

Teaching Plan  
EXPLORE THE BIBLE

Date: July 30, 2017  
Lesson Title: "His Faithfulness"  
Lesson Passage: Psalm 146:1-10

ABOUT THIS LESSON

Psalm 146 emphasizes the absolute dependability of God's faithfulness in caring for His people. This hymn of praise apparently was prompted by the psalmist's deliverance from troublesome circumstances that required God's help. Having experienced God's loving care, the psalmist vows that he will continue to praise God as long as he lives.

TEACHING/LEARNING GOALS

(1) In a sentence, summarize the message of Psalm 146. (2) Identify three groups of needy people who are specifically mentioned in this psalm.

BEGINNING THE LESSON

*Ask class members to look at the beginning and the end of the last five Psalms. (Psalms 146-150 are called "Hallelujah Psalms" because they all begin and end with the same phrase, "Praise the Lord!" In the Hebrew text, this phrase is *hallu-Yah*, which literally means "Praise Yahweh!") Then observe that Psalm 146 is a hymn expressing the gratitude of an individual who has in some way experienced Yahweh's help.*

TEACHING PROCEDURES

- 1. Suggest that the initial phrase, "Praise the Lord" (v. 1a) is probably a call to the gathered congregation, and "O my soul" is the psalmist's call to himself. (NOTE: "Soul" is the Hebrew term **nephesh**, which means, literally, "breath." But it denotes "my innermost being" or what we mean when we refer to "myself.")*
- 2. In verse 2 the psalmist pledges to praise and sing praises to God as long as he lives. ("While I have being" means "as long as I am here" or "throughout my whole life.") APPLICATION: This stands in contrast to the attitude of the "fair-weather Christian," a person whose faith in God is conditional (i.e., "God, if you will heal me, or give me what I want, I'll believe in you").*
- 3. Interpret Psalm 146:3-4: (1) Here the poet warns against depending upon anyone other than God as one's ultimate source of help--even people with power and authority, like princes and other human leaders. (2) "Breath" in verse 4 is the Hebrew word *ruach* (literally, "wind") which was virtually synonymous with "life." When that departs, the lifeless body (even the body of a prince) returns to the soil, and all*

his plans come to an end. APPLICATION: The psalmist is not questioning the importance of human helpers, or the need for them. In family life, the role of parents as providers, caregivers and teachers is indispensable; but they are subject to human limitations. This is why God should be regarded as the ultimate "head of the home." The same is true of human communities, states and nations. In Romans 13:1-3 Paul acknowledges the important role of human authorities as guardians of order in social systems. But, he reminds us, "there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God." (3) The psalmist's point in v. 4 is that even the greatest of men, despite their best intentions, will sometimes fail to provide dependable help in times of need because of their human limitations, and that God is the only unfailing source of help.

4. *Comment on verses 5-7:* (1) These verses are sometimes called an "Old Testament beatitude," because the word "Happy" in v. 5 is virtually synonymous with the word "Blessed" that introduces each of the beatitudes in the "Sermon on the Mount" (Matt. 5:3-11). (2) The scope of the Lord's providential work is enormous, ranging from His creation of the vast heavens and earth (v. 6) to relieving the burdens of oppressed people, providing food for the hungry and setting prisoners free (v. 7).

5. *Observe that the litany of the Lord's works continues in verses 8-9:* (1) He gives sight to the blind and "lifts those who have fallen" (v. 8). (2) He "loves the righteous" (i.e., God's people who obey him and follow his commands) (v. 8). (3) He watches over three groups of people who need special care and protection--"sojourners" (i.e., resident aliens), widows (women who had virtually no legal rights) and orphans (who were completely dependent upon others for food, clothing and shelter). APPLICATION: There is ample evidence in scripture that widows, orphans and resident aliens were objects of special concern in ancient Israel (Deut. 10:18, 14:28-29, 24:19, 27:19, Malachi 3:5) and, also, in New Testament Christian communities (James 1:27; Matthew 25:35). If "the Lord watches over" these particularly needy people (Ps. 146:9), shouldn't "doing the Lord's work" include ministering to them today?

#### CLOSING THE LESSON

Read this TEV translation of Psalm 146:10: "*The Lord is king forever. Your God, O Zion, will reign for all time.*" Then compare these words of praise with the familiar refrain of Handel's "Hallelujah Chorus" in the closing chorus of his oratorio, "Messiah" ("King of kings forever and ever, and lord of lords hallelujah, hallelujah. And he shall reign forever and ever.") SUGGESTION: Consider closing the class session by playing a recording of the "Hallelujah Chorus," which expresses the message of this psalm. (Perhaps you could arrange in advance for a class member to play this chorus, which is available on the internet, using their cell phone or computer tablet.)