1. Learning the Ways of God

**2) Psa 25:4** Show me Your ways, O LORD; Teach me Your paths.

\* The Hebrew word for “Way” literally means “a road” but it was often used figuratively to mean “a course of life” or “a pattern of action.”

\* When the Psalmist prayed that he would learn God’s ways, he wanted to know God’s personality or “heart” so that he would know why God acts as He does. Why does God react to certain situations or circumstances in repeated patterns? And knowing God’s ways will then let us know how God will act in future situations.

**3) Everyone** has certain ways that they think and act: it is part of developing your own personality. Some people are optimists /pessimists, some are patient /impatient, gentle/ harsh, forgiving/ unforgiving.

\* The more you learn about a person, the more you know how they will think and act about different situations: “My wife will be very happy to hear that,” “My father would not permit that,” “I know that my friend will say *no* to your suggestion.”

God has His own personality, so He has certain ways that He thinks and acts.

\* If we learn God’s ways we can become co-laborers with Christ, and can work with God because we know His heart and can understand what He will want to do.

**4) Moses** knew the heart of God, so he was able to work in harmony with God to lead the Israelites out of Egypt, through the wilderness, up to the Promised Land.

**Psalm 103:7** tells us, “He made known His ways to Moses, His acts to the children of Israel.”

**5) The Israelites** did not know God’s ways- They saw God’s mighty acts but they didn’t understand why God did most of the things He did. So the Israelites continually complained & opposed God and His leader (Moses) through their 40 years of wandering in the wilderness. Because they did not know God’s ways they were not qualified to go into the Promised Land!

**Psa.95:7-11** “Today, if you will hear His voice: Do not harden your hearts, as in the rebellion, As *in* the day of trial in the wilderness, When your fathers tested Me; They tried Me, though they saw My work. For forty years I was grieved with *that* generation, and said, 'It *is* a people who go astray in their hearts, and they do not know My ways.' So I declared in My anger, 'They shall not enter My rest.' "

**6) If we** follow our human thoughts and ideas we will often oppose God’s workings through our human ignorance or stubbornness. "‘For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways,’ says the LORD." –Is. 55:8. IF WE KNOW GOD’S WAYS, WE WILL PARTICIPATE IN WHAT GOD WANTS TO DO- IF WE DO NOT KNOW GOD’S WAYS, LIKE THE ISREALITES, WE MIGHT BE ONLY SPECTATORS OF WHAT GOD DOES- OR WE MIGHT ACTUALLY OPPOSE WHAT GOD IS DOING! -PARTICIPANTS? -SPECTATORS?? -OPPONENTS???

**7) The Pharisees** opposed Jesus healing on the Sabbath- they had a legalistic religion, but did not know God’s ways. (In Rom.10:2, Paul said the Pharisses had a “zeal without knowledge”)

-So how can we learn God’s ways? The Bible teaches us God’s ways, and today we will study a Psalm that teaches us these truths- Psalm 107

**8) SIX WAYS GOD WORKS TO REDEEM, PSALM 107**

**9)** INTRO: PSALM 107:1-3 GOD REDEEMS, THANK HIM!

* (vs.1-3 are an intro to the psalm: God gathers the Redeemed- let them thank God!
* Each of these 6 types of people face difficulties & suffering: to cause them to turn to the Lord& find redemption!There is a way that seems right 2 a man but its end/God warns us!
* Vs.6: “Then they cried out to the Lord in their trouble, and He delivered them out of their distresses.” This is repeated in vs.13, 19, & 28- God allows difficulties to come so each type of person will cry out to God & gain deliverance & redemption! **Learn Gods ways!**
* 1st WAY: WANDERERS IN A WILDERNESS, vs.4-9
* 2nd WAY: REBELS IN CHAINS, vs.10-16
* 3rd WAY: FOOLS IN SICKNESS, vs.17-22
* 4th WAY: MERCHANTS IN STORMS, vs.23-32
* 5th WAY: WILDERNESS BECOMES A CITY, vs.33-38

(land can become barren & rivers dry up, because of sin- but God can turn this around and make the wilderness a blessed & fruitful place that grows into a prosperous city!

* 6th WAY: PRINCES HUMBLED, POOR EXALTED, vs.39-42

**EACH OF THESE NATURAL EXAMPLES ALSO HAS A SPIRITUAL FULFILLMENT!**

1 Cor.15:46 “First the Natural, then the Spiritual” How does God deliver us from Spiritual difficulties? This Psalm teaches us 6 ways!

 CONCLUSION: BE WISE AND UNDERSTAND, v.43 ***(LEARN THE WAYS OF GOD!)*** “Whoever is wise will observe these things, & they will understand the lovingkindness of the LORD.”

**10) 1st WAY: vs.4-9 Wanderers in a Wilderness (The Spiritual Wanderers with No Church)**

**READ VS 4-5** -some people look in many directions to find satisfaction in life: prosperity, drugs, popularity… they are left empty-they are in a spiritual wilderness!

-some people look in many religions to find satisfaction in life: left empty and confused!

Some Christians look in many churches & ministries to find satisfaction- they wander, uncommitted, unfruitful! (Ps.92:13-14 Those that are planted in the House of the Lord flourish & be fruitful! But wanderers remain in a wilderness!)

**READ VS.7-8** if they will ***cry out*** to the Lord, God will guide them to a city! ISAIAH 40:3 a voice in the wilderness, prepare a highway! *REPENT*! **READ IS.35:8a**- a high**way** will be there in the wilderness, a high**way** of holiness… **READ Is.35:10** the redeemed will return to Zion (there are the Psalms of Ascent- but Isaiah 35 is a *chapter* of ascent up to Zion!) EVERLASTING JOY, out of the WILDERNESS and up to ZION!

**11) 2nd WAY: vs.10-16 Rebels in Chains (Backsliders Imprisoned to Sin)**

**READ VS 10-11** Backsliders will go into darkness & be bound to sin & Satan

ARE YOU BOUND TO A SIN? DO DEMONS CONTROL YOUR THOUGHTS, MAKE YOU SIN?

DO YOU SIT IN DARKNESS? THERE IS A WAY OUT! CRY OUT TO GOD! **READ VS.13-14**

**12) 3rd WAY: vs.17-22 Fools in Sickness (Sinners are Afflicted) READ 107:17-20**

-If we sin or live foolishly we can become sick- even to death! Worry/ulcers,

angry/high blood pressure! foolish diet/ heart disease or cancer!

IF WE ARE FOOLISH & PERMIT SINFUL WAYS IN OUR LIFE, A SICKNESS CAN BE A WAKE-UP CALL!

**13)** -Not everyone who is afflicted suffers because of their sin: that was the unbalanced theology of Job’s 3 Friends! They assumed Job was a great sinner for God to allow him such trials & sickness!

WE NEED TO LEARN GOD’S WAYS SO THAT WE CAN CORRECTLY UNDERSTAND THE DIFFICULTIES THAT PEOPLE GO THRU- AND COUNSEL THEM THRU TO VICTORY! HELP THE FOOLISH TO BECOME WISE!

**14) 4th WAY: vs.23-32 Merchants in Storms (Ministry Through Trials) Read VS 23-25**

**15)** Spiritual merchants: “The Kingdom of God is like a merchant seeking beautiful pearls” Mt.13:45. Those finding the treasures of the kingdom of God are the ministers and Christian leaders who are becoming spiritually wealthy!

**16)** Merchants traveling overseas: missions work

EXAMPLE: Jesus & His disciples in a storm on Galilee, going across to the Decapolis (only about a 15 km trip, but they went to Greek cultured foreign cities- this was missions work!)

Christ went through a storm on His first missionary trip to the Decapolis

There a demon possessed man was delivered- and all the people heard the delivered man exalt the Lord Jesus (Lk.8:38-39 & Ps.107:32a) (The delivered man’s testimony prepared the way, for all the people to receive Christ the 2nd time He went back there! –Mk.7:31-8:10)

WE WILL FACE OPPOSITION WHEN WE GO FORWARD IN GOD: TESTING! Often we must first bind the Strong Man, Mt.12:29. NEW LEVEL, NEW DEVIL!

When God wants to enlarge our ministry, He will often take us through difficulties, growing strong in spiritual warfare!

When God wants to enlarge our ministry, He will also often take us through difficulties so that thru carrying our cross, we can learn God’s heart and bring redemption to bad situations.

**17)** A Korean woman named Chun-ja was pregnant- she had a dream, given a beautiful baby- replied “No- Give Me the Ugly Baby.” When their baby was born, he had cerebral palsy with severe brain damage- his only communication is that he can smile when he feels love.

At first the father, Mr. Lee, blamed God for his son. Then he began to learn about compassion- love- sacrifice- in a much deeper way. He sold his house & family business to pay the medical expenses and moved to a poor community. He studied at a theological school & became a minister- started a house church & a ministry for unwanted babies!

**18)** They started the Baby Box in Seoul- a place for unwanted babies to be placed (In Korean culture, women would place an unwanted baby on a doorstep at night, maybe they will be taken care of- but many left to die.) Above the box, Ps.27:10 “When my father and my mother forsake me, the Lord will take me in.”

**19)** Through the disabilities of their son, Pastor Lee and his wife learned the compassion of God, and the value of an unwanted baby- have rescued hundreds of babies from death!

**20)** They adopted 10 of the babies with birth defects (downs syndrome, no fingers, many problems) – Korean law only allows them to adopt 10!

**21)** Their ministry to the unwanted babies is impacting Korean society and showing the compassion & love of God to millions! (many TV & newspaper interviews –an international movie was made about their ministry, etc.) MOVIE DIRECTOR GOT SAVED MAKING HIS MOVIE! (His picture on slide # 20)

**Ps.107:32** Let them (the merchants, or ministers) exalt Him in the assembly and praise Him among the elders!

**22) 5th WAY GOD WORKS TO BRING REDEMPTION: vs.33-38 Barren Wilderness becomes a Prosperous City** (Shrinking Congregations become Large)

**23)** In the late 1800s the Brooklyn Tabernacle Church in NYC had 6000 members

**24)** By the 1930s the church was becoming empty- their church building was sold to pay debts

**25)** In 1971 when Jim Cymbala became their new pastor, the church had about 25 people attending in a small rented building- BUT their new pastor believed in the power of prayer! The church learned to CRY OUT TO GOD! REPENT of their past sins! PRAY HEAVEN DOWN!

**26)** Now the Brooklyn Tabernacle has about 16,000 members, more than ever before!

“Then they cried out to the Lord in their trouble, and the Lord saved them out of their distress.”

**27) 6th WAY: vs.39-41 Princes Humbled, the Poor Exalted** (Many who are first will be last, and the last first. –Mt.19:30)

**28)** TRUE STORY: The Mother-in-law of a famous pastor: she was a powerful intercessor, greatly rewarded by the wealthy people she had helped: given houses, properties, much jewelry & money! Then she was taken to heaven in a vision & saw the Lord: she said to the Lord, “Show me my heavenly rewards” and the Lord replied, “You have no reward here.” Shocked, she asked why? The Lord said, “You have helped many people and have been generously rewarded. You have more cars that you can drive, more money than you can spend, more jewelry than you can wear: you have kept all these earthly rewards, they are your reward.” After the vision, she sold everything she would not use or need and gave the money to the families of pastors who were in prison for their faith in another nation- and now, she undoubtably will have great reward in heaven!

**29)** TRUE STORY: Ptr Dewitt Talmage was taken up to heaven, saw a mansion bigger than all the rest: he asked his angelic guide, “Who lives there?”

**30)** His answer; “The widow in the Gospels who gave her 2 coins to God.” Talmage learned the ways of God & became a great preacher- he was the pastor of the Brooklyn Tabernacle back in the late1800s when it first grew to become 6000 members!

**31)** **LAST VERSE OF PSALM 107:** “Whoever is wise will observe these things, and they will understand the lovingkindness of the LORD.” We can gain wisdom from these 6 stories, to further learn the ways of God!

**32)** As we learn God’s ways we can effectively work WITH God- not just see what God is doing like the Israelites who were only spectators! Not mistakenly opposing God, having a zeal without knowledge, like the Pharisees! We want to learn God’s ways & become effective servants of God! “My son, give me your heart, & let your eyes observe my ways.” – Pr.23:26