

SPECIAL LESSON

Psalm 34 (OSB 33): God is Close to the Brokenhearted

Bible Study Preparation and Materials Needed:

Reflecting on: Psalm 34 (OSB 33) - God is Close to the Brokenhearted

For the Lesson: Orthodox Study Bible or Holy Bible: Armenian Church Edition

Recommended Orthodox Study Bible [HERE](#).

Recommended Holy Bible: Armenian Church Edition [HERE](#).

Optional Practice

If time permits, begin or conclude this Bible study with an antiphonal Psalm reading. Have students read the psalm aloud in two groups, line by line. Encourage them to hear David's emotion, allowing it to become their own prayer.

Leader Notes

Things to Watch For:

Some students may have experienced real trauma. Don't push for details or force sharing.

The opening activity can be intense. Gauge your group's readiness.

If discussions stall, that's okay. Silence is better than forced responses.

Be ready to follow up individually with students who seem especially affected.

Adaptation Options:

For smaller groups (under 8), skip partner discussions and keep everything as full group.

For larger groups (over 15), use more small group time.

If your group is less familiar with Holy Scripture, add more context about psalms in general.

For groups that are more reserved, extend individual reflection time and reduce sharing time.

Memory Verse:

**“The Lord is near to those who are brokenhearted,
and He will save the humble in spirit.”**

- Psalm 34(33):19

Bible Study Lesson

Open with prayer:

Իմաստութիւն Յօր՝ Յիսուս, տո՛ւր ինձ իմաստութիւն, զբարիս խորհել եւ խօսել եւ գործել առաջի Քո՝ յամենայն ժամ. ի չար խորհրդոց, ի բանից եւ ի գործոց փրկեա՛ զիս. եւ ողորմեա՛ Քո արարածոց եւ ինձ բազմամեղիս: Ամէն

Eemasdootyoon Hor Heesoos, door eents eemasdootyoon uzparees khorel yev khosel yev kordz arachi ko hamenayn jham. Ee char khorhrtos, ee paneets yev kordzots prgya zees yev voghormya ko araradzots eents pazmameghees. Amen.

Wisdom of the Father, O Jesus, grant to me the wisdom to think, speak, and do that which is good in Your sight. Save me from all evil and distracting thoughts, words, and deeds. Have mercy upon your creatures and upon me, a great sinner. Amen.

A Reflection on Psalm 34 (OSB Psalm 33): God is Close to the Brokenhearted

Psalm 34 (OSB 33)

*1 By David; when he changed his countenance before Abimelech, who let him go, and he departed.**

2 I will bless the Lord at all times; His praise shall continually be in my mouth.

*3 My soul shall be praised in the Lord;
Let the gentle hear, and be glad.*

*4 Oh, magnify the Lord with me,
And let us exalt His name together.*

*5 I sought the Lord, and He heard me;
And He delivered me from all my sojourning.*

*6 Come to Him, and be enlightened,
And your face shall never be ashamed.*

*7 This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him,
And saved him from all his afflictions.*

*8 The Angel of the Lord shall encamp around
those who fear Him,
And He will deliver them.*

*9 Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good;
Blessed is the man who hopes in Him.*

*10 Fear the Lord, you His saints,
For there is no want for those who fear Him.*

*11 Rich men turned poor and went hungry;
But those who seek the Lord shall not lack any
good thing. (Pause)*

*12 Come, you children, listen to me;
I will teach you the fear of the Lord.*

*13 Who is the man who desires life,
Who loves to see good days?*

*14 Keep your tongue from evil,
And your lips from speaking deceit.*

*15 Shun evil and do good;
Seek peace and pursue it.*

*16 The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous,
And His ears are open to their supplications.*

*17 The Lord's face is against those who do evil,
So as to destroy their remembrance from the earth.*

*18 The righteous cried, and the Lord heard them;
And He delivered them from all their afflictions.*

*19 The Lord is near those who are brokenhearted,
And He will save the humble in spirit.*

*20 Many are the afflictions of the righteous,
But He will deliver them from them all.*

*21 The Lord shall guard all their bones;
Not one of them shall be broken.*

*22 The death of sinners is evil,
And those who hate the righteous shall go wrong.*

*23 The Lord will redeem the souls of His servants,
And all who hope in Him shall not go wrong*

God Shows Up When You're Falling Apart

You know that feeling when everything crashes down at once? Maybe a friendship blew up in your face. Maybe someone you loved walked away. Maybe you messed up so badly you don't know how to fix it. That hollow, crushing weight in your chest? That's what it means to be brokenhearted. Here's what might surprise you: that's exactly when God gets closest.

David wrote this psalm after one of the most humiliating moments of his life. But in that mess, David discovered something that changed everything: God doesn't wait for you to get your life together before He shows up. He comes running when you're broken.

"The Lord is near to those who are brokenhearted, and He will save the humble in spirit. Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but He will deliver them out of them all." (Psalm 33:19-20 OSB)

This isn't just pretty poetry for Instagram captions. It's a promise. God doesn't say you won't face hard things. He says you won't face them alone.

Q: *Have you ever felt God close to you during a really dark time? What was that like?*

Q: *If you haven't, what makes it hard to believe He'd be there?*

Praising God When Everything Hurts

"I will bless the Lord at all times; His praise shall continually be in my mouth. My soul shall make its boast in the Lord; let the humble hear it and be glad." David starts this psalm with praise. Not because his life is perfect. Not because the danger has passed. He praises God because God is still God, even when David's world is falling apart. This kind of worship is honestly rebellious. It refuses to let the darkness win. It's saying, *"Yeah, this hurts. Yeah, I'm scared. But I still know who You are."*

You don't have to wait until things get better to worship God. You can cry and praise Him at the same time. You can feel crushed and still trust He's good. That's not fake positivity. That's defiant faith.

In the Armenian Church, we sing this part of Psalm 34 at the conclusion of Badarak (Օրհնեցից զՏէր յաւնեայն ժամ/*Orhnetseets uzDer hamenayn zham*). The Church has been doing this for centuries because praise isn't something you save for when everything is fixed. Praise is how you survive the storm, especially when we leave the church at the conclusion of Badarak and go out into the world again.

A Quick Partner Discussion (optional):

Have students turn to someone next to them and discuss: *"What would it look like for you to bless God 'at all times'? Not just when you get what you want, but even when you don't? Is that even realistic?"*

Stop Thinking and Start Experiencing

"Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the man who hopes in Him." This might be the most famous line in the psalm, and for good reason. David isn't asking you to think harder about God or memorize more facts about Him. He's inviting you to experience Him.

Faith isn't just about having the right answers. It's about tasting something real. You know God is good not because someone told you, but because you've felt it. You've seen it. You've lived it.

In the Orthodox Churches and the Armenian Church too, when we come forward for Holy Communion, we literally taste and see the goodness of God in the Eucharist (and sing this verse too). But this verse goes beyond that moment. It's calling you to seek God personally, not just take someone else's word for it.

Popcorn Sharing (optional quick discussion): *"Let's do some quick popcorn sharing. No pressure, but if you want to share a one-sentence example of when you've 'tasted' God's goodness, just call it out."*

The Righteous Still Suffer

“The righteous cried out, and the Lord heard them; and He delivered them from all their afflictions.”

Let’s be clear: following God doesn’t mean everything gets easy. David doesn’t say righteous people never suffer. In fact, he says the opposite. They often do.

The difference? They know who to cry out to.

God isn’t sitting back waiting for you to handle things on your own. He’s listening. He’s moving. He’s ready to rescue. But you have to actually turn to Him, not just complain to yourself or vent to everyone except God.

When you’re hurting, don’t just scroll through your phone looking for distraction. Don’t just talk to friends (though that helps too). Cry out to the One who actually hears and has the power to do something about it.

He might not answer the way you expect. He might not answer when you expect. But He never ignores a heart that’s turned toward Him.

Reflection Question (take a few minutes to think and share):

Q: *Think about this honestly: When you’re in pain, who do you usually turn to first? Your phone? Your friends? Music? Do you actually believe God hears you when you cry out?*

Humility Opens the Door

“The Lord is near to those who are brokenhearted, and He will save the humble in spirit.”

This is the core of the entire psalm. When you’re crushed, when you’re humble, when you’re completely undone, God doesn’t pull back in disgust. He leans in. He gets closer. His nearness isn’t just comfort. It’s rescue.

In the Orthodox tradition, humility isn’t about putting yourself down or thinking you’re worthless. It’s about being honest. It’s admitting you need help. It’s making room for God to work because you’ve stopped pretending you can do it all yourself.

Pride keeps us stuck. It makes us hide our struggles, fake being fine, and push God away. Humility opens the door. The more we admit we’re broken, the more space we give God to heal us.

Q: *Why do you think God is especially drawn to broken, humble hearts?*

Q: *How would your prayers change if you really believed God gets closest when you’re most broken?*

Close with prayer:

Պահապան ամենայնի Քրիստոս, աջ Քո հովանի լիցի ի վերայ իմ, ի տուէ եւ ի գիշերի, ի նստիլ ի տան, ի գնալ ի ճանապարհ, ի ննջել եւ ի յառնել, զի մի երբեք սասանեցայց եւ ողորմեա՛ Քո արարածոց եւ ինձ բազմամեղիս: Ամէն

Bahaban amenayn Kreesdos, ach Ko hovanee leetsee ee vera eem; ee dveh yev ee keesheree, ee nsdeel ee dan, ee knal ee janabarh, ee nunchel yev ee harnel, zee mee yerpek sasanetsayts yev voghormya Ko araradzots yev eents pazmamyghees. Amen.

O Christ, guardian of all, let Your right hand guard and shelter me, by day and by night, at home and abroad, in sleeping and in waking, that I may never stumble. Have mercy upon Your creatures and upon me, a great sinner. Amen.