



In God's Training School: How We Grow In Christ

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Psalm 18

Icebreaker:

What are your top three favorite things about summer?

The Study:

One of David's masterpieces is Psalm 18. The psalm is epic in scope, but what makes it especially powerful is that as David describes how God rescued him from King Saul, he's also describing how the Lord rescues us from sin and futility, and brings us to freedom. The spiritual lessons in this psalm are profound.



The Quest For Spiritual Maturity & Strength

Step 1: Humble yourself, by admitting you need God.

"I love you, O Lord, my strength. The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer." (vss.1-2)

1. Write your own psalm. Fill in David's sentence with your own words.

"I love you, O Lord, my _____. The Lord is my _____ and my _____ and my _____." (vss.1-2)

Share one of these, and explain why you wrote it.

2. In language of the recovery movement, the first step toward healing is to admit your essential powerlessness, and reach for a 'higher power'. But the Bible taught it first. What do the following verses say about our need for God?

Psalm 16:1-2

Matthew 5:3-5

Matthew 18:1-4

John 15:5

3. A friend says to you, "I don't need God. Everything I have I've worked hard for. I don't get why you're so religious. I didn't take you for a weak person." Where do you go next in the conversation?

4. The following quote is from the book "Cultural Apologetics" by Paul Gould. How does it help you think about the idea of humbling yourself before God?

Given God's desire for humans to flourish in a loving relationship with him, we would expect the evidence for God to be widely available. At the same time, since God wants the relationship that humans enjoy with him to be freely accepted, evidence for his existence would also be easily resistible.

Step 2: Help yourself, by calling on God to save you.

"In my distress I called upon the Lord; to my God I cried for help. From his temple he heard my voice, and my cry to him reached his ears." (vss.5-6)

4. It might seem a simple question, but don't give a simple answer. Why is prayer important as a next step?

5. David poetically describes in verses 7-17 how God immediately (and dramatically) responds, the moment he prays. Have you ever had a quick and dramatic answer to prayer? Share the experience.

6. When God promised David that he would be king, David had to run for his life from King Saul for the next ten years before that promise was fulfilled. In what sense could David honestly say that God heard his prayers the moment he cried out to him?

7. Not everything – in fact, *most things* we pray for – do not get instant answers. Or the answers we necessarily want. Read Psalm 37:4-5, then discuss what we meant in the teaching when we said, *“God answers prayers relationally, not magically.”*

Step 3: Heal yourself, by giving God your all while he gives you his all.

“God...equipped me with strength and made my way blameless. He made my feet like the feet of a deer and set me secure on the heights. He trains my hands for war so that my arms can bend a bow of bronze...I pursued my enemies and overtook them...I thrust them through...For you equipped me with strength.” (vss.32-39)

8. Who’s doing the work in these verses – God or David? Explain your answer.

9. Read Philippians 2:12-13 and Ephesians 2:8-10. What would these verses say to a person who...

- Sins their head off, and says, “Well yunno, I’m saved by grace, not works.”

- Continually doubts whether they’re saved and says, “I’ll never be good enough.”
- Is uber-lazy and says, “I just let go, and let God.”
- Is like Martha who works, works, works, and pushes themselves to the point of agitation, and says, “The Lord helps those who help themselves.”

10. Changing our lives for the better, in a way that keeps the balance of grace and working, will often follow this pathway:

“Teach me your way, O Lord.” ~ Psalm 27:11

Step 1: Pray.

Ask the Lord to speak to you, and reveal to your heart and mind an area of your life he wants to change.

Step 2: Think it through.

Reflect carefully and listen for the ‘still, small voice’ of God. Ask for the counsel of trusted friends, for God will speak through them also.

Step 3: Write it out.

In your spiritual journal, specifically describe what you sense the Lord is saying. “If it isn’t written down, it doesn’t exist.”

4. Step 4: Plan your steps.

It’s not enough to have a mission and vision for your life. You also have to have a strategy.

5. Commit your work to God, then get to work.

Then pray each and every step of the journey. Remember, ‘grace will lead you home’.

What do you sense is an area in your life where God wants to go to work in you, on you, or through you?

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