

Scripture Study

RADIANT *Moms Retreat*

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Words matter. As CC moms, we know this well. The three arts of the Trivium (Grammar, Dialectic, and Rhetoric) rely on the study of words, of language, as a journey to wisdom. More importantly, as John 1 tells us: Christ Himself is the Word made flesh!

Several years ago, I started to use my quiet times to study the lexical meanings of words in Scripture. I blame the 5 Common Topics of Invention for my new obsession. The 5 Common Topics give us a framework to seek truth. To understand the truth of anything, we must know: what it is (Definition), how it compares to other things (Comparison), its context (Circumstance), its causes and its effects (Relationship), and finally, what others say about it (Testimony).

Once I learned to use the 5 Common Topics in our homeschool, I started to apply them to other areas of life — eventually even the Bible. In studying the words of the Word, I have come to see God's heart for His children, and the life-changing Truth of His Word, in a richer and more personal way.

So instead of sharing with you *my* thoughts and opinions on Psalm 34, let me encourage you to dig into this passage yourself! May you find God's Word: "living and active... penetrating even to dividing soul and spirit..." (Hebrews 4:12), as He promised.

Background of Psalm 34

The incident referred to in Psalm 34 can be found in 1 Samuel 21. Review Chapters 15-21 of 1 Samuel to get the context, or read the summary below:

The repeated disobedience of Saul, King of Israel, has cost him everything. The Lord's Spirit departs from Saul and a "harmful spirit" comes to torment him instead (1 Samuel 16:14). Though the rejected King remains on the throne, God has chosen a successor. The Lord commands the prophet Samuel to go in secret to Bethlehem and anoint David, Jesse's son, as the next King.

David soon matures from a young shepherd boy famed for killing Goliath into a man of strength and reputation. David serves Saul faithfully for many years — first, as a musician to soothe the agonies of the "harmful spirit," and then as a successful military commander. David has the devoted friendship of Jonathan, the King's son, and his victories over the Philistines win him the hand of Michal, the King's daughter. But when Saul realizes the fame of his son-in-law has eclipsed his own, his love for David turns to murderous jealousy. Warned that Saul intends to kill him, David runs for his life.

David flees to Nob, just outside Jerusalem, where the Tabernacle is located. David is without food or weapons, so the priests feed him the Bread of the Presence and give him Goliath's sword (21:6). David then escapes to the Philistine city of Gath, ruled by Achish. (Psalm 34 identifies this king as Abimelech, which may be a title, since it is translated: "father of the king.")

Although David's anointing as Israel's next King is still a secret, Achish's servants immediately recognize the man about whom the Israelites sang:

"Saul has slain his thousands,
And David his ten-thousands."

David takes "these words to heart and greatly fear[s] Achish king of Gath." In the camp of the enemy — carrying Goliath's own sword, no less! — David decides to play the madman to escape. Verse 13 tells us that David: "disguised his sanity while in their sight and acted insanely in their custody, and he scribbled on the doors of the gate, and drooled on his beard."

Revolted by this display, Achish sarcastically asks his servants if there is a shortage of crazy people in his court, and David is sent away. He departs Gath, and seeks refuge in the cave of Adullam. Shortly thereafter, David writes Psalm 34 (and Psalm 56) as reflections on this experience.

*Studying God's Word with the 5 Common Topics isn't difficult! Start by using common Bible study tools like concordances and lexicons to **define** words in the ancient languages of the Bible (Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek), and then **compare** to modern English.*

DEFINITIONS BELOW ARE TAKEN FROM TWO HEBREW LEXICONS: STRONG'S AND BROWN-DRIVER-BRIGGS. BOTH LEXICONS ARE WIDELY AVAILABLE ONLINE. FIND BOTH (AND OTHER HELPFUL TOOLS) HERE:

BIBLEHUB.COM > [SEARCH FOR CHOSEN VERSE] > STRONG'S

PSALM 34:1-22

(ENGLISH STANDARD VERSION)

Of David, when he changed his behavior before Abimelech, so that he drove him out, and he went away.

¹ I will bless the LORD at all times;

his praise shall continually be in my mouth.

² My soul makes its boast in the LORD;

let the humble hear and be glad.

³ Oh, magnify the LORD with me,

and let us exalt his name together!

⁴ I sought the LORD, and he answered me

and delivered me from all my fears.

⁵ Those who look to him are radiant,

and their faces shall never be ashamed.

I will bless - "to kneel..."

the LORD - "Jehovah=the Existing One... Proper name of the one True God..."

his praise - "praise, song or hymn... adoration, thanksgiving..."

my soul - "that which breathes, the breathing substance of being"

makes its boast - "to shine... to flash forth light...to act madly..."

be glad - "to rejoice... exult... flourish...take pleasure in..."

magnify - "to cause to grow... make powerful... twist, twine... twist a cord..."

let us exalt - "set on high... uplifted... to raise or bear (children)... erect (a temple)..."

I sought - "to ask for... require... to practice, study... to inquire into the wonder..."

he answered - "respond, speak, testify...to sing... to dwell... grant request..."

delivered - "to rescue, recover... to deliver from sin and guilt... snatch away..."

my fears - "fear...terror... storehouse, granary..."

those who look - "pay attention to, consider... show regard to..."

radiant - "to shine, beam... stream... flow together, be lightened, sparkle..."

their faces - "of man... of seeing (God)... in one's presence... have access to..."

¹⁴ Turn away from evil and do good;

seek peace and pursue it.

¹⁵ The eyes of the LORD are toward the righteous

and his ears toward their cry.

¹⁶ The face of the LORD is against those who do evil,

to cut off the memory of them from the earth.

¹⁷ When the righteous cry for help, the LORD hears

and delivers them out of all their troubles.

¹⁸ The LORD is near to the brokenhearted

and saves the crushed in spirit.

¹⁹ Many are the afflictions of the righteous,

but the LORD delivers him out of them all.

²⁰ He keeps all his bones;

not one of them is broken.

²¹ Affliction will slay the wicked,

and those who hate the righteous will be condemned.

²² The LORD redeems the life of his servants;

none of those who take refuge in him will be condemned.

