

**GROUNDS OF FAITH CAFÉ: “Experiencing the Psalms” Lesson 3. (Psalms 7 and 8). For lesson copies, go to <http://www.montgomerychurch.org/resources8.html>**

Primary resources: James L. Mays, *Psalms*, 1994, John Knox Press; *Shepherd's Notes on the Psalms*, 1999, Broadman & Holman Publishers; *Life Application Study Bible*, NIV, 1991, Tyndale House Publishers and Zondervan Publishing House.

**Introduction:** Psalm 7, like the first six psalms before it, is a plea for relief from distress. Psalm 8, on the other hand, interrupts the sequence of prayers for delivery or salvation in order to praise God almost exclusively. As such, psalm 8 become the first hymn of praise in the books of Psalms and the only hymn in the Old Testament that is composed completely as a direct address about and to God.

**Read Psalm 7 completely through:** As you read, keep in mind an intriguing thought: the course of action one picks when confronted by stress, turmoil, or distress is greatly determined by the relationship one has or does not have with God.

**Now re-read 7:1-11:** Pay particular attention to the Psalmist's description of his dilemma, how he views himself in relationship to God, and how he views God.

- How does the Psalmist view God: Just or unjust? Antagonist or shield/refuge? Righteous or unrighteous? Is your view of God the same or not? Discuss.
- How would you characterize the Psalmist's relationship with God: Righteous? Innocent? Guilty? How would you characterize your own relationship with God? Discuss.
- What action(s) does the Psalmist take when confronted with stress or crisis? Given a similar circumstance, how would you react? Discuss

**Now re-read 7:12-17:**

- The Psalmist seems to think that evildoers will eventually bring their own punishment upon them as a consequence of their actions. Do these verses suggest that to you? Do you believe that to be true? Discuss.
- The Psalmist closes his prayer giving thanks to the LORD and singing praise to His Name. What does this suggest to you about how the Psalmist sees God? Does this reflect your own attitude? Discuss.

**Challenge:** Having read and discussed Psalm 7, now re-write the Psalm from the perspective of someone who does not either know or believe in God.

- What picture emerges of how one copes with stress when God is not present to him or her? What do you learn from this? Discuss.

**Read Psalm 8 completely through:** Keep in mind that the Psalm is composed as an address about and to God suggesting once again that how we see God greatly influences how we think and how we behave.

- In this significant hymn of praise, what specifically does the Psalmist praise God for and what question does he raise with regard to God's intended mission for mankind? Do you have the same or similar thoughts? Discuss.

**Second Challenge:** Having read and discussed some key points in Psalm 8, now re-write the Psalm to include what you specifically would praise God for.

- Do your specific praises draw upon a past personal history with God, Scriptural historical records, or a combination of all? What have you learned from this? Discuss.
- What do you think regarding the purpose or reason for God's creation of yourself? Do you identify with the Psalmist's perspective? Do you see something else? Discuss.