

SESSION 7

CHERISHED IN GOD'S EYES

▶ **The Point**

God values and cares for even the weakest among us.

▶ **The Passage**

Psalm 8:1-8

▶ **The Bible Meets Life**

Most people instantly recognize the great value of gold. But what about aluminum? Randall Lawrence inherited an old desk when his father, a former employee of the Denver Mint, passed away. Because he wasn't interested in the few coins his dad had left in the desk, Lawrence sold them to a local coin dealer. Those coins included a 1974-D penny cast from aluminum—one of the rarest coins in the world. Later, the dealer called Lawrence and offered to split the proceeds from the sale of this one penny. Its value? \$250,000!

It would have been sad if such a rare treasure had been overlooked or cast aside. Yet, tragically, something far more valuable than an aluminum penny gets cast aside every day: people. Children, the elderly, the weak, and the helpless too often become victims in a society that places too little value on human life. As we explore Psalm 8, we'll see that God has an entirely different perspective regarding the value of human life.

▶ **The Setting**

Biblical scholars have identified several types of psalms in the Book of Psalms, including laments, thanksgivings, praises, and royal songs. Psalm 8 is clearly a psalm of praise as it describes the glory and creative power of God. However, this song also has a royal tone as it refers to “the son of man” (v. 4). This was Jesus' favorite title for Himself while He was on the earth (see Matt. 20:18; Mark 10:45; Luke 9:58; John 3:14). The use of this psalm in Hebrews 2:5-9 shows how Jesus perfectly completes God's intended role for man in relation to His creation.

What does the Bible say?

Stronghold (v. 2)—The Hebrew term gives the meaning of power and strength in this context of God overcoming and silencing all His enemies.

The son of man (v. 4)—The phrase is used in common Hebrew parallelism, where the same idea is repeated using different wording. What is stated with man in the first line of the verse is restated using the son of man in the second line for emphasis.

Psalm 8:1-8

- 1** Yahweh, our Lord, how magnificent is Your name throughout the earth! You have covered the heavens with Your majesty.
- 2** Because of Your adversaries, You have established a stronghold from the mouths of children and nursing infants to silence the enemy and the avenger.
- 3** When I observe Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars, which You set in place,
- 4** what is man that You remember him, the son of man that You look after him?
- 5** You made him little less than God, and crowned him with glory and honor.
- 6** You made him lord over the works of Your hands; You put everything under his feet:
- 7** all the sheep and oxen, as well as the animals in the wild,
- 8** the birds of the sky, and the fish of the sea that pass through the currents of the seas.

GET INTO THE STUDY



5 minutes



Notes

DISCUSS: Question #1 on page 61 of the PSG: **“What have you owned that’s gone up in value?”**

Note: Suggestions include real estate, baseball cards, rare toys, jewelry, vintage furniture, and so on.

GUIDE: Direct group members to “The Bible Meets Life” on page 62 of the PSG. Introduce the value of human life as this session’s topic by reading or summarizing the text—or by encouraging group

members to read on their own.

ACTIVITY (OPTIONAL): To supplement “The Bible Meets Life,” pass out 40 pennies to each person in your group. Explain that these pennies represent the more than 40 million children that are aborted each year around the world—each penny represents more than a million lives taken in the past year. Encourage group members to carry their pennies throughout the day and pray for the unborn children of the world each time they hear the pennies jingling in their purses or pockets.

Note: To make things easier to carry before the group meeting, you can get 50-count rolls of pennies from most banks.

GUIDE: Call attention to “The Point” at the top of page 62 of the PSG: **“God values and cares for even the weakest among us.”**

ENHANCEMENT: Display Pack Item 6, “The Weak,” to reinforce the high value contained in every human life.

PRAY: Transition into the discussion by asking the Holy Spirit to grant each person in your group clarity and wisdom as you work together to engage a difficult (and potentially painful) subject.

TIP: Additional ideas for your group are available at biblestudiesforlife.com.

Psalm 8:1-2 Commentary

[Verse 1] As David wrote this song of praise, he began by making sure the singers would have no doubt about the object of their praise. **Yahweh** is the name God revealed to Moses (see Ex. 3:13-16). This is God's covenant name and implies God's eternal nature. David also referred to Yahweh as **Lord**. This title emphasizes the power and authority of God and points to His rule as King above all kings.

To describe God's **name** as **magnificent** is to affirm God Himself as being magnificent. Here, *name* is not simply a reference to *Yahweh*, but points to His total being and character. God is *magnificent* or glorious because of who He is and what He has done. One way the magnificence of God is revealed is through His creation of **the earth**. God's **majesty** is further revealed in **the heavens**, what people see as they look up from the earth. Wherever people look, they can see the majesty and glory of God the Creator. The apostle Paul affirmed this same truth when he wrote that God's "eternal power and divine nature" are clearly revealed "through what He has made" (Rom. 1:20).

[Verse 2] Though God's clear revelation of His glory is evident throughout His creation, most people have chosen to reject the reality of God's existence and glory. Because they rejected God's revelation, "they did not glorify Him as God or show gratitude" (Rom. 1:21). Once they chose to refuse the truth God has revealed through His creation, they became, in David's words, God's **adversaries**. David recognized that these people were not only opposed to God, but also to those who trust and worship Him. David called them the **enemy** and the **avenger**. David and the nation of Israel often had to fight against such people. As Christians, with the revelation God has provided to us in the New Testament Scriptures, we understand that Satan (the Devil) is God's arch enemy as well as our ultimate source of opposition.

So what has God done to silence such opposition and to provide a relief for His faithful ones? He has **established a stronghold**. The Hebrew term for *stronghold* has the meaning of power and strength, in this context of God overcoming and silencing all His enemies. Jeremiah used this same word to refer to God as "LORD, my *strength* and my stronghold, my refuge in a time of distress" (Jer. 16:19, emphasis added). How has God done this? The answer may seem strange to our Western minds. When we seek help, we tend to look for the strongest, the richest, the smartest, the most powerful one to deliver us. God does just the opposite. He uses the ones we would consider the weakest (see 1 Cor. 1:27). David said that God uses **the mouths of children and nursing infants**. How can such powerless persons provide strength and security? From David's view, young children represented more evidence of God's glory as Creator and Lord. The sounds of small children can remind anyone of the reality of God's limitless power and love. Who else could create such beautiful and amazing creatures?

Psalm 8:3-8 Commentary

[Verse 3] As David continued to reflect on how God's glory is revealed in His creation, he thought about **the moon and the stars**. David imagined God as a great, galactic Artist who fashioned these heavenly bodies and then set them in place for us to see each night (**the work of Your fingers ... which You set in place**). Of course, with our technology we can see much more of the vastness of the universe than David could. Our knowledge only amplifies the glory to which David pointed.

[Verse 4] As David thought about the vastness of the night sky, he considered the contrast with human beings who seem so small. He specifically chose a word for **man** that reflects humanity's weakness and dependence on God's provision and protection. Though human beings seem small and insignificant in the greatness of God's creation, yet God still takes notice of each person and provides for his or her needs (see Matt. 6:25-32). The phrase **the son of man** is used in common Hebrew parallelism. Instead of using *man* again in the second line, David found another way to say the same thing.

[Verse 5] Not only does God remember and look after people, He has created human beings so as to give them special status over all the rest of His creation, a **little less than God**. The phrase *less than God* could also be translated as "less than the angels." When the writer of the Book of Hebrews quoted this passage from the Greek version of the Old Testament (see Heb. 2:6-8), he used "lower than the angels." That's how the Greek translation reads. The key word is the Hebrew *elohim*. This word was often used for God in the Hebrew version of the Old Testament. But it could also simply mean "heavenly beings" or "angels." Regardless of the translation, the primary meaning is the same: in their position and authority, God made human beings lower than God and the angels but higher than the rest of His creation.

David went on to describe man's position as that of **glory and honor**. In comparison to God, man is only a reflection of God's perfect glory. Genesis 1:27 says that God made the man and woman "in His own image." God made human beings with that divine image so that they would reflect His glory. However, when a person is spiritually reborn, that individual is also able to reflect the likeness of Christ (see 2 Cor. 3:18). In no way does the Scripture ever teach or imply that *man* is a god or can become a god. People can only reflect the glory of their Creator, and the likeness of the One who recreates them when they are reborn at the moment of salvation. Sadly, daily events in our world demonstrate a flagrant disregard for the elevated status God has given to His highest creation. Examples include the abuse of children, human trafficking, prostitution, pornography, drug abuse, genocide, slavery, abortion, physician-assisted suicide, terrorism, and on and on. If we're not careful, we can become numb to the daily reports of such atrocities. As a contrast, God's ideal is for all people to marvel, as David did, at the glorious status God has given to every single human being.

Psalm 8:3-8 Commentary (continued)

[Verse 6] David's message in Psalm 8 contains a lot of connections to the Book of Genesis. For example, David knew that in the Genesis account of creation, God told the man and woman not only to "Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth," but also to subdue and rule over all that He had created (Gen. 1:28). **You made him lord over the works of Your hands.** Of course, the man and the woman sinned and corrupted God's perfect world. Though God changed the way He related to human beings because of their sin, He did not change His command for people to have authority over all living creatures (see Gen. 9:2). **Everything** was still **under his feet**, under his rule and authority. God still allowed humanity to function as His stewards over creation.

Even as God confronted the man and woman who had sinned against Him, He also looked forward to the day when the corrupted world order would be redeemed (see Gen. 3:15). His view was more than a mere hope: that day would mark the completion of His eternal plan (see Eph. 1:4). That's why He sent Jesus from heaven to earth. The writer of Hebrews said "we do not yet see everything subjected to" man (Heb. 2:8). Sin and Satan still reign, but something has occurred that significantly changed the landscape. Though we don't see man and creation in the perfect harmony God intended, we do see Jesus (v. 9). Jesus is the perfect God-Man. Like the rest of humanity, Jesus was "made lower than the angels for a short time" (v. 9). He was a human being in every way except that He was without any sin (4:15). Yet, He was also fully divine, God in the flesh (see John 1:14). He was the one who was perfectly qualified to "taste death for everyone" (Heb. 2:9), so that everyone who puts their faith in Him can be saved from the slavery and penalty of sin (see Rom. 6:23; Heb. 2:14-15). And one day Jesus will totally and finally defeat all God's enemies and all the adversaries of His faithful ones (see Rev. 19–20). At that point Jesus will fulfill the commission of all humanity to subdue and rule over all God's creation. One day God will send forth "a new heaven and a new earth" (Rev. 21:1) and "there will no longer be any curse" on any part of God's creation (Rev. 22:3). There will only be the perfect peace and harmony God created in the beginning for all people to enjoy.

[Verses 7-8] The lists in these verses are similar to the lists found in Genesis 1:28 and 9:2. They specify all the land animals, all the birds, and all the creatures of the sea. God's original intention for human beings was that they should exercise authority over and be good stewards of God's creation. While God clearly meant for man to understand his authority and superior worth, God also intended for people to demonstrate respect and care for both the creatures and the land itself. Though we have marred God's original design by our sin and rebellion, God has never removed our mandate to work with Him in governing and caring for His creation. We must always remember that while we have great freedom and opportunity as we subdue the earth, we will always remain God's stewards. That is our high calling.

