

8-SESSION BIBLE STUDY  
WITH OPTIONAL VIDEOS

# PSALM 40

CRYING OUT TO THE GOD WHO  
DELIGHTS TO RESCUE US

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SESSION TWO:

# CRYING OUT

I waited patiently for the LORD;  
he inclined to me and heard my cry.

**PSALM 40:1**

## ***GROUP GUIDE***

### **WARM THINGS UP**

Begin with a few questions to start your conversation.

Name a few insights that you gleaned from your study of Psalm 40 this past week.

Share the key phrase and title that you identified for Psalm 40.

Did a certain part of the psalm particularly resonate with you? Explain.

### **WATCH**

To view Session Two's teaching from Sarah Mae, download the optional video bundle at [LifeWay.com/Psalm40](http://LifeWay.com/Psalm40).

### **CREATE CONVERSATION**

If you feel comfortable, share a time when you have cried out to the Lord in the past. How did God respond?

When you're walking through a hard time, do you find it easier to go to God with your struggles or to the people around you? Explain.

Read Psalm 40:17 aloud together. What do you think David might have meant when he said that he was "poor and needy"? Do you think of yourself as poor and needy before God? Why or why not?

Discuss the end of Psalm 40:17. Do you know God as your Helper and Deliverer? If so, how have you seen Him be a Helper and Deliverer in your life? If not, why do you struggle to see Him that way?

Close by praying for the women in your group to see God as their Helper and Deliverer, to cry out to Him for help, knowing that He loves them, hears them, and will meet them in their honesty.



# 1

## *CRYING OUT*

... he inclined to me  
and heard my cry.

### **PSALM 40:1b**

Before we begin, pray a prayer like this:

*Father God, open my mind so that I may understand the Scriptures, and my eyes that I may behold wondrous things in Your Word.*

The word “cry,” *shavah* in the Hebrew transliteration, means specifically a “cry for help.”<sup>1</sup> God heard David’s cry for help.

**READ** Psalm 40:2,12,14, and write down some of the reasons why David cried out to God for help.

Why do we cry out? What are some things that cause people to cry out for help?

Why do you think people choose not to cry out? What fears might they have in crying out to the Lord for help?

For most of us, the entry point to prayer is a need for help. We know we can't fix or face our troubles alone. Even when we're scared, unsure, or we convince ourselves for a time that we can handle it, the truth is, God is our only hope. As the psalmist says in Psalm 73:25, "Whom have I in heaven but you?"

And yet, often, in a tucked away place in our souls, we find this thought: *If I cry out, I might get hurt*. To cry out for help is to be in a place of vulnerable risk. Or, as the psalmist teaches us, it's to be in a place of vulnerable trust.

Let's discuss two questions that I think hinder our surrendering to a vulnerable trust in God—one where we are free to cry out without fear or pretense:

- 1) Does God *really* hear my cries?
- 2) Can I *really* trust Him?

**Do you struggle to surrender to God? If yes, which of the above questions best represents your struggle to come to God? Explain.**

Now let's see what God has to say in answer to these questions.

## ***DOES GOD HEAR MY CRIES?***

**READ Psalm 34:15. Whose cry does God hear?**

The Bible tells us because of Jesus' sacrifice on the cross, believers in Christ are counted righteous before God. We get credit for Jesus' righteousness in the eyes of God. (See Rom. 5:19; 2 Cor. 5:21; and Phil. 3:9.)

**Does God hear your cries? How do you know?**

## ***CAN I TRUST HIM?***

Trust is a tender thing when we've been hurt or when we struggle with God's goodness based on our experiences and our perspectives. Before we look at the Scriptures, consider this prayer:

*Father, thank You that You know all the things I don't and that You understand everything that I can't. Please help me to see You, to trust You, and to be vulnerable with You. Thank You for Jesus. In His name I ask these things. Amen.*

Write your own prayer below:

**READ Psalm 139:1-18. With how many of your ways is God acquainted?**

**Do you know what tomorrow will bring? Does God know?**

God has packed the Bible full of beautiful, truthful promises to His children: He promises to be near to the brokenhearted (Ps. 34:18). He knows the distress of our souls (Ps. 31:7), and He promises never to forsake those who seek Him (Ps. 9:10). He cares about our pain. We even see Jesus crying with His followers here on earth (John 11:32-35).

**READ Matthew 12:20. What do you think it means that God would not break a broken reed or quench a smoldering wick?**

The entire Bible is the story of God's love for us, culminating in our rescue with the death and resurrection of Jesus and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit into each of us, sealing us (Eph. 1:13) for the day when all things will be made right and new (Rev. 21:5).

How do we know we can trust God? Because He proved He is trustworthy by showing the ultimate display of love for us. "Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13). If we believe God loves us, then we must believe that we can trust Him. His love took Him to the depths, and when we're in the depths, it is His love that preserves us (Ps. 40:11).



So how do we reconcile His love and trustworthiness to our fearful, sometimes arrogant ways of thinking, living, and feeling? We tell the truth.

## ***TELLING THE TRUTH: BEING HONEST WITH OUR PAIN AND PRAISE***

Can you imagine singing Psalm 13:1 in church? "How long, O LORD? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me?" It's honest though, right? Raw, real, recognizable? U2 singer Bono puts it bluntly when he says, "Why I'm suspicious of Christians is because of this lack of realism."<sup>2</sup> God is not afraid of our honesty.

**READ Psalm 13:1. What did David ask the Lord?**

**READ Job 30:20-21. Whom was Job addressing?**

God allows honest and vulnerable prayers and songs in a spirit of humility. He even shows us examples of saints of old addressing Him with accounts of their honest pain and confusion because of their limited human understanding.

The beauty of truth telling with each other and before God is that it clears the way for us to come out of hiding and into the light, where we see and acknowledge our pain and questions and confusion. When we do this, when we let the truth out, we are better able to ask God to help us heal. When we trust Him with our pain, we grow to know Him more as a loving Father who draws near to the brokenhearted, sits with us in our hurt and confusion, and leads us to gospel-anchored hope, joy, peace, and purpose. When we do this, when we let the truth out, we are better able to see the pain and questions and confusion of others and love them in it, not rushing their processes with God, just as God has been graciously patient with us in ours. To sing together with honest lyrics is to corporately sit with each other and agree that pain and praise are both threads that weave this tapestry of life.

**How has God used today's time of study to speak to your heart and mind? How will you respond to Him?**

## *CRYING OUT: OUR SIN*

<sup>12</sup> For evils have encompassed me  
beyond number;  
my iniquities have overtaken me,  
and I cannot see;  
they are more than the hairs of my head;  
my heart fails me.

<sup>13</sup> Be pleased, O LORD, to deliver me!  
O LORD, make haste to help me!

### **PSALM 40:12-13**

Before we begin, pray a prayer like this:

*Father God, open my mind so that I may understand the Scriptures, and my eyes that I may behold wondrous things in Your Word.*

Circle the words "evils" and "iniquities" in the above passage.

Here, the word "evils" has to do with trouble, distress, and misery. "Iniquities" describes our sin and the consequences our sin has on us and others. Both bring pain. These words have a similar meaning, and they share a common concept.

Circle other words or phrases in this passage that share a similar meaning or concept. What do you see?

David was focusing on one main idea in these verses. What was he trying to communicate?

Can you relate to David? Have you ever felt completely overwhelmed and overtaken by troubles? Have you ever felt the weight and regret and guilt of your sin or seen its consequences ripple out to others, causing them misery? Explain.

Rewrite this passage in your own words, communicating the same idea.

Let's take a closer look at the evils that surrounded David.

### ***THE EVILS THAT SURROUND DAVID***

To understand just how all-encompassing the troubles were in David's life, we need to first understand a crucial part of his story: his anointing and his relationship with King Saul. I'm going to quickly summarize the highlights of David's story that we need to understand for our study. The rest of the story is fascinating; I encourage you to read it for yourself. If you'd like to read more, David's story is told in 1 Samuel 16–1 Kings 2:11.

For years, God set aside a group of people for Himself, to be His people, called the Israelites. God ruled them as their King. After many years, God's people asked God for an earthly king, so that they could be like the other nations around them.

Though their request did not please God, He gave them what they wanted and appointed Saul to be their king. Saul ruled as king for years, but the Lord eventually rejected him because of his failure to obey God (1 Sam. 13; 15).

In Saul's place, God chose David, a man after His own heart, to be the next king of Israel (1 Sam. 13:14). God sent the prophet Samuel to anoint David, but it would be several years before David would begin his reign. In fact, even though he had already been anointed as king, David would spend years in the service of Saul, fighting military battles for him and serving in his court. At several points during David's years of service, Saul became jealous of him—David quickly gained military notoriety and became more favored by the people than Saul. In fact, Saul became so jealous that he tried to kill David several times, forcing David to become a fugitive of sorts. David was constantly on the run, hiding in caves, traveling from place to place, unsure of who he could trust. It was a weary existence. He often cried out, lamenting to the Lord and begging for help. On at least two occasions, while on the run from Saul, David had the opportunity to kill the king, but he resisted out of respect for the Lord; Saul was still technically God's anointed king for that time (1 Sam. 24; 26). David hadn't been given the throne yet. David remained faithful and steadfast in God, trusting Him completely.

Saul was a complicated man, tortured by his own jealousy and pride, and yet he possessed a small softness of heart. He was able to feel the Lord's conviction (1 Sam. 15:24-25), but his conviction never led him to true repentance.

Take a moment right now to think if there's anything that God has convicted you of that you need to repent of, and if there is, repent of it (let God know you want to turn from this sin). Write a prayer of repentance here. Remember, repentance is a continuous process, so your walking in light may be a gradual change and you may have to walk away from this sin more than once.

When Saul died in battle, David lamented over him. Shortly after, David was appointed king of Judah, and eventually, king of Israel.

## ***HOW GREAT THE SIN OF THE MAN AFTER GOD'S OWN HEART***

In large part, the Bible portrays David as faithful and upright, demonstrating his full confidence in and fear of the Lord. But, David wasn't perfect. Let's take a look at an instance of sin in his life.

**READ 2 Samuel 11. Look closely at verses 1-5. What was David's problem?**

**David tried to cover up his sin in several ways. List them below.**

How often do we, like David, in trying to fix or cover up our sin, just go deeper into more sin? William Paul Young says that getting caught "is a great and terrifying grace."<sup>3</sup> David received that grace from his friend and prophet, Nathan.

**READ 2 Samuel 12:1-25. How did God respond to David's sin—in sending Nathan to confront David? In the consequences of David's sin? In His response to David's repentance?**

**How did David respond to being rebuked? Note especially against whom David says he sinned. (If you have time, read Psalm 51, a psalm David wrote after Nathan confronted him.)**

## ***WHAT ABOUT OUR SIN?***

Why do we so often stay in the darkness of our sin, struggling to confess our sins to God and godly community?

You know that gross feeling you get when you know you're in sin or you haven't confessed a hidden sin from your past? It's a slimy feeling in your gut that no matter how hard you try, you can't get rid of. It's always there, just under the surface of your skin, keeping you from feeling pure, from having a clear conscience. It's a severe mercy of God called conviction of sin. While it may be uncomfortable at times, conviction of sin is a kindness of the Holy Spirit—leading us back to God in repentance and faith, reminding us that God is not finished with us yet. He has plans for our future, and they are good. There is only one way to get rid of that feeling, of that grossness: confession.

**READ 1 John 1:8-9. What are we told to do in order to be forgiven? What will God do if we confess?**

The Greek word for confess in verse 9 is *homologeō*, and it means “to declare openly,”<sup>4</sup> acknowledging and agreeing with God that what you are doing or what you did was wrong. God says if we confess our sins and turn from them, He'll forgive us and bring us back into right relationship with Him. We confess in order to be right with God.

Sometimes God also tells us to confess to one another.

**READ James 5:13-16. Why do we confess to one another?**

When we confess before the Lord, whom our sins are always primarily against, He forgives us and cleanses us. When we confess to one another, we are healed. And that word “healed” carries a meaning of being made whole. How? How does confessing to someone cause healing and wholeness? This passage in James refers to the power of intercessory prayer in accountability as we love one another enough to fight for the holiness of our brothers and sisters and the intimacy of their relationships with Christ. As scholar Ralph P. Martin says, “The author [of this passage] is showing that the prayer, not the person, ... is the channel through which God’s power to heal is conveyed.”<sup>5</sup> In confession of sin to one another, we bring our brothers and sisters before God in prayer, asking Him to heal them.

The grossness *only* goes away when we confess and choose to walk in the light, no matter how scary, no matter the consequences. Nothing, no hidden sin or fear of exposure or awful outcome, is worth compromising the freedom you have when your conscience is clear and your heart is pure before the Lord.

What can you learn from David’s example of repentance?

How has God used today’s time of study to speak to your heart and mind? How will you respond to Him?

## *CRYING OUT: OUR ENEMIES*

<sup>14</sup> Let those be put to shame and disappointed altogether who seek to snatch away my life; let those be turned back and brought to dishonor who delight in my hurt!

<sup>15</sup> Let those be appalled because of their shame who say to me, “Aha, Aha!”

### **PSALM 40:14-15**

Before we begin, pray a prayer like this:

*Father God, open my mind so that I may understand the Scriptures, and my eyes that I may behold wondrous things in Your Word.*

*When you think of an enemy, who or what do you think of?*



An enemy can be someone we don't even know (a terrorist, for example), or he or she can be under our own roofs. An enemy can be a parent, a neighbor, or someone we work with. If we have a personal enemy, it's likely he or she has hurt us in a deep way, and we are valid in our feelings of caution. Anger is honest. If someone hurts my child, I might feel anger or disdain toward that person. If someone abused me, I might feel anger toward him or her.

David understood these honest feelings and went so far as to ask God to harm or humiliate his enemies. Please don't misunderstand, it's not that these declarations of harm should be carried out, or that God is OK with our vengeance. Rather, God wants us to pray honestly and to bring these honest feelings to Him so that they no longer consume us.

**Look at Psalm 40:14-15 and list the things David wants for his enemies.**

If you have an enemy, go ahead and write the truth about what you'd like to happen to that person in the margin. This is practice in getting out the truth of how you really feel. (God knows it all anyway.)

OK, now take a deep breath and thank God that He allows the truth of our pain to be acknowledged; no hiding, no pretense.

Let's go to the Scriptures to see what we can learn about our enemies.

**READ John 10:10; Ephesians 6:12; and 1 Peter 5:8-9. Who is our chief enemy, the one who deceives man and causes pain, destruction, and evil influences? Who is our battle not with?**

**READ James 4:7. What's our first line of defense in dealing with Satan?**

We wrestle with our chief enemy, Satan, along with “the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places” (Eph. 6:12) and with our own flesh and fallen nature. I don’t have to tell you that we also daily deal with people around us who can act like enemies.

**READ Matthew 5:43-48. How does Jesus tell us to treat our enemies?**

**READ Romans 12:17-21. Instead of repaying the evil done to us or taking revenge, what does God instruct us to do?**

As *The Jewish Encyclopedia* notes, “Kindness bestowed upon an enemy is called ‘heaping coals of fire upon his head,’ since it tends to waken his deadened conscience and help him to realize his wrong.”<sup>6</sup> God uses grace and kindness to lead us to repentance (Rom. 2:4). We’re to do the same with others.

**Think of a recent conflict you’ve experienced. If you’re honest, how did your attitudes and actions line up with what God teaches us in Matthew 5 and Romans 12? Explain.**

**If you have room for growth in this area, and I think we all do, list one or two tangible ways you might have handled the situation described above differently, to infuse more grace and kindness into the encounter.**

Loving our enemies is impossible for us to do on our own. We need God to empower us to do it. And, let’s be honest, it sometimes makes no sense to us. Why would God possibly ask us to love the people who hurt us the most? Who wants to love the person who causes us trouble at work, the person who hurt our child, or the person who has violated us? Who wants to love the abusive father, the alcoholic mother, the bully, or the terrorist? What is God thinking?

Why do you think God calls us to love our enemies? Jot down any thoughts below.

Remember what we read in Matthew 5:43-48? When we love our enemies, we are acting like our Father in heaven who not only tells the sun to rise and the rain to fall on the just and the unjust alike, but who reached out to us and made us His children when we were His enemies (Rom. 5:10). The Matthew 5 passage shows us that God uses loving our enemies as a way to make us look more like Him, chipping away our earthiness to create more of His character in us. It's God's blessing—working even the hard things for the good of His children.

Think back to David and Saul, and how David had the opportunity to kill Saul, free and clear. In those moments, in those choices David made not to kill Saul, he loved him. He loved his enemy (remember, love is an action) because he trusted God, and it broke Saul's heart because he saw that David was more righteous than he. Saul had every opportunity to turn from his evil ways, but he chose to let his selfish ambition lead him. David trusted the outcome to the Lord. And there it is: Trust. Do we trust the Lord to deal with our enemies? Do we believe God will use these hard circumstances for our good? Or do we believe it's solely up to us to make things OK?

**Journal your thoughts to God. If you struggle to trust Him with your enemies, tell Him about it. If you gladly submit your hard relationships to God, praise Him for His grace and care for you.**

## ***DO I HAVE TO MAINTAIN A RELATIONSHIP WITH SOMEONE WHO HAS DONE EVIL TO ME OR TO SOMEONE I LOVE?***

I want to be very careful here. Loving our enemies does not mean we are to stay in abusive or harmful situations. You are free in Christ to use wisdom and set boundaries that protect you and your family. You've been given authorities to deal with wrongdoers, and you do not have to associate with someone who is doing evil in this manner (Prov. 4:14-15; 1 Cor. 5:11). The key is to be sensitive to the Holy Spirit, be consistent in your study of God's Word and participation in godly community, and be willing to do whatever God asks of you, so you have a clear conscience before Him.

As to forgiveness of enemies, there is so much freedom in choosing to forgive. See the appendix on page 182 for "6 Ways to Forgive." I love what Henry Cloud and John Townsend say in their book, *Boundaries*:

Forgiveness gives me boundaries because it unhooks me from the hurtful person, and then I can act responsibly, wisely. If I am not forgiving them, I am still in a destructive relationship with them.<sup>7</sup>

God works mightily when we forgive. Reach out to friends or godly church leaders if you're in a troubling situation or relationship and you aren't sure what to do. The Lord is with you. We've been asking ourselves some tough emotional and spiritual questions. If you think you may need more support than your group can offer, reach out to your pastor or a trained Christian counselor. God has given us so many resources to use to walk in health and joy. Let's receive those gifts.

**How did God speak to your heart and mind in this session?**

**Considering what we've studied, is there anyone you need to forgive?**

# 4

## ***CRYING OUT: OUR POOR AND NEEDY STATE***

As for me, I am poor and needy,  
but the Lord takes thought for me.

**PSALM 40:17a**

Before we begin, pray a prayer like this:

*Father God, open my mind so that I may understand the Scriptures, and my eyes that I may behold wondrous things in Your Word.*

**READ** Genesis 2:7 and Job 34:14-15. Where did your breath come from?

It's not something we often consider or discuss. But we, each and every one of us, are breathing because God is sustaining us. Every breath, every heartbeat, He is holding our lives in His hands, just as He holds the universe together (Col. 1:17). If God decided to gather His breath back to Himself, Job 34:15 tells us that "all flesh would perish together, and man would return to dust." Our physical existence, no matter how self-sufficient we feel on a daily basis, depends utterly and entirely on God. But, what about our spiritual state?

**READ** Ephesians 2:1-9, and complete the blanks below.

Without Jesus, we are:

With Jesus, we are:

Do we have in ourselves the ability to be alive? How are we made alive?

**READ** John 15:5. What can we do apart from Jesus?

All of us are poor and needy and are always at the mercy of God, whether we believe in Him or not, whether we trust Him or not. Our very breath is a mercy. We are therefore physically and spiritually poor and in need of Jesus every single day. We are all dependent on Him from the minute our lungs take in that first gasp of breath to the moment that breath leaves us. And again, whose breath is in our lungs? The very breath of God. In fact, every time you breathe you are quite possibly saying His name, because scholars believe His very name is the sound of our breath: YHWH.

"... scholars have noted that the letters YHWH represent breathing sounds, aspirated consonants that in the Hebrew alphabet would be transliterated like this:

Yod, rhymes with "rode," which we transliterate "Y"  
He, rhymes with "say," which we transliterate "H"  
Vav, like "lava," which we transliterate "V" or "W"  
He, rhymes with "say," which we transliterate "H"

A wonderful question rises to excite the imagination: what if the name of God is the sound of breathing?"<sup>8</sup>

The first thing we do as a newborn is inhale the breath of life that is God's Name, and the last thing we do, in the moment of our death, is exhale that Name.<sup>9</sup>

**JAMES DAVID AUDLIN**

When you really think about your true physical and spiritual reality before God, how do you feel? Comforted? Anxious? Explain.

Acknowledging our need before God and our true dependence on Him can be a little unnerving, but I'm here to tell you it's a great thing.

### ***THE VERY GOOD NEWS IN BEING POOR AND NEEDY***

**READ Matthew 5:3. What word did Jesus use to describe the poor in spirit? What is theirs?**

I love the ESV Study Bible's commentary on this Matthew passage. It says, "The poor in spirit are those who recognize they are in need of God's help." The kingdom of God "belongs to those who confess their spiritual bankruptcy."<sup>10</sup> The Greek word for "poor" here, *ptochos*, means to be as helpless as a beggar. The Hebrew words used in Psalm 40:17 for "poor" and "needy" are *ani* and *ebyon*. They convey the same meaning: "destitute – beggar,

needy.”<sup>11</sup> Why do you think Jesus would say that someone who is as helpless as a beggar is blessed and that theirs is the kingdom of heaven? I think it’s because God’s redemptive grace bridges the chasm between our sin and His righteousness—turning God’s enemy into His friend, the lost into the found, and the beggar into the blessed (2 Cor. 12:9-11).

## ***WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE BLESSED?***

*When you hear the word **blessed** what comes into your mind?*

The word *blessing*, as in God blessing His people and His people blessing Him with praise, in the Greek (*eulogeo*) means to grant or bestow what is beneficial, what will result in good. Oddly enough, it’s the word translated as “bless” in the KJV translation of Matthew 5:44: “Love your enemies, bless them that curse you.” When you think of blessing, think of Romans 8:28, how God is working all things together for our good.

**READ** Ephesians 1:3-14. Focus on verse 3. What are Christians, those who recognize their poor and needy state, blessed with?

List below all of the spiritual blessings God gives His children, as described in the Ephesians passage.



**READ** these Scriptures and list other ways a person is blessed.

Matthew 5:1-11

Luke 11:28

Romans 4:7

James 1:2-4

Pick one of the blessings or ways that we've been blessed by God that we've discussed above and ask God to help you understand it more.

Write the blessing you've chosen to study further below.

We're blessed with God's Spirit to help us when we are poor and needy, when we humbly acknowledge the truth that we are utterly dependent on God for our lives and our spiritual conditions. It's in this humility and understanding that we can have the confidence to cry out to God for help, knowing that He takes thought of us. What a comfort. What grace.

How did God speak to your heart and mind today? How will you respond to Him?