

Purpose Abandoned

THE POINT

God created us with purpose, but our sin keeps us from living out that purpose.

THE PASSAGE

Psalms 8:1-6; 14:1-7

THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

A few years ago, I was given a grand piano. It didn't cost me anything except the lunch I bought for the men who helped me get it home. While I love to play, I had no intention of playing this piano. A local church wanted it gone because its soundboard was cracked and would no longer stay in tune.

Over the next several months, this grand piano resided in my garage as I slowly worked on it and gave it new life—as a bookcase. With nothing more than another free meal, more men helped me haul this piano bookcase to my office, where it resides next to my lamp—that was once a clarinet.

I love my piano bookcase, but there is something far greater I'd rather have done with it. I wish I could've played it. That's the purpose for which it was built. It's the same with us. We've lost the purpose for which God created us, but instead of returning to Him to regain that purpose, we settle for something less in our lives. Something far less.





5 MINUTES

GET INTO THE STUDY

DISCUSS: Question #1 on page 21 of the Personal Study Guide (PSG): **What's the most interesting repurpose project you've seen?**

GUIDE: Direct the group to **The Bible Meets Life** on page 21 of the PSG. Introduce the importance of understanding the impact of sin on our purpose by reading or summarizing the text or by encouraging group members to read it on their own.

RECAP: I love my piano bookcase, but there is something far greater I'd rather have done with it. I wish I could've played it. That's the purpose for which it was built. It's the same with us. We've lost the purpose for which God created us, but instead of returning to Him to regain that purpose, we settle for something less in our lives. Something far less.

GUIDE: Call attention to **The Point** on page 21 of the PSG: **God created us with purpose, but our sin keeps us from living out that purpose.**

PRAY: Transition into the study by thanking God for offering us forgiveness for our sins. Ask Him to help us live in that forgiveness so that we can live out our purpose.

STUDY THE BIBLE



10 MINUTES

NOTES

PSALM 8:1-6

¹ LORD, our Lord, how magnificent is your name throughout the earth! You have covered the heavens with your majesty. ² From the mouths of infants and nursing babies, you have established a stronghold on account of your adversaries in order to silence the enemy and the avenger. ³ When I observe your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you set in place, ⁴ what is a human being that you remember him, a son of man that you look after him? ⁵ You made him little less than God and crowned him with glory and honor. ⁶ You made him ruler over the works of your hands; you put everything under his feet:

READ: Ask someone to read aloud Psalm 8:1-6 on page 22 of the PSG.

GUIDE: Use the commentary for the verses on the next page of the Leader Guide to explain the context of this psalm.

RECAP: Do you remember the first time you saw a mountain rising from the horizon? Or do you recall the first time you stood on the beach and saw nothing but an expansive ocean before you? I don't know about you, but experiences like that capture my attention. That's because the greatness of creation reflects the greatness of the Creator. It makes me want to shout with David, "LORD, our Lord, how magnificent is your name throughout the earth!" (v. 1).

PRAY: Invite the group to follow the pattern of this psalm in offering praise to God (either aloud or silently) for who He is and what He has done in their lives.

RECAP: How astonishing, then, to see how our mighty creator God views humanity out of all His creation. Out of all the wonderful things God has made, it's humanity alone who have been granted a place a little less than the Lord. We are granted special status to rule over the rest of creation as part of our praise to God.

We were created with a purpose. Humanity was created to take care of God's creation, to bear His image, and in so doing, bring Him glory (Gen. 1–2). Our first parents, Adam and Eve, were given this specially ordained status as God's image bearers to rule over creation. We were created to give God praise as we exercise our privilege to rule creation on God's behalf.

DISCUSS: Question #2 on page 23 of the PSG: **How does God's creation inspire you to worship Him?**

ACTIVITY (OPTIONAL): Use the "Video" option (page 35 of this Leader Guide) to help the group relate to the psalmist's awe at God's magnificence.

TRANSITION: We were created to bring God praise and glory. In the next verses, we see that we have turned away from God and His purpose for us.

ALTERNATE QUESTION:

What are some reasons people discount or ignore God's role as Creator?

PSALM 8:1-6 *Commentary*

Connection to the Point. The psalmist marveled at God's creation and was astonished at the status He gave humanity.

Context. Psalm 8 is one of seventy-three psalms attributed to King David. The instructions to the choir director to use a *Gittith* probably indicate that this psalm was to be sung by a group accompanied by an instrument similar to a lyre; the *Gittith* likely derived its name from the Philistine city of Gath. The psalm praises God for what He has done in creating the world and placing humanity over it as His stewards.

LORD, our Lord (v. 1). The first title for God, *LORD* (*Yahweh*), is His personal, covenant name, which He revealed to Moses at the burning bush (Ex. 3:14-15). It emphasizes God's eternity and self-sufficiency. *Lord* (*adon*) means one who has authority over another. When used of God it acknowledges God as the greatest power and the highest authority.

Name (v. 1). "The truth of God's character is focused in His name. The divine name reveals God's power, authority, and holiness."

Your majesty (v. 1). The term (*hod*) means "splendor," "glory," and "strength." It can refer to human vitality (Prov. 5:9), the majestic strength of a horse in battle (Zech. 10:3), and the splendor of a growing plant (Hos. 14:6). The term also is associated with authority (Num. 27:20) and the bestowing of honors (Dan. 11:21). God's divine glory is displayed in the heavens, which He has made.

From the mouths of infants and nursing babies (v. 2).

Two of the smallest and most vulnerable in society are *infants*—those who have finished the weaning process, and *babies*—those who are still nursing. Their voices praise God as well and attest to His creative power. Here they are contrasted with God's adversaries, the enemy who represents human power and prideful arrogance.

Work of your fingers (v. 3). God is spirit. He does not have actual fingers. This is known as an anthropomorphism, attributing human characteristics or behaviors to God to explain who He is and what He does. Here it is used to paint a picture of God creating the universe.

Human being (v. 4). David contrasted God's creation with human beings, emphasizing humanity's seeming inconsequence when compared to the heavens, the moon, and the stars (vv. 3-4). Yet human beings are made in the image of God (Gen. 1:26-27) and have been given the responsibilities of caring for God's creation as His stewards/representatives (1:28; 2:15; 9:1-2). God gave human beings an exalted place over His creation with accompanying moral responsibilities. Adam and Eve's sin (chap. 3) did not nullify this role.

Son of man (v. 4). In this passage, the phrase *son of man* is parallel to *human being*. It refers to all the descendants of Adam. The prophet Daniel used the term as a reference to a future Messianic figure who would be given dominion over every people and nation (Dan. 7:13-14), and Jesus used the term for Himself as being that Messianic figure (Matt. 26:64).

Little less than God (v. 5). Bible translators are divided over how the term translated as *God* (*elohim*) should be rendered. *Elohim* can refer to a variety of spiritual beings depending on the context. Some translate it as "the angels" or "heavenly beings," while others translate it as "God." It occurs over 2,600 times in the Old Testament and is translated as "God" over 2,000 times. When used for God, it carries the sense that He is unique among the *elohim*; none can compare with Him.

The phrase *little less than God* emphasizes humanity's exalted position above the rest of God's creation. However, humanity remains below the status of God Himself. While made in God's image (Gen. 1:26-27), humanity is in no way equal to God.

Under his feet (v. 6). This phrase expresses the same idea of the first part of verse 6 but using different words. God has placed His creation under humanity's feet in the sense of giving them dominion over creation as His stewards. This is detailed in verses 7-8, which list sheep, oxen, wild animals, fish, and birds as being under humanity's authority. The phrase *under his feet* can also refer to the symbolic act of a victorious warrior placing his foot on the neck of a defeated enemy. This symbolism appears most powerfully in reference to Jesus being victorious over all His enemies and reigning over His eternal kingdom.

STUDY THE BIBLE



10 MINUTES

NOTES

PSALM 14:1-3

¹ The fool says in his heart, “There’s no God.” They are corrupt; they do vile deeds. There is no one who does good. ² The LORD looks down from heaven on the human race to see if there is one who is wise, one who seeks God. ³ All have turned away; all alike have become corrupt. There is no one who does good, not even one.

READ: Ask someone to read aloud Psalm 14:1-3 on page 23 of the PSG.

RECAP: No one likes to be considered foolish. It spans across cultures, but so much of our humor involves someone doing something silly and foolish. We laugh at jokes where someone is acting dim-witted and foolish. Many of us have said something wrong or planned to embark on some adventure or task only to have someone tell us, “Don’t be foolish.”

“The fool” (v. 1) mentioned by David is not merely someone acting like a buffoon. The Jewish people would have understood a fool to be someone acting senseless in an ethical or moral sense. This isn’t a person who’s acting like a clown; he is draped in immorality. We see this in a man David encountered named Nabal—whose name is the Hebrew word for fool! Nabal knew who David was and what he had done for him, yet he refused to return the favor and be kind and generous to David and his men; instead, it was all about him (1 Sam. 25:3-11).

GUIDE: Use the commentary for the verses on the next page of the Leader Guide to explain the context of this psalm.

RECAP: Some of the wealthiest people in our country are self-professed atheists and agnostics, but they still engage in philanthropy that benefits thousands. But whatever good we do can’t cover over the fact that we are sinners bent on doing things our way. We may not be acting as depraved as we could, but we’re still corrupted by the stain of sin. And no good on our part can erase that stain.

Because of sin, we’ve lost our way and we’ve lost our purpose. All of us. “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23).

DISCUSS: Question #3 on page 24 of the PSG: **What are some ways people avoid seeking God?**

ACTIVITY (OPTIONAL): Use the “Testimony” option (page 35 of this Leader Guide) to allow the group to hear one person’s answer to this question.

TRANSITION: In the next verses, we see that when we turn to God as our refuge, He restores us.

ALTERNATE QUESTION:
What are some ways you communicate to others that no one seeks God?

PSALM 14:1-3 *Commentary*

Connection to the Point. Every human being is a sinner who has turned away from God.

Context: Psalm 14 was also written by King David. It details how the godless reject God's law (vv. 1-3) and oppress God's people (vv. 4-7). This portrait of the ungodly is placed between Psalm 13, which is a plea to God for deliverance from one's enemies, and Psalm 15, which is a description of the godly.

Fool (v. 1). The *fool* is the opposite of a wise person who fears the Lord (Prov. 1:7). The fool denies the existence of God; he rejects God, treating Him and His name with contempt (Ps. 74:18). The term for *fool* (*nabal*) means "senseless." It describes someone who has a closed mind in relation to God, godly living, and ethical behavior. He is characterized by immorality; this is expressed in the way he lives and how he treats others. Abigail's husband, Nabal, demonstrated such foolishness in how he treated David and his men, who had protected Nabal's sheep, while the animals were grazing in the wilderness (1 Sam. 25).

In his heart (v. 1). The Hebrew word for *heart* (*leb*) literally refers to the internal organ but is also used in reference to the totality of a person's inner being, as well as to his emotions, mind, and will. The hardness of the fool's heart is seen in the act of defiance, which flows out of the center of his being, "**There's no God**" (see Prov. 19:3).

Corrupt (v. 1). The fool is *corrupt* (*shachath*). The Hebrew term means "to destroy" or "bring to ruin." Through his godless behavior and lifestyle, the fool destroys himself and brings grievous harm to others.

Vile (v. 1). *Vile* (*ta ab*) can also be translated "abhorrent" or "detestable." The fool's actions are vile because they are offenses against God. The term also includes ethical sins against other people. King Ahab of Israel was described as having committed "detestable acts" by worshiping idols (1 Kings 21:26).

No one who does good (v. 1). This statement does not mean that no one has the capacity to do good, but rather that because of our fallen nature, even our best deeds are tainted with sin. Isaiah noted, "All our righteous acts are like a polluted garment" (Isa. 64:6). Similarly, Paul

wrote in Romans that no one seeks God, and in our fallen state (prior to salvation) we are enslaved to sin (Rom. 3:9-20; 6:17). Only those works of believers done through the indwelling Holy Spirit are ultimately acceptable before God (Gal. 5:13-25).

Wise . . . seeks God (v. 2). The Hebrew term for *wise* (*sakal*) refers to one who has insight and understanding, particularly in relation to God and godly living. The wise person *seeks* God. The term (*darash*) means "to search for and inquire about." To *seek* someone is to look for him or her passionately. It can also be translated as "study." The wise person fears the Lord (Ps. 111:10; Prov. 1:7), which leads to an understanding of and relationship with God and brings about a lifestyle characterized by godly living (Prov. 9:10).

All have turned away (v. 3). People by nature are spiritually dead (Eph. 2:1-6), separated from God (Rom. 5:10), and do not seek Him (3:9-18). While all people have turned away from God, in Jesus Christ God has taken the initiative to seek sinners with the gospel of salvation (Matt. 18:12; Luke 19:10). Jesus has given His disciples the same role as His ambassadors who are to go into the world to proclaim the need for people to repent of their sins and accept the offer of salvation in Jesus Christ (Matt. 28:19-20; 2 Cor. 5:18-21).

STUDY THE BIBLE



15 MINUTES

NOTES

PSALM 14:4-7

⁴ Will evildoers never understand? They consume my people as they consume bread; they do not call on the LORD. ⁵ Then they will be filled with dread, for God is with those who are righteous. ⁶ You sinners frustrate the plans of the oppressed, but the LORD is his refuge. ⁷ Oh, that Israel's deliverance would come from Zion! When the LORD restores the fortunes of his people, let Jacob rejoice, let Israel be glad.

READ: Ask someone to read aloud Psalm 14:4-7 on page 24 of the PSG.

DO: Direct the group to **Engage** with “Turning Away or Taking Refuge?” on page 25 of the PSG (page 35 of this Leader Guide) to give the group an opportunity to evaluate their walk with God.

RECAP: We can point our fingers in disgust at all those fools and “evildoers” (v. 4), but I feel sadness for them. We’ve already seen that, as fools, they are senseless. Choosing to be their own gods, they’ve lost all sense, and they are unable to see or understand just how sinful they are. “Will evildoers never understand?” (v. 4). As long as they choose to “not call on the LORD” (v. 4), they will act selfishly. That can be true of all of us. We all worship something, and if we don’t call on God as God, we’ll call on ourselves. In our self-centeredness, we make ourselves god.

GUIDE: Use the commentary for the verses on the next page of the Leader Guide to explain what it means to call on the Lord.

SUMMARIZE: Highlight the main points from page 26 of the PSG. Up to this point, Psalm 14 can feel disheartening, but there is hope!

- **God sees.** God is not oblivious to sin, nor is He oblivious to our pain and oppression.
- **God judges.** God takes sin seriously.
- **God delivers.** God’s judgment should cause dread in all of us!

DISCUSS: Question #4 on page 26 of the PSG: **How has God restored you since turning to Christ?**

DISCUSS: Question #5 on page 26 of the PSG: **When has the Lord been a refuge for you during a difficult time?**

GUIDE: Refer back to **The Point** for this session: **God created us with purpose, but our sin keeps us from living out that purpose.**

ALTERNATE QUESTION:

Why are we sometimes reluctant to turn to God after we’ve sinned?

PSALM 14:4-7 *Commentary*

Connection to the Point. Dread awaits sinners, but God offers refuge for those who turn back to Him.

Understand (v. 4). The word for *understand* (*yada*) literally means “to know.” This term is used to describe how God watches over the way of the righteous (Ps. 1:6; 37:18) and knows the hearts and actions of the unrighteous (Isa. 44:18). It is also used in the sense of being acquainted with someone (Gen. 29:5; 2 Sam. 1:5), as well as not knowing someone (Ex. 1:8). In the context of Psalm 14, it describes a lack of understanding about God. However, the problem is not just intellectual but relational. Evildoers will not seek after God; they have intentionally turned away from Him.

Consume my people (v. 4). The term *consume* (*akal*) literally means “to eat.” It figuratively means to *consume* in the sense of “to destroy.” Evildoers seek to consume God’s people with their evil deeds. They cheat, harm, persecute, and oppress them (Ps. 27:2; Prov. 30:14). Instead of seeking God to meet their needs, evildoers attempt to meet their needs by taking from others. To the wicked, such actions are as natural as a ravenously hungry person devouring a meal of bread.

Call on the LORD (v. 4). To *call on* (*qara*) is to call out to someone, in this case to God. Those who call out to God recognize their need for God in their lives and seek Him by calling on the Lord in prayer (34:6). The Lord promises to answer and save those who call out to Him (145:18-20). The fool does not call upon the Lord because he does not believe in his heart that he needs the Lord. In Romans, Paul wrote that all those who call out to God (in repentance and faith), confessing Jesus is Lord and believing God raised Him from the dead, will be saved (Rom. 10:9-13; see also Joel 2:32).

Filled with dread (v. 5). The defiance and complacency of evildoers and fools has its consequences. Rejecting God and refusing a relationship with Him ultimately leads to judgment. While evildoers may terrorize the people of God for a time, in the end they will be filled with dread because **God is with those who are righteous**, meaning those who live in relationship with Him and seek to live according to His standards. An attack on God’s people is an attack on God Himself (Acts 9:1-5). The term *dread*

(*pachad*) means “to be afraid,” “to tremble,” and “to live in terror.” God’s judgment will fall on all evildoers, in this life and/or ultimately at the final judgment (Matt. 25:31-46; 2 Tim. 4:1; Rev. 20:11-15). Believers today have no reason to dread, since God has forgiven their sins, reconciling them to Himself through Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 5:17-19).

You sinners frustrate the plans of the oppressed (v. 6). The *oppressed* refers to the poor, the needy, the humble, and the afflicted. In this case, God’s people who are suffering. The term is parallel to the “righteous” (v. 5). *Sinners* is parallel with the “fool” (v. 1) and the “evildoers” (v. 4). Those who do not acknowledge God often also actively oppose those who live righteously.

Refuge (v. 6). A *refuge* (*machaseh*) is a shelter, literally or figurative, which the weak and vulnerable enter for protection. Hope and trust are associated with this word. God is the righteous people’s place of protection and source of security against the attacks of the wicked. This does not mean that bad things will never happen to believers, but it does mean that they can cry out to and seek the Lord in times of trouble (Ps. 46). He will walk with them through the trials and tribulations of life (Isa. 43:2), giving them strength and endurance to withstand these experiences (40:31; 1 Cor. 10:13).

Zion (v. 7). The term can refer to the hill south of Jerusalem which was fortified by the Jebusites and captured by King David (2 Sam. 5:7). It was also known as “the city of David” (1 Kings 8:1) and “the city of our God” (Ps. 48:1-2), the place where God dwelt (9:11). *Zion* also was synonymous with the city of Jerusalem (Ps. 135:21; Isa. 40:9; Mic. 3:12) and the entire nation (Ps. 126:1; Jer. 50:4-5). In the context of Psalm 14, *Zion* is the place where God dwells and from which the deliverance of His people comes.

Jacob . . . Israel (v. 7). Jacob was the son of the patriarch Isaac and the grandson of Abraham. God changed Jacob’s name to Israel (Gen. 32:22-31), which reflected the change in Jacob from a deceiver to a man of God. In the Old Testament, both *Jacob* and *Israel* are used as identifiers for the Israelites.

LIVE IT OUT



5 MINUTES

NOTES

GUIDE: Direct the group to page 27 of the PSG: God created us with purpose, but our sin keeps us from living out that purpose. How will you respond to the truth learned in this study? Choose one of the following applications:

- **Reflect.** Take time to reflect on the fact that God has created you for His glory. Are you living your life for His glory or your own? Make any changes necessary to give Him all the praise.
- **Confess.** What's a part of your life God is revealing to you that you may be living apart from His purposes for you? Confess that to Him, repent, and thank Him for His forgiveness.
- **Forgive.** A sign of maturity is sharing God's forgiveness with others. Is there someone who has hurt you? Ask God for the grace to forgive, even as He has forgiven you.

WRAP IT UP

TRANSITION: Read or restate **The Point** for this session: **God created us with purpose, but our sin keeps us from living out that purpose.**

PRAY: Thank God for rescuing us from sin. Ask Him to help us be a repenting people who follow His purpose for our lives.



SCAN ME



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ENGAGE

Turning Away or Taking Refuge? Evaluate yourself on each action from Psalms 8 and 14. Ask God to strengthen you in any areas of weakness.

Am I regularly looking up and around at what God has made?

I rarely do this. _____ I sometimes do this. _____ I often do this.

Do I let God's creation give perspective to the purpose of my life?

I rarely do this. _____ I sometimes do this. _____ I often do this.

Do I turn away from God when I hit hard times?

I rarely do this. _____ I sometimes do this. _____ I often do this.

Do I actively remember and live like God is with me?

I rarely do this. _____ I sometimes do this. _____ I often do this.

When my plans don't work out, do I take refuge in the Lord?

I rarely do this. _____ I sometimes do this. _____ I often do this.

When I am in a difficult situation, do I look to God for my deliverance?

I rarely do this. _____ I sometimes do this. _____ I often do this.

BONUS CONTENT

VIDEO ACTIVITY (OPTIONAL): In advance, play a video or slide show of various aspects of God's creation. Invite the group to answer the question the psalmist asked in Psalm 8:3-4 in light of such wonder.

NOTE: A video option can be found at BibleStudiesforLife.com/AdultExtra.

TESTIMONY ACTIVITY (OPTIONAL): In advance, invite someone from the group or another church member to share a testimony of how they avoided seeking God for many years.

NOTES

1. Brad Creed, "Names of God," in *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, gen. ed. Chad Brand, rev. (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2015), 1143.