

## Lesson 1 A Prayer of Dependence Psalm 86

**Introduction:** Our Bible Study for the next several weeks will be lessons about *Praying the Psalms*. This is from the Life Guide Bible Studies series. Some of the lessons we will cover are entitled: A Prayer of Longing for God, A Prayer of Trust, A Prayer of Distress, A Prayer When God Is Silent, and we will start the series with a lesson entitled “A Prayer of Dependence.”

**About the Book of Psalms:** The Book of Psalms is the longest and perhaps the most widely used book in the Bible. It explores the full range of human experience in a very personal and practical way.

David wrote almost half (seventy-three) of the one hundred and fifty psalms. Other writers were Asaph (12), the sons of Korah (9), Solomon (2), and Heman (with the sons of Korah), Ethan and Moses each wrote one psalm. The other fifty-one psalms are anonymous.

The psalms were written between the time of Moses (around 1440 BC) and the Babylonia captivity (586 BC). For the most part, the psalms were not intended to be narrations of historical events. However, they often parallel events in history, such as David’s flight from Saul and his sin with Bathsheba.

To say what is the key number or verse of the Book of Psalms is most difficult because there are so many “favorites” within the book. But the central theme of the Book of Psalms is worship. God is worthy of all praise because of who He is, what He has done, and what He will do. His goodness extends through all time and eternity.

*Getting the most out of Praying The Psalms.* The psalms are acts of relating to God. In the intense language of poetry, they address God with frankness and urgency. They give voice to our inner turmoil. They teach us to talk to God about life’s deepest needs and longings with childlike vulnerability and spontaneity. They immerse us in a spiritual life that is a passionate struggle to love and to know we are loved by God.

The psalms offer us the gifts of expression, courage and celebration—and the gift of raw honesty:

- Raw honesty.....The psalms do not attempt to be “nice” or “polite” or even “theologically correct.” We are given permission to talk to God without holding back and to be exactly where we are and who we are with God.
- Expression.....They give us the powerful words and images which express our heart cry to God. They give words to our feelings. Our fears, our hopes, our joy, our anger, our longing, our gratitude, our doubts and our worship find full expression here.
- Courage.....The psalms give us the courage to acknowledge our vulnerable dependence on God. It takes courage to admit the truth of our dependency on God.
- Celebration.....They call us to shout, sing and dance our gratitude and praise to God. The psalms draw us into active worship. As we enter the world of the psalms, we come into God’s presence as the vulnerable, honest, needy, spontaneous joyful children He made us to be.

*Observation, Interpretation, and Application* are three keys that unlock the treasures of Scripture.

Let’s begin! A Prayer of Dependence, **Psalm 86**

Our relationship with God is that of children to a parent, sheep to a shepherd, creatures to the Creator. We are dependent on Him for life, for breath, for sustenance, for help in trouble, for love, for forgiveness, for mercy. We may like to think of ourselves as independent and self-sufficient, but we are not. We need God. It is vital that we acknowledge our need because it is the beginning point of our relationship with Him.

**Group Discussion** Take a few minutes to write about a young child and a loving parent you have known or know currently. What kind of help does the child need from his parent? What is it like to watch a child depending on her parent?

**Personal Reflection.** Think of a time when you needed to rely on someone for emotional or physical support. What feelings did you have about depending on that person for help?

This psalm helps us give voice to our dependence on God. **Read Psalm 86.**

**Discussion:**

1. What is the overall sense you get about the nature of the psalmist's relationship with God?
  - a. In reading **Psalm 86**, I get an overall sense that this psalmist has a deep caring relationship with God. It appears to be close and personal. He doesn't speak to God as if He is a stranger .
2. What appeals to you about the psalmist's relationship with God?
  - a. He knows God for himself and speaks confidently about what he wants God to do.
    - i. He appears to have had previous experiences with the Lord and believes that God will answer his prayer. See **Hebrews 11:6** and **1 John 5:14-15**.
    - ii. The last part of **v. 17** speaks in the sense that God has helped and comforted the writer before.
    - iii. Note the writer's direct, frank, unselfconscious expression of need. The psalmist evidences a sense of childlike dependence on God's love and goodness.

3. List the many requests the psalmist makes of God.
  - a. He asks God to bow down thine ear, to hear him, to preserve his soul, to save thy servant, to be merciful and to bring joy to His servant.
  - b. He asks God to give ear to his prayer, to attend to his supplication, to teach him His way, to unite his heart.
  - c. He also asks God to turn unto him, to give strength to His servant, and he wanted God to give him a sign of His goodness.
4. The psalmist describes himself in **verse 1** as “poor and needy.” What is he saying about himself?
  - a. In describing himself as “poor and needy,” the psalmist is honestly acknowledging his need and appealing to God for help. He is needy and since God made him and his needs, he brings himself and his need to God.
5. What reactions would you have to describing yourself as poor and needy?
6. Why does the psalmist need God’s help?
  - a. The psalmist needs God’s help because the arrogant are attacking him and a band of ruthless men are seeking his life (**v. 14**). The psalmist is facing a situation that is too big for him. He is overwhelmed.
  - b. Most people don’t have someone stalking them to kill them. But there will be times when our lives or the life of someone close to us will be threatened with illness. There may be times when we feel threatened in other ways (financially, for example) that are overwhelming to us. We all experience many days that would qualify as “days of trouble” (**v. 7**). We all need God’s help in ways similar to what the psalmist experienced. We all have trouble that are too big for us to handle alone.
7. What are some of the specific statements the psalmist makes about God?
  - a. The psalmist makes statements like “You are my God,” “You are forgiving and good,” and “there is no other god like Him.” He also says (**v. 15**) “O Lord, thou art a God full of compassion, and gracious, longsuffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth.
8. How would you summarize the psalmist’s view of God?
  - a. God is awesome, loving, kind, and compassionate. He is full of grace and mercy. He alone is God.

9. How does the psalmist show his dependence on God throughout this psalm?
- a. Throughout this psalm the psalmist shows his dependence on God by stating his needs and making his request known unto God. The psalmist identifies his neediness and contrasts it with God's love and power.
  - b. He clearly knows he cannot take care of himself. He knows he needs God.
10. When is it difficult for you to depend on God?
11. How might the psalmist's dependency on God encourage you to depend more fully on God?
12. In what areas of your life do you need to acknowledge your dependence on God?

**Prayer:** Spend some time acknowledging in prayer some of the specific ways you need God at this time in your life.

**Now or Later**

Write about a time when you experienced God's help and presence. Write a prayer, thanking God for this memory and expressing your need for God today.

**Homework:** A Prayer of Longing for God. Read **Psalm 63**