

God's Wonderful Mercy and Love



SABBATH—FEBRUARY 10

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Psalm 136; Psalm 51; Psalm 130; Psalm 113; Psalm 123; Psalm 103.

Daily God's people have new experiences that teach them about God's mercy and love.

MEMORY VERSE: "Lord, I will praise you among the nations [people groups]. I will sing about you among the people of [on] the earth. Great [wonderful] is your love. It reaches to [touches] the heavens [skies]. Your truth reaches to the skies [clouds]" (Psalm 57:9, 10, NlrV).

THE POETS WHO WROTE THE BOOK OF PSALMS understand that they are poor and needy. They need God's mercy to save them. They also know that they can't earn God's mercy with their good behavior. So, they have nothing good to offer God.

The Book of Psalms teaches us that people must depend fully on God's mercy. We can be thankful that God's mercy is everlasting. The history of God's people shows us this Bible truth. So does everything God made (Psalm 136). God is everlasting, but human life is the same as grass. We live only a short time on this earth and then die. So, God pities us humans and makes our strength new (Psalm 103:3, 5, 15). God gives us the promise of everlasting life.

God's people know that they pray to a Father in heaven who loves them (Psalm 103:13; Psalm 68:5; Psalm 89:26). Daily they have new experiences that teach them about God's mercy and love. These experiences help them to worship and serve God more. Because God is so wonderful, His people want to worship and serve only Him.

GOD'S MERCY CONTINUES FOREVER (Psalm 136)

Read Psalm 136. What is the most important Bible truth in this poem? Where does the poet find proof for this idea?

Psalm 136 asks God's people to praise the Lord for His mercy. God's people, Israel, can see His mercy in the things that He made (Psalm 136:4–9) and in their history (Psalm 136:10–22). The word “mercy” comes from the Hebrew word “**khesed**,” which means God's love never fails or changes.

The Lord is the “God of gods” and “the Lord of lords” (Psalm 136:2, 3, ERV). These special names for God do not mean that there are other gods. The “God of gods” and the “Lord of lords” show us that God is the only God.

No one can do the wonderful miracles that God can do (Psalm 136:4). God made the skies, the earth, the stars, and the planets. Many people in Bible times believed the stars and planets were gods and worshiped them (Deuteronomy 4:19). The Book of Psalms shows us that these “gods” are only things God made. These “gods” can't control anything.

In Psalm 136:12, the poet uses God's hands and arms as a word picture to show us that God is very powerful. God's hands and arms help us understand that God's mercy can go anywhere and touch the heart of anyone.

God's mercy should cause His people to trust in Him and stay loyal to Him and His promise. In Psalm 136, the poet announces 26 times that God's mercy continues forever. This announcement gives us hope that the Lord doesn't change. He will show favor to His people and continue to bless their children. God remembers His people (Psalm 136:23). God keeps His promise. The foundation of God's promise is mercy. When we believe in God's mercy, we will be filled with joy when we worship God.

Psalm 136:23–25 ends with telling us about how God cares for everyone and everything on this earth. God offers His mercy to His people and to everything He made. The Book of Psalms tells us that God's saving mercy is for everyone. So, the poets invite everyone to join Israel as they praise the Lord (also read Luke 2:10; John 3:16; and Acts 15:17).

How does Jesus' death on the cross show us in a powerful way that God's love and mercy continue forever?



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GIVE ME A CLEAN HEART (Psalm 51:1–5)

Read Psalm 51:1–5. Why does the poet in Psalm 51 ask the Lord to show him mercy?

King David wrote Psalm 51. In this poem, King David pours out his heart to the Lord. David asks God to forgive him for the sins he did at a dark time in his life (2 Samuel 11 and 12). David had sex with another man's wife and then ordered the man to be killed in war. King David knows that he sinned against God (Psalm 103:10). But David asks God to show him mercy (Psalm 51:1; Exodus 34:6, 7). Forgiveness is a gift of God's mercy and His love (Psalm 51:1).



David says, “God, you will not reject a heart that is broken and sorry for its sin” (Psalm 51:17, ICB).

Read Psalm 51:6–19. What do these verses teach us about God's forgiveness? How does God's forgiveness change us? What else does God's forgiveness do for us?

God's forgiveness is more than a legal announcement that the sinner is now innocent in God's eyes. God's forgiveness changes us from the inside out (Psalm 51:6; Hebrews 4:12). God makes our lives new (Psalm 51:10; John 3:3–8). The Hebrew word “**bara**” means “to make.” “**Bara**” shows us that God can make anything He wants out of nothing! God is the only One who can “**bara**” or “make.” Only God can change a sinner's heart (2 Corinthians 4:6).

David asks God to clean his heart with hyssop (Leviticus 14:2–8; Psalm 51:7). Hyssop is a plant that Israel's spiritual leaders used at special times in their worship of God. King David feels that his guilt separates him from God in the same way a leper, or sick person, is separated from his community and must live alone with a skin disease (Psalm 51:11). David believes that animal offerings won't heal him. He knows that no gift he can bring to God will pay for his terrible sins (Psalm 51:16; Exodus 21:14; Leviticus 20:10).

God's mercy allows Him to accept David's offering of a sorry heart. That's why David says, “God, you will not reject a heart that is broken and sorry for its sin” (Psalm 51:17, ICB). When David asks God to make his heart clean with hyssop, David shows he wants to come back to God.

If God can forgive murder, cheating, and lies, what hope do we all have?

WHAT IF THE LORD PUNISHED ALL OUR SINS? (Psalm 130:3)

Read Psalm 130. What does this poem tell us about sin and how terrible it is? What hope do sinners have?

The poet's sins and his people's sins cause the poet's suffering (Psalm 130:3, 8). The people's sins are bad enough to separate them from God forever (Psalm 130:3). In heaven, God keeps records of our sins. God will use these record books when He judges us (Daniel 7:10; Revelation 20:12). Sinners' names will be removed from the Book of Life if they refuse to confess their sins and stop doing them (Exodus 32:32; Psalm 69:28; Revelation 13:8).

The poet asks God for forgiveness. God's forgiveness is the only thing that can erase sin from the record books in heaven (Psalm 51:1, 9; Jeremiah 31:34; Micah 7:19). The poet knows that "God is a loving God, and not Someone who is angry. God only gets angry when people aren't grateful for His gift of love. . . . God doesn't pour His anger on us to hurt us. God's anger is meant to heal us. God doesn't want to destroy us. He wants to save His people (read Hosea 6:1, 2)." —Hans K. LaRondelle, *Deliverance in the Psalms* (Berrien Springs, MI: First Impressions, 1983), pages 180, 181, adapted. God loves to forgive our sins, not punish us for them! God's forgiving love fills our hearts with love, too. Then we want to worship and honor Him (Psalm 130:4; Romans 2:4). We must worship God because we respect and love Him, not because we fear His punishments.

God's children must be patient and wait for the Lord (Psalm 27:14; Psalm 37:34). Do we sit around and do nothing while we wait for the Lord to answer our prayers? Of course not! When we wait on the Lord, we grab hold of the Lord's promises in faith and hold tight. The poet's hope in the Lord comes from the Bible (Psalm 130:5). So, our waiting for the Lord is worth our time. Waiting for the Lord isn't a time when we do nothing. Help from God will come when we need it most.

Do you see how the poet asks God to help everyone in his community of faith (Psalm 130:7, 8)? The poet knows that everyone in the community is connected. So, he prays for himself and the whole community. As Christians, we are also part of a faith community. So, we should remember to pray for each other.



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PRAISE TO GOD (Psalm 113 and Psalm 123)

Read Psalm 113 and Psalm 123. What do these poems praise God for?



The poet says, the Lord “is so high above us that he must look down to see the sky and the earth” (Psalm 113:6, ERV).

Both Psalm 113 and Psalm 123 praise God for His mercy and His royal power or majesty. Only God can sit on the throne in heaven. So, God’s throne shows us His majesty and that He is powerful, too. God is more powerful than any leader on earth or in the skies. God is above them all (Psalm 113:4, 5; Psalm 123:1). That’s why the poet says, “Who is like [the same as] the Lord our God?” (Psalm 113:5, NLV). This verse shows the poet’s faith. The poet believes that no one on earth or in heaven is more powerful than the God of Israel.

The Lord’s throne is high above the earth. The poet says, the Lord “is so high above us that he must look down to see the sky and the earth” (Psalm 113:6, ERV). But the Lord is willing to bend down to watch over His children. God sees everything that happens here on earth. The Lord is filled with mercy. So, He is ready to save the poor and the needy from their troubles. The Lord doesn’t hide Himself from His servants, even if He lives far away.

We cannot fully understand God’s care for us. God takes care of the poor and the needy. He changes their lives. God does mighty miracles to help them. God shows us that He is very powerful when He helps people who are sad and hurting. People feel that they can come to God because they know He is the One who made them and the One who keeps them alive. We know that we are God’s servants and His beloved children.

We worship God because He is powerful. More than that, we worship God because He is loving and holy. We can praise God at any time and anywhere (Psalm 113:2, 3). We see God’s majesty and mercy in Jesus. Jesus was willing to leave His throne in heaven and come to this earth to save us. Jesus died on the cross to bring sinners back to God (Philippians 2:6–8). The Cross shows us the best reasons for why we should worship and praise God for all that He does for us.

Think about the Cross and everything that Jesus did there for you. Think about your old sins. How did Jesus save you? Why must you always remember to think about these things?

REMEMBER ALL GOD'S BLESSINGS (Psalm 103)

Read Psalm 103. What does this poem teach us about God's many blessings?

Psalm 103 tells us about the Lord's many blessings. The blessings include every good thing the Lord does for us (Psalm 103:2). The Lord "gives us plenty of good things" (Psalm 103:3–6, ERV). The Lord gives us these blessings because He is a God of love. The Lord also gives us these blessings because He remembers His promise with His people and keeps it (Psalm 103:7–18). The Lord remembers that humans are weak and live only a short time. So, the Lord feels sorry for His people (Psalm 103:13–17).

In the Bible, what does it mean to remember? Remembering is more than thinking about something that happened in the past. Remembering means that we do something now. When God remembers His promise, He acts. He comes to help His people. He keeps them alive because of His mercy (Psalm 103:3–13). In Psalm 103:11–16, the poet uses powerful word pictures to show us that God's mercy can be compared only to the skies where all the planets and the stars are.

How should God's people thank Him for His mercy?

First, God's people should bless the Lord (Psalm 103:1, 2). When we bless someone, our blessing is the same as a gift. Our gift may be spiritual. Or our gift may be something that someone needs (Genesis 49:25; Psalm 5:12). Everything we own or have comes from God. So, how can we bless God when He already owns everything we have? The Bible shows us that we can praise or thank God in the same way that the Israelites thanked King Solomon for everything he did for them (1 Kings 8:66; also read Job 29:13). When God gives good gifts to His children, He blesses them. Then His people bless God with praise for His love.

Second, God's people should remember His promise and His blessings in the past (Psalm 103:2, 18–22). When we remember God's blessings, we will love and obey God more.

Ellen G. White wrote, "We should spend an hour each day thinking about Jesus' life. . . . When we think about Jesus' death for us, we will trust in Him more. Our love will grow strong. Then we will be filled with His Spirit."—*The Desire of Ages*, page 83, adapted.



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ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: Read Ellen G. White, “The Sinner’s Need of Christ,” pages 17–22, in *Steps to Christ*.

“We have sinned against God. We aren’t worthy of God’s blessings. But God taught us to say: ‘For [because of] your sake [honor], do not hate us. Do not take away [remove] the honor from your glorious [wonderful] throne. Remember your agreement [promise] with us. Do not break it.’ Jeremiah 14:21 [ICB]. When we come to God, we must confess our sin. We know that we aren’t worthy of His blessings. God will hear our cry for help. He promised He will answer our prayers. When God keeps His promise to us, He brings honor to His Name and His throne.”—Ellen G. White, *Christ’s Object Lessons*, page 148, adapted.

In Psalm 103, the poet knows that God showed him mercy (Psalm 103:2). God’s gift of mercy causes the poet to say, “The LORD does what is right and fair for all who are treated [hurt] badly” (Psalm 103:6, NIV). The poet wants everyone to know that the Lord is a God of mercy and love. When people understand this Bible truth, they will give their hearts to God. They will accept His saving mercy and praise Him (Psalm 9:11, 12; Psalm 22:22–27; Psalm 66:16).



“When God keeps His promise to us, He brings honor to His Name and His throne.”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① God’s mercy is everlasting. How does this Bible truth help you to understand God’s love and His saving mercy better? Does this teaching mean that we can continue sinning because God’s mercy is forever? Explain.
- ② The same God who forgives our sins is the God who will judge our sins. How do we explain these two different ideas?
- ③ Read what the New Testament says about God’s mercy: Ephesians 2:4, 5; 1 Timothy 1:16; Titus 3:5; Hebrews 4:16. How do these verses about God’s mercy agree with what we read about God’s mercy in the Book of Psalms?

SEKULE'S STORY (PART 3): BIBLE ANSWERS

On Friday evening, Sekule waited outside the room of a student at his high school. Sekule's school was in Sarajevo, the capital of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Sekule was waiting for a boy who insulted him. When the boy came out of his room, Sekule planned to beat him up.

While Sekule waited, a friend offered him some alcohol. Sekule drank. After many more drinks, he got drunk and passed out. In the morning, Sekule knew his friends would tease him for not getting his revenge. So, Sekule decided to hide for the day. But where? Then he remembered the invitation from his Adventist teacher to go to church. Today was the Sabbath.

Sekule's hair was long and greasy. He hadn't washed it for a month. Sekule's breath smelled bad from drinking. But he went to church anyway. He heard that Adventists celebrated the Sabbath with sex parties every week. Sekule didn't want to be sitting next to a grandmother when that happened. Sekule saw a very pretty young woman and sat next to her.

When the church pastor started to preach, Sekule's mouth dropped open in surprise. The pastor gave Bible answers to his questions about God and hell. Sekule felt so grateful to learn that God is really a God of love (1 John 4:8). God also wants to save every sinner (Luke 19:10). Best of all, God will put no one in everlasting hellfire (Malachi 4:1, 3; Psalm 37:10, 11).

After the sermon, a church member invited Sekule to some Bible meetings. Sekule went. At the end of the meetings, Sekule asked the church pastor, "Tell me, please, what I am allowed to do as a Christian. And what am I not allowed to do?"

The pastor told him, "You can't work on Sabbath anymore."

Sekule said, "OK, done."

The pastor said, "You can't go to school on Sabbath."

Sekule nodded. "OK, done."

The pastor added, "You can't beat people up anymore."

Sekule agreed. "OK, done."

"You can't eat meat that isn't clean."

Sekule said, "OK, I won't eat meat that's not clean."

The pastor added, "We suggest that you not eat any meat."

From that day, Sekule never again worked on Sabbath. He stopped going to school on Sabbath, too. Sekule never fought again or ate any meat. He got baptized six months later when he was 18 years old. Sekule accepted these Adventist teachings right away. Why? Because the pastor gave him excellent Bible answers to his questions about God and hell.

Read more about Sekule's story next week. Thank you for your Sabbath School offerings that help share the Good News about Jesus in Montenegro.

INSIDE
Story

by ANDREW MCCHESENEY



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