

What Psalms and Proverbs Say About Mercy



SABBATH—JULY 20

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Psalm 9:7–9, 13–20; Psalm 82; Psalm 101; Psalm 146; Proverbs 10:4; Proverbs 13:23, 25.

MEMORY VERSE: “Defend the poor and orphans. Protect the rights [power or special favor that the law gives to citizens] of the poor. Help those [people] who are poor and helpless. Save them from those [people] who are evil” (Psalm 82:3, 4, ERV).

PSALMS AND PROVERBS show us the experience of living with God every day. The book of Proverbs is full of wisdom. It offers advice on families, friendships, business, and government. The Psalms are songs. They are full of deep feelings and spiritual experiences about everything from sorrow to praising God. Psalms and Proverbs show us that our faith should make a difference in every part and experience of life. Why? Because God cares about every part of our lives. He cares about the way we act with others. He wants us to be fair to each other.

We live on an earth where things are not always fair. The Bible shows us again and again that God cares about all the things that are not fair. He works hard to change those things. He is the One who gives hope to people who feel hopeless.

We cannot study everything in this lesson that Psalms and Proverbs say about showing mercy and being fair. But we hope that this lesson will cause us to do more to help the poor and the needy around us. It is our job to help them.



God gives hope to people who feel hopeless.

PSALMS: SONGS OF HOPE FOR PEOPLE HURT BY THEIR LEADERS (Psalm 9:7–9, 13–20)

As we learned, God knows when people are in trouble. Psalms most often tells us about people who cry to God. They trust God. But they do not see God doing anything to stop the people who are not being fair. Sometimes the evil that happens in life is so bad. Then the writers of the Psalms have trouble seeing God's power and love at all.

What do the writers of the Psalms do when that happens? Do they stop singing about God in the Psalms? No. They keep singing. Their faith and their life stay strong. They continue to have hope. They ask God to act before it is too late. They ask God to hurry. They ask Him to step in and save the needy. They ask Him to help people who are hurt before it is too late.

Read Psalm 9:7–9, 13–20. David wrote this psalm. Think about the awful troubles David experienced. David believed in God's love and care. At the same time, David knew about suffering. Have you ever had an experience that tested your faith the same way as David's faith was tested? How did you keep your faith strong during that hard time?



“If God's people can stand in front of God and tell Him their problems, they know God will help them.”

Again and again, the Psalms show us how to keep our hope in God strong during hard times. We must continue to believe that God is the Judge of everyone on earth. Evil may look as if it has won for now. But God will judge people who do evil. He will judge people who are not fair. God will punish them. But God will bless and make new the lives of His people who were hurt by evil.

C. S. Lewis wrote about his deep wish for the time to come when God will act as Judge. Many Christians are afraid of that time. But C. S. Lewis saw that time as something we should wish for. He says that it is a time “when God will finally hear the cries of thousands of people. These people lost their homes and everything they owned. Why? Because people in power stole it from them. But now God is on the side of His people. They do not fear God's work as Judge. If God's people can stand in front of God and tell Him their problems, they know that God will help them. Soon God will come as Judge. Then we will get that chance to tell Him everything.”
—*Reflections [thoughts] on the Psalms* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1958), page 11, adapted.

“DO SOMETHING, GOD!” (Psalm 82)

Read Psalm 82. What is the message for us in this psalm?

The Lord gave His people many laws. These laws helped God’s people to live better lives. It helped them to be examples of God’s love to other people. Sadly, God’s people failed to follow His plan. They became the same as everyone else around them. The leaders of other countries were not fair to their own people. The leaders stole from their people and hurt them. God’s people became just the same. The leaders and judges of God’s people took care of their own needs. Evil people paid these judges money to judge in their favor. The courts did not protect the people. Soon, the rich people started to use poor people to make more money. But the rich did not pay the poor people the money they earned.

Psalm 82 talks about an awful time when these things happened. This psalm shows God’s work as Judge of everyone on earth. The psalm also shows a time when God judges the leaders and judges of the people. The writer of the psalm tells us something about the people who serve as judges. In the psalm writer’s eyes, God’s work as Judge is an example of how human judges should work. God’s work as Judge also shows us the rules that we need to follow. God will use these rules to judge everyone who lived. “God has put them in power. He chose them to act as judges under Him.”—Ellen G. White, *Prophets [special messengers] and Kings*, page 198, adapted.

The psalm ends with the writer asking God to help (Psalm 82:8). The writer asks God to step in and stop the evil that is everywhere in the country. This psalm speaks for all people who are crushed by people in power. The writer of Psalm 82 asks God to help. God is the Judge and Ruler of everyone and everything in heaven and on earth. God makes a promise. Yes, there will be times when the courts on earth will not help the poor. They will not listen to our cries for help. But we can always cry to God.

At different times in life, we may be hurt by people in power. Other times, we may not be fair to other people. Psalm 82 helps us to find help and wisdom in both experiences. God cares about bad judges. God says they are His children too. He wants them to choose a better life. So, there is hope for us all if we allow God to change us.



We can always cry to God for help.

A KING'S PROMISES (Psalm 101)

Read Psalm 101. The writer of this psalm wrote it for leaders. What important advice can we learn from it for our own lives?



David tried to be fair and show mercy in his life and work.

Many people believe that David wrote Psalm 101 in the early years of the time when he was king of Israel. King David had many difficult experiences before he became king. He was a soldier for King Saul. Then he ran away from King Saul who tried to kill him many times. David saw that Saul was an awful king. David saw what happens when a king destroys his own people and his family. So, David decided to be a better leader than Saul.

Few of us are the leaders of countries. But we all have the chance to help change the lives of other people. We can encourage people in our families, communities, in our jobs, or in our churches. Ellen G. White talks about David as a leader. “David made promises. We can read his promises in Psalm 101. Everyone who has a family should make these same promises. They should promise to protect their homes against anything that can hurt their families.” —*Counsels [advice] to Parents, Teachers, and Students*, page 119, adapted.

We should follow the rules in Psalm 101 in our lives. Anytime we get this chance, we should ask our leaders to follow these rules to. Each of us has the chance to follow David’s rules in Psalm 101. Then we will be good leaders. Our lives will be a blessing to other people too.

How do we start learning to become good leaders? For David, it starts with honoring God for His mercy and being fair (Psalm 101:1). These two things are the foundation for everything David wanted to do as a leader. He tried to be fair and show mercy in his life and work. A good leader must say no to sin, lying, and doing wrong. All of these sins are special traps for leaders and rulers.

David knew it was very important to get good advice. So, he found honest leaders to help him do what was right. David wanted people to say that he was a fair king who showed mercy to everyone. These things were important to him. That is why he looked for leaders to work for him who were fair and showed mercy too.

Maybe you are not a leader. But what can you do to be fair and show mercy to the people in your life who need it?

WALKING WITH THE LORD (Psalm 146)

As we read the end of the book of Psalms, we see that many of the psalms are songs of praise. The final five psalms (Psalm 146–150) start with the words, “Praise the LORD” (ERV). Psalm 146 praises God for a special reason. It praises God because He is kind to the poor and shows them mercy.

Read Psalm 146. What is the message of this psalm? What is the writer of the psalm saying in Psalm 146:5–9?

God made heaven and earth (read Psalm 146:6). Psalm 146 shows us God’s work on this earth as Judge. It shows that He gives us everything we need for life. He frees us from sin. He frees us from the people who hurt us. He heals us. He helps us. He defends the weak.

Why should we take care of needy people? Yes, we should take care of them because God said we should. God asks us to do this work because He does this work Himself. He is not asking us to do it **for** Him. He is inviting us to do it **with** Him. When we work to stop sickness, hunger, and evil on this earth, we work with God. We join Him in His work of mercy.

Christians want to be closer to God. Psalm 146:7–9 show us one way to be closer to Him. When we join God in His work of mercy, we will be close to Him. God lifts up the poor. He heals the sick. He shows mercy to the suffering. God helps people that leaders hurt. So, we should work with God to help Him do this work too. “Jesus came to this earth. He worked with the poor and suffering. Jesus gave them more of His attention than He gave anyone else. Today, Jesus lives in the hearts of His children. When His children visit the poor and needy, Jesus goes with His children. He helps them to take care of the poor.

“Other people’s suffering helps us understand the mercy and love of God. If we do not help people, we cannot understand God’s love and mercy. God’s love and mercy help us know that we have a loving Father in heaven. The Good News about Jesus is the most beautiful when we share it with people living in very poor countries.”—Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, volume 7, page 226, adapted.

How does serving other people bring us closer to God? What has been your experience?



God invites us to work with Him to stop sickness, hunger, and evil on this earth.

PROVERBS: MERCY FOR THE NEEDY (Proverbs 10:4)

A proverb is a wise saying. The book of Proverbs is full of many wise sayings. Proverbs talks about many different ideas and life experiences. Some of the proverbs talk about being rich or poor, being happy, and showing mercy. Proverbs shows us that life is not always simple. Our choices can change our lives.

Read Proverbs 10:4; Proverbs 13:23, 25; Proverbs 14:31; Proverbs 15:15, 16; Proverbs 19:15, 17; and Proverbs 30:7–9. How are these proverbs the same or different? What do they tell us about being rich, poor, and helping people in need?



The best leaders are the ones who ask God for help (read Proverbs 8:15, 16).

Proverbs shows us that God cares for the poor and the weak. Sometimes people are poor because of bad things that happened to them in life. Sometimes they are poor because they made bad choices. Or maybe someone cheated them. Whatever mistakes they made, Proverbs tells us that the Lord is their God who made them. No one should hurt the poor or cheat them because they made mistakes.

Proverbs shows us a better life. The secret to a better life is clear. We must choose wisdom and obey God. Sometimes we get riches and money in this life. But these things do not always come from God. The most important thing in life is being loyal to God and His law. It is more important than money or riches. “It is better to be poor and do what is right than to be wealthy [rich] and be unfair [not fair]” (Proverbs 16:8, ICB).

Proverbs also talks about being honest and fair in business. Leaders and judges must be fair too (read Proverbs 14:5, 25; Proverbs 16:11–13; Proverbs 17:15; Proverbs 20:23; Proverbs 21:28; Proverbs 28:14–16). Proverbs offers wisdom and advice about how men and women should live. It also offers advice for communities. It shows us how communities can serve and protect the people who need help the most. Proverbs asks us to remember that the best leaders ask God for help (read Proverbs 8:15, 16). We should act as God’s helpers. We should show God’s loving favor to everyone in need.

It is easy for us to feel sorry for people who suffer. But what can we do to help them?

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: “Read Ellen G. White, “The Last Years of David,” pages 746–755, in *Patriarchs and Prophets*; C. S. Lewis, “ ‘Judgment’ in the Psalms,” pages 15–22, in *Reflections on the Psalms*.

“David wrote many songs in the book of Psalms. David’s songs talk about everything. He wrote songs about feeling guilty. He also wrote songs about blaming himself for his sins. His songs also talk about faith and walking with God. David’s life shows us that sin makes us feel ashamed and sad. But God’s love and mercy can touch us when we are in deep darkness and save us. Faith will heal the person who is sorry for sin. Then we will become the sons of God.”—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs [Old Testament fathers and leaders] and Prophets [special messengers]*, page 754, adapted.

Ellen G. White also wrote about the wisdom in the book of Proverbs: “The book of Proverbs shows us many important rules. When we obey them, they make our communities strong. These rules make our religions and governments strong and happy too. The rules help us to feel safe and protected. Everything that makes our communities feel safe comes from the law of God.”—Ellen G. White, *Education*, page 137, adapted.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① In what ways are you a leader at work or in your community? As a leader, how can you help leaders in your community show more mercy to the poor and needy? How can you help change things around you to make life fair for other people?
- ② Think about the laws where you live. How can you work to make these laws better to help the poor and suffering people in need who live in your community?
- ③ Why are Bible rules about being fair so important for making our communities stronger?
- ④ The book of Proverbs mostly talks about wisdom. It gives us wise advice for our daily life. But what does Proverbs tell us about what is in God’s heart and who He is?



God’s love and mercy can reach down into the deep darkness and save us.