

May 27  
Lesson 13 (NIV)

# REJOICING

## IN RESTORATION

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DEVOTIONAL READING: Hebrews 7:20-28

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Leviticus 16; Psalm 34; Hebrews 2:5-18

### PSALM 34:1-10

- <sup>1</sup> I will extol the LORD at all times;  
his praise will always be on my lips.
- <sup>2</sup> I will glory in the LORD;  
let the afflicted hear and rejoice.
- <sup>3</sup> Glorify the LORD with me;  
let us exalt his name together.
- <sup>4</sup> I sought the LORD, and he answered me;  
he delivered me from all my fears.
- <sup>5</sup> Those who look to him are radiant;  
their faces are never covered with shame.
- <sup>6</sup> This poor man called, and the LORD heard him;  
he saved him out of all his troubles.
- <sup>7</sup> The angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear him,  
and he delivers them.
- <sup>8</sup> Taste and see that the LORD is good;  
blessed is the one who takes refuge in him.
- <sup>9</sup> Fear the LORD, you his holy people,  
for those who fear him lack nothing.
- <sup>10</sup> The lions may grow weak and hungry,  
but those who seek the LORD lack no good thing.

### HEBREWS 2:17, 18

- <sup>17</sup> For this reason he had to be made like them, fully human in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people.
- <sup>18</sup> Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.



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## KEY VERSE

*Taste and see that the LORD is good; blessed is the one who takes refuge in him.—Psalm 34:8*

## LESSON AIMS

After participating in this lesson, each learner will be able to:

1. Describe the connection between [Psalm 34](#) and [Hebrews 2:17, 18](#).
2. Give examples of God's desire and ability to provide for his people.
3. Encourage one person in the week ahead who feels as though God doesn't care about his or her suffering.

## LESSON OUTLINE

### Introduction

- A. Father of the Afflicted
- B. Lesson Background: [Psalm 34](#)
- C. Lesson Background: Hebrews

### I. Call to Praise ([PSALM 34:1-3](#))

- A. Personal ([vv. 1, 2](#))  
*At All Times*
- B. Public ([v. 3](#))

### II. Caring God ([PSALM 34:4-10](#))

- A. God Delivers ([vv. 4-7](#))
- B. God Provides ([vv. 8-10](#))

### III. Compassionate Savior ([HEBREWS 2:17, 18](#))

- A. He Relates to Us ([v. 17](#))
- B. He Supports Us ([v. 18](#))  
*One Who Can Relate*

### Conclusion

- A. Son of David
- B. Prayer
- C. Thought to Remember

## Introduction

### A. Father of the Afflicted

A Christian girl soaks her pillow with tears. Her prom date drives away with another girl who won't refuse him. An unemployed father hangs his head in shame. Christmas won't seem so merry because he refused to lie for the good of his company. A faithful family spends another night in the shelter. Speaking publicly

about one's Christian faith is not welcomed in their village.

The apostle Paul referred to himself and the other apostles in very unflattering terms, as “the scum of the earth” (1 Corinthians 4:13). Through the years, many followers of Jesus have felt much the same. They stuck to their faith whether popular or not. They have proclaimed Christ unswervingly even when it led to abandonment, poverty, and homelessness. This world does not claim them. It does not appreciate their integrity and commitment to purity and truth. But God claims them. He recognizes them as his children, for he is the father of the afflicted.

In the midst of rejection and scornful treatment from the world, it can be hard to sense God's parental love. We are more likely to feel anger and resentment. In times like these, we can know that the pain is only temporary. We are encouraged by those who have been there and persevered. We can use examples like David and Jesus, who faced affliction, experienced God's favor, and left behind a powerful witness and testimony.

### B. Lesson Background: Psalm 34

Psalm 34, one of many written by David, is an alphabetic acrostic poem. This means that each verse begins with a letter of the Hebrew alphabet, in consecutive order. In English this would mean beginning the first verse with A and beginning the last verse with Z. There are 22 letters in the Hebrew alphabet, thus there are 22 verses in Psalm 34. A more elaborate acrostic is Psalm 119. Its first 8 verses begin with the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet, the second set of 8 verses begin with the second letter, and so on until all 22 letters are used 8 times for a total of 176 verses in the psalm.

Some psalms include a heading that provides the setting. Psalm 34 has such a heading. It mentions a time in David's life “when he pretended to be insane before Abimelek, who drove him away, and he left.” This account is in 1 Samuel 21:10-15, when David was fleeing from jealous King Saul, who wanted to kill him. David came to the territory of the king of Gath, but his reputation for killing “tens of thousands” of Philistines had preceded him. To avoid suspicion, David acted as if he were insane. The king berated his servants for bringing such a man into his presence, and David was allowed to leave. It was a time of great distress for David, one when he desperately needed God's help.

The contents of Psalm 34 do not fit neatly into any one category. The first 10 verses contain elements of an individual thanksgiving hymn. The remaining verses contain strong wisdom elements. The verses in our printed text fall within the thanksgiving section.

### C. Lesson Background: Hebrews

The two verses from Hebrews come from a different setting altogether. The book of Hebrews was written to Christians from a Jewish background who were suffering their own version of rejection: being ostracized for choosing to follow Jesus as Messiah. The pressure to return to Judaism was intense.

The writer, who is not named in the book, urges them not to do so, lest they abandon all they have received in Christ (example: Hebrews 10:32-39). This is why the word *better* occurs so often (11 times) in Hebrews: the writer is trying to persuade his readers that what Christ provides through the new covenant is much better than what the old covenant was able to provide. The portion of our printed text from Hebrews 2 is part of the writer's case for why Jesus is the better (in fact, the perfect) high priest.

## HOW TO SAY IT

Abimelek Uh-bim-eh-lek.

acrostic uh-kros-tik.

Corinthians Ko-rin-thee-unz (*th* as in *thin*).

Gath Gath (*a* as in *bath*).

Gethsemane Geth-sem-uh-nee (*G* as in *get*).

Herod Hair-ud.

Judaism Joo-duh-izz-um or Joo-day-izz-um.

Philistine Fuh-liss-teen or Fill-us-teen.

## I. Call to Praise

(PSALMS 34:1-3)

### A. Personal (vv. 1, 2)

**<sup>1</sup> I will extol the LORD at all times; his praise will always be on my lips.**

First to note here is the defining characteristic of Hebrew poetry: *parallelism*. This means making a statement and then repeating the thought in slightly different words. We should not understand the author to be talking about two different topics. The action of the first half of the verse is the same action in the second half.

David maintains that he has chosen to adopt a posture of continual *praise* to the Lord. David is not claiming that he lives in a nonstop state of praise. Rather, he is emphasizing that situations of distress and despair (such as the one described in the psalm's heading) are occasions when God should be blessed and not discarded. This is a powerful thing for a man on the run to say. He is not singing this song from a padded pew in a beautiful sanctuary. He sings a song of praise when others would be tempted to curse their enemies and feel sorry for themselves. David strives to exalt God at all times—even the worst of times.

*What Do You Think?*

What would our neighbors notice about us if we were committed to praising God at all times?

*Talking Points for Your Discussion*

In speech and demeanor when times are good

In speech and demeanor when times are hard

**AT ALL TIMES**

The lead singer of the popular Christian band Casting Crowns heard back from his doctor after a routine visit for heartburn. Apparently the tests discovered a cancerous tumor on his kidney. After the initial shock, Mark Hall's deeply ingrained faith in Christ kicked in. "My feelings kept slamming up against something solid in me, and that was the roots of my faith. The fact that I've been in the Word for years. The fact that I've been following Jesus for years, and the roots of my faith were reminding me: God is who he says he is."

Though on the run from King Saul, David likewise found the ability to praise God despite his circumstances. To be determined to "extol the Lord at all times" is not denial or escapism; rather, this is the normal response of someone who has been grounded in the Lord and knows that God will be faithful, regardless of difficulties.

When was the last time you praised God while you were in a difficult situation?

—D. C. S.

**<sup>2</sup> I will glory in the LORD; let the afflicted hear and rejoice.**

David eventually escapes his perilous surroundings, but he doesn't dwell on his own ingenuity. Instead he directs all glory to God. In addition, he does not keep his rescue to himself. He wants others to know about it. This verse therefore introduces another party who will be present throughout the verses to follow.

The plural Hebrew word translated *afflicted* appears also in singular form in [verse 6](#), below. There it is translated "poor"; see commentary on that verse.

## B. Public (v. 3)

**<sup>3</sup> Glorify the LORD with me; let us exalt his name together.**

More parallelism presents itself as David invites others to join him in praising the Lord. The word *glorify* appears numerous times in the Scriptures, and that word causes us to think of the angels giving honor and praise to God in Heaven. While we do our best to *glorify the Lord* and *exalt his name*, our efforts inevitably fall short, as we cannot add more glory to what God already possesses.

What we can do, however, is glorify God and exalt his name in the sense of changing our perspective. Our perspective must always be that he is the transcendent, eternal Creator, Redeemer, and Ruler—and we are not.

*What Do You Think?*

What practical steps would help our church members to exalt God's name *together*?

*Talking Points for Your Discussion*

- During corporate worship
- While participating in shared ministries
- In group Bible-study settings
- Other

## II. Caring God

(PSALM 34:4-10)

### A. God Delivers (vv. 4-7)

**<sup>4a</sup> I sought the LORD, and he answered me;**

We begin to see in this verse a repeated poetic pattern. David began this psalm by speaking of himself. Then in [verse 3](#), just considered, he addresses an audience (which may be his band of 400 followers noted in [1 Samuel 22:2](#)). This is evidence of the psalm's being a communal invitation rather than an individual meditation.

Again the psalmist shares his own testimony and indirectly invites his audience to seek God. The Lord is responsive when his people seek him out ([Jeremiah 29:13](#)).

**<sup>4b</sup> he delivered me from all my fears.**

David doesn't list specific fears. But judging from the psalm's superscription, we may surmise that he feared being killed either by King Saul or King Abimelek (see the Lesson Background).

David probably knows of the times when Abraham and Isaac felt threatened by a Philistine king, so both spoke to him deceptively ([Genesis 20:2](#); [26:7](#)). They were found out, but God protected them nonetheless. David has had good reason to fear; yet he has had even better reason not to fear: God can deliver him. And he has done so.

*What Do You Think?*

How did a time of God's deliverance from a fearful season prepare you for future challenges?

*Talking Points for Your Discussion*

- Lessons learned about God
- Lessons learned about fellow Christians
- Lessons learned about yourself

**<sup>5</sup> Those who look to him are radiant; their faces are never covered with shame.**

Although God "causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous" ([Matthew 5:45](#)), he is especially interested in providing for all of his faithful ones. Abraham and Isaac revealed character flaws in speaking deceptively. God knew what was going on, of course (see [Genesis 20:3-7](#)), but he was merciful.

God's people have hope as long as they *look to him*. That hope is not rooted in their own worthiness, but in the worth that God attributes to them. Though disdained by the world, they have no reason to be *covered with shame*. By contrast, David prays in [Psalm 40:14](#) that those who intend to harm him "be put to

shame and confusion.”

**6. This poor man called, and the LORD heard him; he saved him out of all his troubles.**

This verse may seem redundant in light of [verse 4](#). One suggestion is that its function is to maintain the acrostic structure of the psalm as a whole (see the Lesson Background).

Even so, there seems to be one point of additional emphasis. Notice that the verse begins with the specific *this poor man*. That means David is talking about himself, thus identifying with the poverty of his audience. The word *poor* is the singular version of the plural word translated “afflicted” in [verse 2](#), above. David himself is from a lowly background. He was watching his father’s sheep when the prophet Samuel came to Bethlehem seeking one of Jesse’s sons to anoint as the next king of Israel ([1 Samuel 16:11](#)). No one considered David, the youngest, as a possible candidate. No one, that is, except God.

**7. The angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear him, and he delivers them.**

The language of this verse presumes a more military context. *The angel of the Lord* forms a protective perimeter *around those who fear* God. *Fear* is a term of reverence and respect for God. The passage is reminiscent of [Joshua 5:13-15](#), where Joshua encounters the commander of the Lord’s army. Joshua wants to know whose side the angel is on. The angel refuses to pick sides; God’s angel simply fights for or against whomever God says. If we want God to fight for us, we must fear him. Only then can we be confident that he will deliver us. The Lord’s protection may not take a visible form (compare [2 Kings 6:15-17](#)), but it is there.

## B. God Provides ([vv. 8-10](#))

**8. Taste and see that the LORD is good; blessed is the one who takes refuge in him.**

In [verse 3](#), above, David has invited listeners to join in glorifying the Lord. Now he invites them to enter into a personal relationship of trust in God and to experience him firsthand.

If life is likened to a choice of banquets, we can picture several hosts who beckon us to eat at their respective tables. Some offer us wealth and privilege. Others offer us friendship in idolatry. Those meals may please our palate for a brief moment, but in the end they make us sick. David invites us to eat at the Lord’s table, for only he truly satisfies. Peter uses similar language when he encourages believers to crave the milk of God’s Word, “now that you have tasted *that the Lord is good*” ([1 Peter 2:2, 3](#); contrast [Hebrews 6:4-6](#)).

The state of being *blessed* that is experienced by those who take refuge in God is one of sustained satisfaction and contentment. The Psalms begin with this same word ([Psalm 1:1](#)).

**9. Fear the LORD, you his holy people, for those who fear him lack nothing.**

[Proverbs 9:10](#) teaches that “the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.” Fearing God includes believing that what he says is true. When he says that certain actions will yield certain negative consequences, we must believe him. In other words, we should fear what God says we should fear.

Corresponding with that is the understanding that we should not fear what God says we should not fear. There are many commands throughout Scripture that instruct us in that regard (example: [Matthew 10:28](#)). If we live as God desires, we have nothing to fear because he created us and knows what is in our best interests. He knows all our needs and will provide for them (compare [Matthew 6:25-34](#)).

**10. The lions may grow weak and hungry, but those who seek the LORD lack no good thing.**

David in his day knows as well as we do in ours that *lions* stand at the top of the land-animal food chain. They are quite skilled at acquiring food, and David has had personal experience in protecting sheep from them ([1 Samuel 17:34-37](#)). They are extremely self-sufficient. But they can and do *grow weak and hungry* at times in spite of that self-sufficiency. Yet in David’s experience, *those who seek the Lord* will *lack* for nothing they need. David said the same thing more famously in [Psalm 23:1](#): “The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing.”

*What Do You Think?*

What life-lessons have you learned about God’s provision?

*Talking Points for Your Discussion*

In regard to your faith

In regard to God’s character

In regard to your fellow believers

Other

## III. Compassionate Savior

([HEBREWS 2:17, 18](#))

### A. He Relates to Us ([v. 17](#))

**17. For this reason he had to be made like them, fully human in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people.**

[Psalm 34](#) focuses on God’s desire and ability to provide for those in need. David experienced this and eagerly invites his followers to trust the Lord in a similar fashion. But one might reasonably ask how God can know what we really need since he himself has never needed anything ([Psalm 50:9-13](#)). One might respond by pointing out that since God created us, of course he knows what we need. As a car designer knows what it takes to keep an automobile running, so also God knows what we need to flourish.

Even so, it is particularly reasonable to ask how God knows what it is like to suffer oppression. No one can oppress God. His greatest enemies tremble before him. He may know what our bodies need on a biological level, but how can he relate to us on an emotional level? How could he identify with being afflicted?

The author of Hebrews provides a most convincing reply. When God became flesh in Jesus, he entered personally into all the frailty of human existence. In the flesh, he suffered hunger, poverty, neglect, betrayal, torture, and a horrendous death. What God knew to be true as the all-knowing God, he experienced as a vulnerable human.

That experience qualified Jesus to be the perfect *high priest* to mediate between humanity and God. Like us, he experienced temptation; unlike us, he remained *faithful* and did not sin ([Hebrews 4:15](#)). Thus Jesus could become the perfect sacrifice for our *sins*, unlike the high priests of the old covenant, who had to offer

sacrifices for their own sins ([7:26, 27](#)).

God then raised Jesus from the dead. Now, having ascended into Heaven, Jesus intercedes on our behalf ([Hebrews 7:25](#)). Though our sin separates us from God, Jesus has provided *atonement* to reconcile us with God by taking the punishment for our sins upon himself at the cross.

#### *What Do You Think?*

How should a Christian's life change when becoming fully convinced that Jesus is the merciful and faithful high priest?

#### *Talking Points for Your Discussion*

- Regarding prayer interactions with God
- Regarding interactions with other believers
- Regarding interactions with unbelievers

## **B. He Supports Us (v. 18)**

### **<sup>18</sup>. Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.**

Some might suggest that Jesus cannot relate to our spiritual poverty because he himself never sinned. The writer of Hebrews disagrees with this kind of reasoning. One does not have to sin to relate to sinners. It is enough that Jesus was “tempted in every way, just as we are” ([Hebrews 4:15](#)). He faced a period of severe temptation following his baptism ([Matthew 3:13-4:11](#)). The spiritual warfare that occurred during that experience must have been intense to a degree we cannot fathom. Jesus also wrestled in Gethsemane with carrying out the Father's plan for him to drink the bitter cup of suffering just ahead. But Jesus fully surrendered to his Father's will ([Matthew 26:39](#)).

By overcoming temptation, Jesus became someone who *is able to help those who are being tempted*. That, of course, includes us all.

### ***ONE WHO CAN RELATE***

Jordan Rogers has a responsible position as a brand manager at a company that produces athletic apparel. But his ability to perform at this level wouldn't have been possible without Christ's intervention over the power of heroin. In an “I Am Second” video, Jordan shares how Christ helped him overcome the temptation of a raging drug habit, resulting in 13 years of sobriety.

Jordan first experimented with heroin at age 15, and by the time he was in his early 20s he was a full-blown addict. In reference to his everworsening addiction, Jordan says, “I had this black hole in my soul and just wanted to change the way I felt.” His attempted solution was to get high in as many new and different ways as possible.

Jordan hit rock bottom when he found himself in a jail cell. There he thought to himself, “This is not what I was made for. I absolutely deserve to be here, but I don't belong here.” As two of his cell mates argued over a roll of toilet paper, Jordan cried out to God: “Whoever you are, whatever you are . . . I need help.”

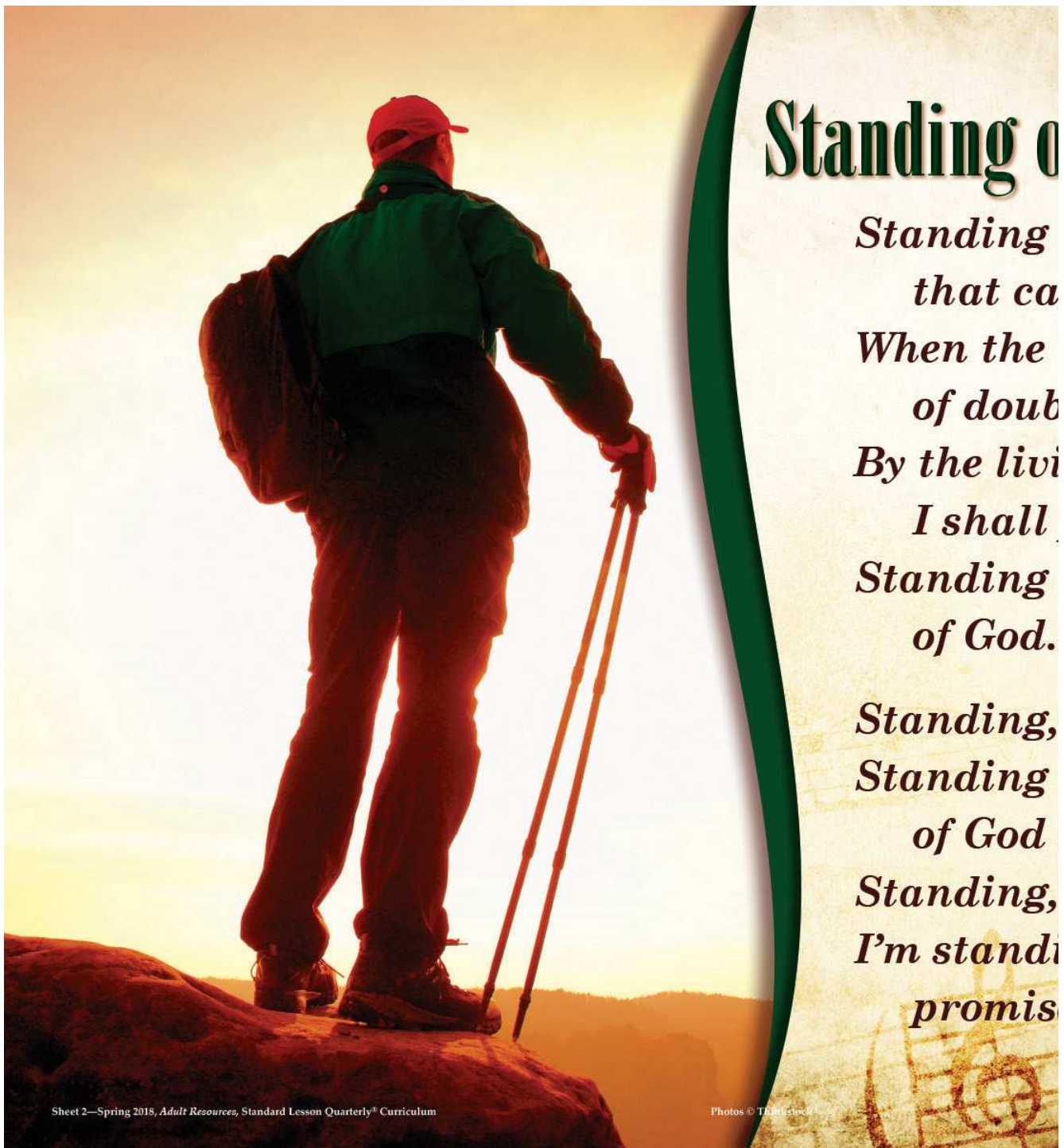
God is able to come alongside and help those who are being tempted ([1 Corinthians 10:13](#)). The Lord used a mentor who entered Jordan's life, showed him the love of Christ, and helped him find recovery and freedom from temptation. Remember: the Jesus you take to someone this week is the Jesus who suffered the temptations that the one you help does.

—D. C. S.

## **Conclusion**

### **A. Son of David**

From a genealogical perspective, Jesus was clearly a descendant of David. We can trace his ancestry using the genealogies of [Matthew 1](#) and [Luke 3](#). But when we read Hebrews alongside [Psalm 34](#), we see Jesus linked with David in a different way. David suffered oppression. He had to escape the wrath of one, possibly two, jealous kings. Not only did he trust God for deliverance, but he encouraged others to do the same.



Sheet 2—Spring 2018, *Adult Resources*, Standard Lesson Quarterly® Curriculum

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Visual for Lessons 2 & 13. *Point to this visual as you ask, "Which verse of today's lesson reflects these thoughts most closely? Why?"*

Jesus too faced oppression. The paranoid King Herod tried to kill the infant Jesus. Religious and secular authorities eventually succeeded in putting him to death. But Jesus was not someone who obsessed about the injustices surrounding his trial and execution. Rather, he used his experience to identify with us in the many forms of affliction that beset us in a fallen world. His perfect example of faithfulness even in the face of death encourages us to hold fast. Though the world may appear to get the best of us, the God who vindicated Jesus by raising him from the grave will raise us too; and we will reign victorious with him!

#### **B. Prayer**

Heavenly Father, we are humbled by your concern for us. We are so small in the grand scheme of things! Yet you love us beyond our ability to comprehend. We thank you for delivering us from the evil that surrounds us and the evil that lies within us. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

#### **C. Thought to Remember**

"Taste and see that the Lord is good." —[Psalm 34:8](#)

## INVOLVEMENT LEARNING

*Enhance your lesson with NIV® Bible Student (from your curriculum supplier) and the reproducible activity page (at [www.standardlesson.com](http://www.standardlesson.com) or in the back of the NIV® Standard Lesson Commentary Deluxe Edition).*

### Into the Lesson

Bring a small collection of tools to class. Pass them around and ask students to describe a purpose for each. Discuss things in your homes that need fixing; talk about what tools you would use to fix them. Invite students to give examples of home-improvement projects they are currently undertaking, as well as fix-it situations gone wrong.

*Option.* Before class, research clips from the TV show *Home Improvement* that feature a main character fixing (or attempting to fix) something. Describe it as a lead-in to the above.

*Alternative.* Distribute pens and copies of the “Get a Fix” activity from the reproducible page, which you can download. Have students work individually to match words containing FIX with their correct definitions. (You can place the copies in chairs for learners to begin working on as they arrive.)

After either alternative say, “We may fix broken appliances and broken furniture, but how do we fix broken lives? The Bible has the answer.”

### Into the Word

Divide the class into three groups. Give each group a pen, paper, and a prepared index card with a single word and a Scripture reference:

*Group 1*—Deliverance (Psalm 34:1-6)

*Group 2*—Provision (Psalm 34:7-10)

*Group 3*—Reconciliation (Hebrews 2:17, 18)

Groups are to do the following:

1. Define their word. 2. Give an example of a person performing that function. 3. Tell how their Scripture text defines God or Jesus as one who performs that function.

Here are possible responses:

#### *Group 1*

1. *Deliverance* is to release, rescue, or liberate from an unfavorable situation.
2. Example: A firefighter rescues someone from a burning building.
3. God delivers those who trust him from fear, shame, and troubles.

#### *Group 2*

1. *Provision* is to meet or supply a need.
2. Example: A church or community food pantry helps feed homeless people.
3. God protects his people by providing for their needs.

#### *Group 3*

1. *Reconciliation* is to bring about peace between estranged or warring parties.
2. Example: A marriage counselor helps a couple work out their differences.
3. Jesus interceded for sinners by placing himself in the path of God’s wrath. Jesus did so as he took the penalty for our sins upon himself at the cross. His task of intercessory reconciliation included remaining sinless while being tempted as we are in all ways.

After groups have completed their research, ask them to share their findings with the class. When they have done so, say, “Fixing our state as broken human beings is not as easy as repairing an appliance or a piece of furniture. But God took steps to see that we are removed and shielded from everlasting danger and that the penalty for our sins is paid.”

### Into Life

Write this statement on the board: *God repairs the irreparable.* Invite students to react to the statement; jot responses on the board. Push deeper by requesting respondents to explain their reactions and to support their explanations with examples.

*Alternative.* Distribute pens and copies of the “You Can Say That Again!” activity from the reproducible page. Have students work in small groups to say the same thing in a new way.