



CHRISTIANITY WITHOUT THE RELIGION

BIBLE SURVEY

THE UN-DEVOTIONAL

PSALMS 120-150

Week 3

Hidden Treasure in History

DAY 15

Psalm 135

What one special treasure, heirloom or collection of yours would you never sell? What is the story behind that priceless item?

1. Who or what is God's "treasured possession" (v. 4; compare Tit 2:14; 2Pe 2:9-10)?

2. With what does the Psalmist describe God? (a) words of praise, (b) Bible stories, (c) character sketches, (d) first-person testimony, (e) one-word adjectives. What is God like?

3. By contrast, what were the "idols of nations" like (vs. 15-18)?

4. Why praise God so much? (a) we forget God when things are going well, (b) if we don't keep God at the forefront of our lives, we'll worship something else.

1. Judging by what people buy, watch, listen to and devote their time to, who and what are some present-day idols?

2. How would you finish the sentence, "Praise the Lord for _____"?

3. Tell a story of how you know God is great and God is good.

This was written after Israel's return from the Exile to celebrate Israel's redemptive history leading up to the construction of the Temple. Every verse of this call-to-praise, storytelling psalm either echoes, quotes or is quoted by other Scriptures.

OPENING

up to the Word

DIGGING

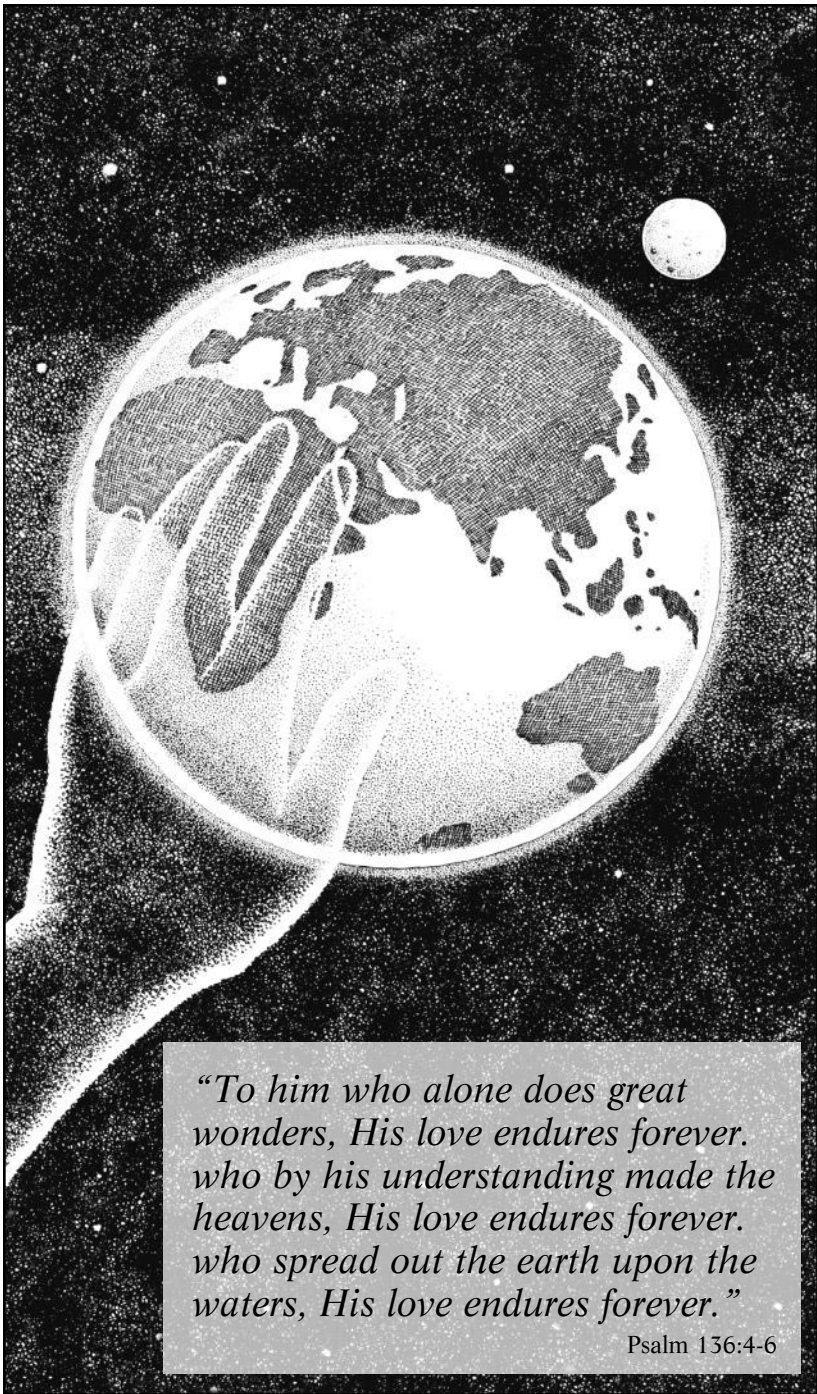
into the Word

LIVING

out the Word

WINDOW

on the Word



“To him who alone does great wonders, His love endures forever. who by his understanding made the heavens, His love endures forever. who spread out the earth upon the waters, His love endures forever.”

Psalm 136:4-6

Can't Thank You Enough!

DAY 16

Psalm 136

When you want to say, “Thank you!” in a special way, how do you do it best or most often? (a) with flowers, (b) with a card, (c) with your own creative phrases, (d) with song or poetry, (e) with a singing telegram.

1. What events are remembered in this storytelling?
2. What is the effect of using the same response over and over? (a) memorable, (b) singable even by kids, (c) sleep-inducing like a lullaby.
3. We live in a *what-have-you-done-for-me-lately*, self-centered society. So why give thanks for things that happened so long ago?

1. If you wrote a psalm like this for your family, what events would you include?
2. What person has made a difference in your life, whom you've never really thanked (teacher, friend, parent, child, minister, bus driver)? How could you thank that person?
3. Since gratitude and thanksgiving flow out of God's grace, how have you seen it grow and mature in your life and the lives of others you know?

*This liturgy of praise—to God as Creator and Redeemer of his people—stands out in Jewish tradition as the Great Hallel, recited at Jewish Passover meals. It thanks God over and over, retelling Israel's history. The repeated praise lyric, **His love endures forever**, gives modern readers a clear sense of Hebrew congregational responsive psalm singing. Other psalms, though not as obvious as here, were also meant to be sung responsively.*

OPENING

up to the Word

DIGGING

into the Word

LIVING

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on the Word

Singing the Blues, Cursing the Enemy

Psalm 137

OPENING
up to the Word

What has made you sing the blues lately? What words have you uttered recently you wish you could take back? Under what circumstances?

DIGGING
into the Word

1. What feelings, tones, rhetoric and hyperbole do you pick up in this psalm?
2. Why do the Israelites refuse to sing or play for the Babylonians? (a) they feared ridicule, (b) they had no reason to sing, (d) they refused to entertain their captors.
3. What makes the psalmist most angry? (a) being forced to sing, (b) being captured, (c) being deprived of creature comforts, (d) seeing Jerusalem destroyed. What else? Why do you think so?

LIVING
out the Word

1. Under what circumstances might you pray in anger?
2. What rhetoric would you change to suit your true feelings?
3. Who or what would be the focus of your passion for justice?

WINDOW
on the Word

*The words of this psalm, a painful cry from the soul, reflect a time when **the Israelites had long since been captured** and exiled in Babylon. The use of exaggeration conveys a sense of outrage and passion for justice more than an intention to kill or maim. The Christian can pray this “imprecatory” psalm if one translates the fiery rhetoric and cursing into affirmations of divine judgment against the Edomites, the daughter of Babylon, and other such age-long enemies (vs. 7-9; see Isa 13; 47; 63:1-6; Jer 49-51, Ez 35; Rev 18:1-19:4).*

Love Song

DAY 18

Psalm 138

When things turn out amazingly well for you, who is the first person you call?

- 1.** How does this psalmist approach God? (a) in awe, (b) boldly, (c) humbly, (d) from afar, (e) in trouble. Why do you think so?
 - 2.** What does the psalmist seem to appreciate most about God? (a) enduring love, (b) faithfulness to his word, (c) great power, (d) his care for the lowly, (e) answers to prayer, (f) protection, (g) his deliverance.
 - 3.** What changes for this psalmist? (a) his heart, (b) his dire circumstances, (c) his focus, (d) God's promises.
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- 1.** God was with David in the midst of his troubles (vs. 6-7). Is God with you in the details of your life?
- 2.** David knows God will fulfill his larger purpose in him (v. 8). What do you think God's ultimate purpose for you might be?

OPENING

up to the Word

DIGGING

into the Word

LIVING

out the Word

I See You... and I Know What You Do

Psalm 139

OPENING
up to the Word

Who knows you best? When you're trying to hide something, who among your family or friends usually guesses that something's wrong? Is that comforting, or convicting, to be known so well?

DIGGING
into the Word

1. What image comes to mind as David contemplates God's all-knowing awareness of him? (a) wise grandparent, (b) Big Brother, (c) CIA, (d) good doctor, (e) hidden camera, (f) detailed record book of sins.

2. This concept of a "know-it-all" God breaks all human categories and comparisons. What impact does this have on the psalmist (vs. 6, 7, 14, 17, 21-22, 23-24)?

3. To what lengths does David consider running away and hiding (vs. 7-12)? What holds him back (vs. 17-18; 23-24)?

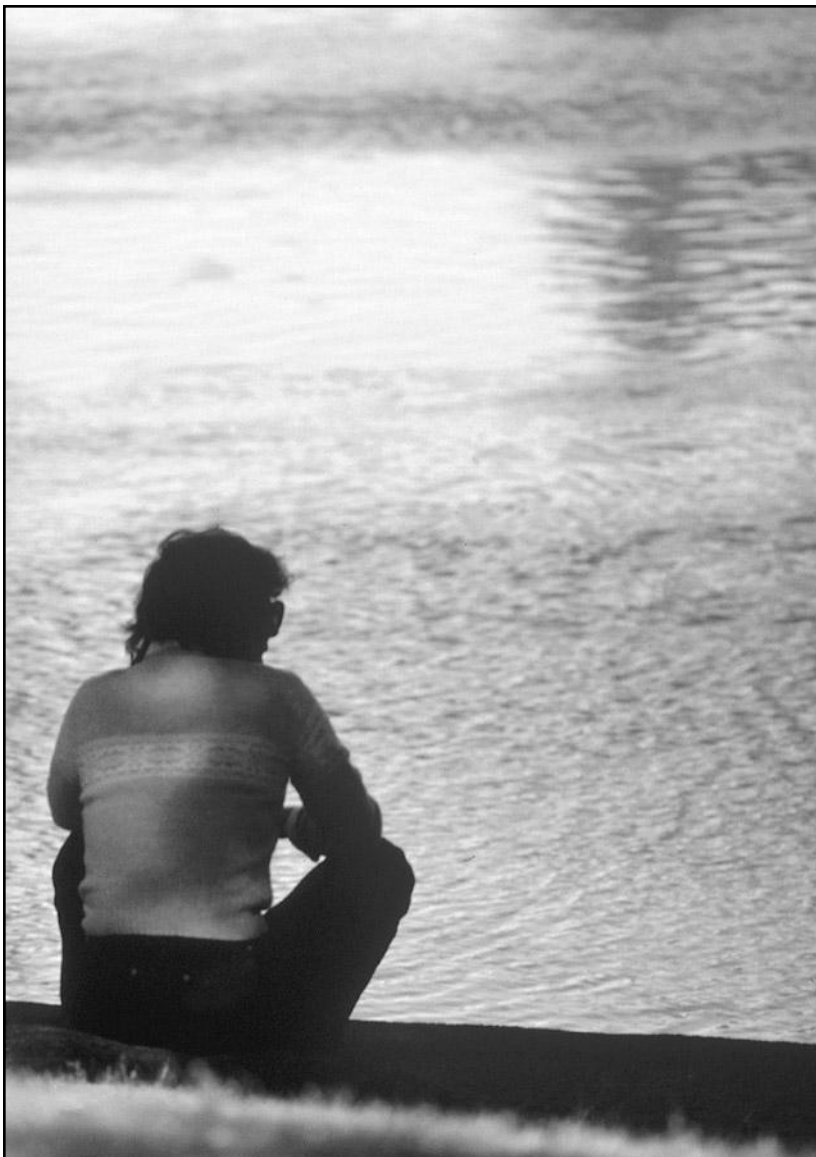
LIVING
out the Word

1. God knows all about you and he loves you anyway! How does that differ from someone else knowing all about you?

2. Are you in the run-and-hide stage, or the search-me-and-correct-me stage? What is your next step of faith?

WINDOW
on the Word

***The secret place and depths of the earth** (v. 15) both refer to the place of the dead (Ps 63:9; Job 14:13; Isa 44:23), but here are metaphors for the concealment or hiddenness of the womb. **When I awake**, as from sleep or death, could be an Old Testament glimpse of the resurrection (compare Ps 17:15, where one awakes to see his God's face).*



“O Lord, you have searched me and you know me. You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar.”

Psalm 139:1-2

Bad Apples and Snake Poison

Psalm 140

OPENING
up to the Word

Ever hang out with the wrong crowd? What made you want to be with them? How did you finally learn they were *bad apples*?

DIGGING
into the Word

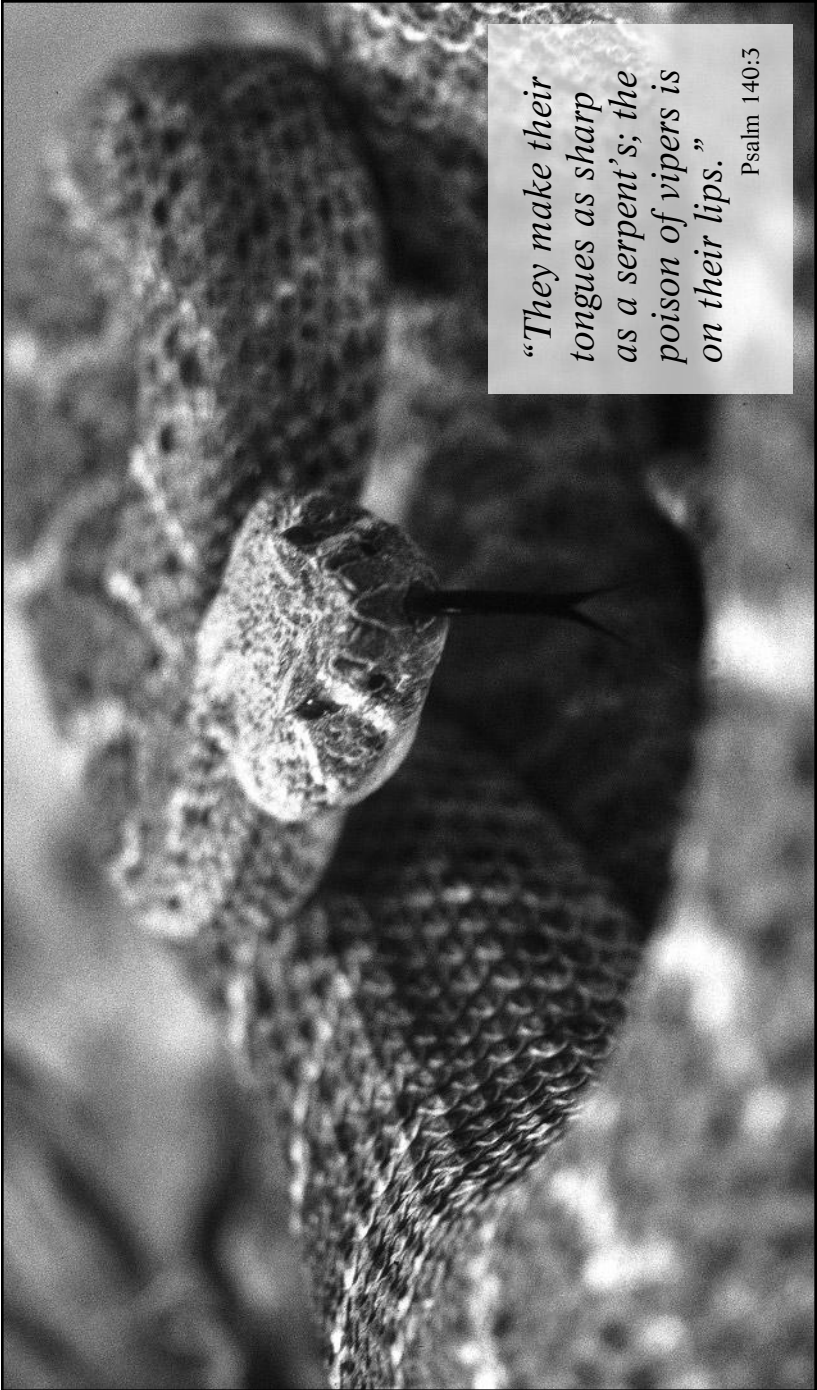
1. What does the anatomical imagery—heart, head, tongue, lips, hands and feet—tell you about David? His God? His enemies?
 2. Describe in other terms the situation David finds himself in.
 3. How did he get into that predicament? How would he get out?
 4. What does the psalmist want God to do for him? For his enemies? For the needy?
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LIVING
out the Word

1. When someone comes against you, what should you do? (a) dig a deeper hole or build a stronger wall, (b) turn the other cheek, (c) fight back, (d) pray or curse as this psalmist does. When should God get involved?
 2. Thank God for your support network of family, friends who help keep you on the right track.
 3. How can you help someone else who may run with bad company?
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WINDOW
on the Word

A *malicious tongue*, which is as sharp as a serpent's and as the poison of vipers (v. 3), is the dominant theme throughout this Psalm. This theme is further developed in James 3:1-12.



*“They make their
tongues as sharp
as a serpent’s; the
poison of vipers is
on their lips.”*

Psalms 140:3

Preserve and Protect This Prude

Psalm 141

OPENING
up to the Word

What delicacy, comfort food or yummy treat do you find most irresistible? Are you hooked? How long can you go without it?

DIGGING
into the Word

1. In this psalm, what do you see, hear, smell, taste and touch?

2. What fierce temptation is the psalmist trying to resist or escape? (a) internal struggle, (b) external threat, (c) spiritual warfare, (d) other. Give examples from David's life.

3. Why ask for physical and verbal discipline (v. 5; see Pr 27:6)?

4. Which aspects of God's character are lifted up or appealed to?

5. Will David succeed on his own? Why or why not?

6. David will suffer because of the ungodly in Israel for how long? (a) briefly, (b) always, (c) until _____. Why do you think so? On what do you (and David) base this belief (vs. 6-10)?

LIVING
out the Word

1. David welcomes advice (discipline and rebuke) to keep from sinning or falling prey to evil. Whose advice would you accept to help keep you on the straight and narrow path?

WINDOW
on the Word

This psalm exhibits an almost prudish desire for righteousness and self-preservation. Yet this is not a cloistered piety, but one that struggles in and against the world.