



YOU: Connect. Grow. Serve. Go!
Summer 2018 Leader Commentary

Unit 2: No Doubt About It
Session 3: Does God Care? (see pp. 128-131)

The Question: How can I know God cares when I'm hurting?

The Point: God acts on my behalf.

Background Passage: Psalm 34

Focal Passage: Psalm 34:15-22

This commentary is designed to help you think about the question, "How can I know God cares when I'm hurting?" and drive home this one truth: God acts on my behalf.

Focus on These Points

God Knows What You're Going Through
(Ps. 34:15-17)

The incident that inspired this psalm can be found in 1 Samuel 21:10-15 when David was delivered from King Achish of Gath. In this psalm, David expressed his thanksgiving to God for rescuing him from a very perilous and threatening situation. David called to the Lord, transferring his trust fully to God, and his fears were relieved. In these three verses David identifies that the "righteous" are the recipients of this care and concern from God. David, a man after God's own heart, was confident that God's eyes and ears are especially tuned to the call of His children.

David's reference to the "eyes" and "ears" of God is an example of an anthropomorphic reference—referring to human (*anthropos*) traits, qualities, or specifically "forms" (*morphe*). These references are often the attempt of the biblical writers, under the direction of God, to explain the work and nature of God in ways that we, as mere humans, can understand. Since God, being spirit in nature (aside from the revelation of Jesus in the flesh), we would not have a reference to understand Him without these types of references.

David had no doubt that God would hear his cry and that God would respond and come to his aid. The *Holman Old Testament Commentary: Psalms* states, "So strong was God's defense that the Lord was against David's enemies so their memory would be cut off. This means his foes would be so defeated that they would soon be forgotten." That is the extent to which God hears and responds to His children.

God Is with You
(Ps. 34:18)

Our God, the one true God, is near to His children. He is close by and ready to respond. Matthew Henry said, "It is the character of the righteous, whose prayers God will hear, that they are of a broken heart and a contrite spirit (that is, humbled for sin and emptied of self); they are low in their own eyes, and have no confidence in their own merit and sufficiency, but in God only."

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“Brokenhearted” and “crushed in spirit” further develop the image of oppression, although the emphasis in these terms is on internal suffering. Yahweh is near those who are broken and humble (51:17) as opposed to those who have a “heart of stone” (Ezek. 11:19; 36:26). There are times when we feel oppressed and overcome. At those times we need to cling to the promise in this verse that God is near us.

Any parent knows the special bond that drives the heart of a parent to the heart of a child when that child is experiencing heartache. From a human perspective we can begin to understand the love of our heavenly Father when His children are hurting. In spite of a broken heart, we must remember that God is near to help us in our times of need.

God Responds and Delivers (Psalm 34:19-22)

David said that no matter what type of problems a child of God might face—no matter how overwhelming, how oppressive, how hurtful—God will deliver His children from all of those problems.

Verse 19 states that the afflictions of the righteous are many. This does not mean that the problems God’s children face are any more numerous than those suffered by others. The reality is that, because we live in a fallen world, we are all (righteous and sinners alike) subject to suffering and hurts.

“He protects all his bones” (v. 20) is a reference to God’s protecting the whole being of His righteous children. It is an exaggerated description to indicate that God not only cares for the body in general of His children, but His care is so intense for His children that He even cares for all of their bones. This verse has also been described as a Messianic prophecy since John 19:36 states the fulfillment of this verse in the experience of Christ’s crucifixion.

Evil (Hb ra’ah) (v. 21) can mean disaster and calamity as well as the abstract concept of evil. In this case it is personified as the one who kills the wicked.

David summarized the psalm by stating that God “redeems” the lives of His servants (v. 22). The Hebrew word *padah* means “to ransom or rescue from great harm.” This term was also used to describe the deliverance God provided for Israel from the hands of Egypt. David was convinced, as can we be convinced, that no one will be condemned who takes refuge in God. To take refuge in God means to flee to Him for protection.

God does care for us. Even when He may seem far away, these words from David remind us that God is indeed near and that He hears us when we cry out to Him. God acts to comfort and deliver us when we are hurting.