that risk. ☺ When things are falling apart, I want God as much as possible to deliver me out of trouble. Therefore, if that is what it takes as motivation to give, I will do so.
 - d) Let me say what giving "is and isn't". It is not about giving our life savings to the first person to ask. We will be broke quickly that way and then we would be in need. This is not a lecture on where or how much to give. It is a reminder about our attitude toward giving. God wants us to have an attitude and a heart to be "givers" to others. That can include helping around our home or around our church. It can refer to our time as well as our resources. It is a reminder that God wants us to do "team work" for His sake.
23. Verse 2: The LORD will protect him and preserve his life; he will bless him in the land and not surrender him to the desire of his foes. ³ The LORD will sustain him on his sickbed and restore him from his bed of illness.
- a) In Verse 1, our motivation for being a giver was based on the promise that God will help us if we have the attitude of a giver. Verses 2 and 3 say in effect, "that is not all we get if we are willing to be givers."
 - i) The point of these opening verses is God wants us to make a difference for Him by being of help to others. That is what being a "giver" means. It means we don't just live to say, make money or have fun. There is nothing wrong with earning a living or enjoying our lives. The point here is that people should see us as one who has love for other people by our "giving". Not by giving away all we earn, but by giving of our time and resources to make a difference for God.
 - b) With that speech out of my system, let us look at Verses 2 and 3. Verse 2 starts by saying that God will protect the giver and preserve his life. Does that mean we as "givers" will never be in trouble? No, it means that if one is looking for proof that one will live forever in heaven, it is not a matter of saying the right words about Jesus. It is about living to make a difference for Him. One way of making a difference is to be a giver.
 - c) Verse 2 goes on to say that God will bless him "in the land" and will not surrender him to his foes. Does that mean we will never experience defeat in life if we are loyal to God?
 - i) No, it does mean that if we have the "giver" attitude, we will never be without some reason to bless God (and others) in the first place. Those who live to bless God by blessing others will never be without the resources to give that blessing.
 - ii) To put it another way, the way we can tell if we are blessed by God is by "giving" and then watch our lives be blessed by having that attitude.
 - d) This leads us to Verse 3. God promises to sustain us when we are sick. That does not mean that no Christian ever dies of sickness? Of course not. It does mean that when we have the attitude of "giving", we can trust that we can be rescued from whatever sickness or injury we face or else, God will rescue us (by either death or by recovery) to be with Him for all eternity. Either way, we win and God gets the glory.

24. Verse 4: I said, "O LORD, have mercy on me; heal me, for I have sinned against you."
- a) OK David makes another jump here, from talking about the benefit of being a "giver" to the idea of David asking for God's mercy and realizing he has sinned.
 - b) I suspect what is going on here, is David is contemplating all the times in his life when he could have been more of a help (or a "giver") to others, but instead focused on his own life and his own problems.
 - c) Think of it this way: Have you every read of Jesus saying He didn't have time to help anyone who asked? Yes, there are times where we are too busy or too tired to help people. We can't be "all serving all the time", or we would die of exhaustion and collapse. Even with that said, people should see Christians as givers and we should be more concerned with the welfare of others than with our own sense of self-satisfaction.
25. Verse 5: My enemies say of me in malice, "When will he die and his name perish?"
- a) If we are going to make a difference for Jesus, we can expect to have enemies. There are forces and people who don't want us to make a difference for God. David experienced that in his life and if we living to make a difference for God, we will experience it too.
 - b) A subtle point of this verse is that the only hope we have to deal with such enemies is to trust in God to help us. To quote an old expression, "Without God we can't, with God, we make a majority". But John, how do you know who is right or wrong in any given situation? That is why we turn that situation over to God to deal with in the first place.
26. Verse 6: Whenever one comes to see me, he speaks falsely, while his heart gathers slander; then he goes out and spreads it abroad. ⁷ All my enemies whisper together against me; they imagine the worst for me, saying, ⁸ "A vile disease has beset him; he will never get up from the place where he lies."
- a) When others verbally attacked us, they don't say, "You represent the true God and I oppose that." Instead they will speak what is false or else they will spread lies about us.
 - i) Even the best of people have to deal with lies and gossip being spread about them.
 - b) The question is, when we are in a situation that appears to be out of our control, (e.g., false stories are being spread about us), how do we deal with that situation?
 - i) And John, don't just say, "give to God" and move on. ☺
 - ii) When we are in situations of facing slander, or when others say, "He or she will never recover from what we are dealing with (See Verse 8), first of all, we have to remind ourselves that God is in charge and more importantly He does want to help us deal with our problems. That is a point of this prayer request here.
 - iii) Next, when we are accused, we have to remember the source. Sometimes facing accusations are easier when we consider who is making those false accusations.
 - iv) The point is to keep standing up for what is right and others will judge the evidence for themselves as opposed to believing false accusations of others.
 - v) There are times where we should speak up. The point is the best evidence for one's innocence is not what we say, but based on the evidence of how we live our lives. That is how others judge us.
 - vi) Even with all that said, we need to remember our dependence is on God to get us through such situations and not our own ability to "handle it".
27. Verse 9: Even my close friend, whom I trusted, he who shared my bread, has lifted up his heel against me.
- a) I have heard lectures guessing whom among David's friends is this verse talking about.
 - b) This verse is also quoted by Jesus referring to Judas who betrayed him. (See John 13:18).
 - c) OK John, so this verse is used by David and Jesus. How does that affect us?
 - i) Does this verse mean we can expect someone close to us to betray us? I don't know. I do know that our life can be painful in ways we never expect. When we feel betrayed by someone close to us, we can turn to God for comfort as He is aware of the pain caused by such an action.

- d) How does this verse fit in with the rest of the psalm? The point is David was hurt by the slander caused by His enemies and even someone close to David turned against him.
- i) It can mean that when we are hurt by false accusations or slander, it can cause someone we love to believe those accusations. Let's face it, when we hear something bad about someone we love, we are tempted to say, "Listen to what they are saying about you. How do you answer for those accusations?"
 - ii) The issue is not innocence or guilt. The issue of the moment goes back to the opening verses of being a giver. We can stand there and accuse those we love of something, or we can be above it and ask how we can help that person with what they are dealing with at the moment. That is the type of "giver" God desires.
28. Verse 10: But you, O LORD, have mercy on me; raise me up, that I may repay them.
- a) So now we are back to giving our problems back to God. Whoever it was that betrayed David, he was hurt to the point where it brought him to a low state of mind. In Verse 10, David is asking God to "raise him up" (improve his low emotional state) so David could repay (get revenge) on those who wanted to do David harm.
 - i) It may help to remember here that David lived in a "kill or be killed world". When David says he was betrayed, we shouldn't take that lightly. It was probably, literally a life and death threat.
 - b) OK, and what does that have to do with us? When we are feeling bad due to something that someone else did to us, often all we can do is grieve and ask God to strengthen us. David purposely does not give us the details of what happen, I suspect, so we the audience can relate better to this psalm by putting our own "low" moments here.
 - c) The real point is when we are hurt for whatever reason, we need to remember there is a God who still cares for us (no matter who is at fault) and wants to lift us up again so we can make a difference for Him. God put us here to make a difference for Him. Even if you don't have the strength to get up and "go" at this point, at the least, one can pray for help and pray for God to make a difference in the situation one is dealing with.
29. Verse 11: I know that you are pleased with me, for my enemy does not triumph over me.
- a) David can proclaim at this point in effect, "Dear God, I don't know what is the plan for my future, but I know that I am not dead and I know that You still rule. I also know that You, God are pleased with me, not because I am a good person, but because I have committed my life to serving You. I know that I will have victory over those who don't care about You. I don't know how and when that victory will come, but I know it will. Despite all the ways I have been hurt, I know the battle is not over until You "say so". Therefore give me the courage and the strength to fight another day to make a difference for You."
 - i) Not only does that little speech fit this verse, it would also have made a good ending prayer for this lesson. However, there are still two more verses to go. ☺
30. Verse 12: In my integrity you uphold me and set me in your presence forever.
- a) I found myself looking at different definitions of "integrity" and seeing how it best applies to this verse. Whatever David meant by integrity, is it allowed God to uphold David and set him in God's presence forever. (That is, it got David in a better mood.)
 - b) Webster defines integrity as "firm adherence to a code of especially moral or artistic value". Given that definition, what is David saying here?
 - i) In effect David is saying that it is his deepest desire to please God and do His will. (I believe God gives us that desire and then we act upon it.)
 - ii) The idea of God "upholding me" with that desire means in effect that if set as a goal to please God, He works with us and through us to accomplish that goal.
 - c) Think of it this way: If there is a God and He has created us to make a difference for Him, that means He desires to work through people to accomplish His goals. That is what David is stating at this point in the psalm and David realizes that because He is working for God's benefit, David's reward is to be in God's presence forever.

31. Verse 13: Praise be to the LORD, the God of Israel, from everlasting to everlasting. Amen and Amen.
- a) This verse ends with a praise to God. The verse is saying in effect, may the God of Israel be praised from the beginning of our acknowledgement of Him through the end of our time with Him. Since we will be with him forever, that praise will never end.
 - b) I didn't want to say this verse goes from the beginning of time to the end of time, because God's reign is longer than time as we know it. If the ultimate purpose of life is to make a difference for God and letting Him work through us to make a difference for Him, then let the praises for God's will being accomplished come through us and through the length of time of man's existence on earth and in heaven.
32. This now marks the end of "Book 1" of the Psalms. In case you didn't know, the psalms are divided into five books. One can see the reference to "Book 2" before the next psalm starts up in most English translations of the bible.
- a) It is interesting to note that all five books of the psalms end in effect with a praise to God for who He is and the fact that He is working to make a difference in this life.
 - b) With that said, there is a view in Jewish theology that the five books of the psalms somehow correspond to the first five books of the bible. I'm not sure that is true, and I won't comment much on that idea until I get through all five books. What I will say is the book of Genesis can be described as the beginning in the sense of that it is about people discovering God exists, and He lives to make a difference in their lives. Just as the main characters of Genesis discover that fact, so does David, the main author of much of this first book of the Psalms.
 - c) The other interesting thing is now that I have finished commenting on these last two psalms of Book 1, it is only "now" that I see the big picture of these two psalms and why David wrote them to finish book 1. (By the way, that is the reason I often, like today write my introduction to this lesson after I have first gone through every verse.)
 - i) These two psalms deal with our sin issues, with being hurt by others, with the realization that there is God and His desire to run our lives.
 - ii) The big theme I have seen over all of the psalms "to date", is they primarily deal with how God is to be worshipped and that includes giving Him the issues and situations we face in life so He can lead us through those issues and situations. That is why my title for this lesson is about "worship."
 - d) To put it another way, these psalms are a summary of how life works: We go through our lives doing "things". At times we are hurt by we did wrong and by the way others have hurt us. We give our situations over to God and say in effect, "This is too much for me to handle". We realize that God wants to run our lives and we work through Him to make a difference for Him. We look back at our situations and we realize the victories we have simply by trusting in God and letting Him" win through us.
 - i) That in effect is a summary of these two psalms and of this lesson.
33. So what do I "take home" from this lesson? The realization that God is our hope to help us through whatever we are dealing with. Whether we are going through a high or low moment in life, the point is we give those situations over to God and say to Him in effect, "I am trusting in You. I don't know what is going to happen to me today or tomorrow, but I am going to go forward and trust that You are guiding me through these situations. May I use my life today to make a difference for You in all that I do." (I can't do a closing prayer better than that, so I'll just call that last little pray my "closer".) I ask this in Jesus name, Amen.