

Psalms, Teacher's Guide

Week 6: Trusting God Amid Injustice

Psalm 37

Teaching Aim (Teacher Orientation)

Psalm 37 is wisdom poetry for the believer rubbed raw by injustice, and it pairs closely with Psalm 73 later in the study. What is doctrinally at stake is the justice and providence of God: the truth that He sees, that He governs the outcomes, and that the present prosperity of the wicked is neither permanent nor the final word. The psalm answers the ancient question of why the wicked prosper not with a tidy theory but with the long view, the wicked fade like grass, the righteous are upheld, and the account finally settles in God's hands.

Handle the inheritance language with care, because it is a key doctrinal point. The psalm repeatedly promises that the meek and those who wait for the Lord will 'inherit the land,' and Jesus takes up this very promise in the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:5). Do not read 'inherit the land' or 'inherit the earth' as the promise of an earthly political kingdom or of material wealth. In its original setting it pointed to secure dwelling in God's promised land; fulfilled in Christ it points to the inheritance of the saints, ultimately the new heavens and new earth where righteousness dwells (2 Peter 3:13; Revelation 21). Likewise, frame the final justice, reward, and judgment of the psalm according to the New Testament, the judgment seat of Christ and the eternal inheritance, not an earthly settling of scores.

This psalm is also intensely formational, because envy and fretting over injustice are among the most common and corrosive sins of the heart. The psalm prescribes not gritted teeth but a set of trusting actions, trust, delight, commit, be still, wait, that retrain the heart away from resentment and toward rest in God. Aim to send students home both confident that God's justice is sure and Christ-secured, and practically equipped to commit their particular injustices to Him rather than letting bitterness take root.

Question 1

Student Question:

The psalm opens, "Fret not yourself because of evildoers; be not envious of wrongdoers! For they will soon fade like the grass and wither like the green herb" (vv. 1–2). Why does David ground his command not to fret in the short-lived nature of the wicked, and what does it teach us about taking the long view of God rather than the short view of present appearances?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Begin with the command and its reason. 'Fret not' is repeated because fretting is the natural reflex when we watch the wicked prosper. David grounds the command in a fact: the prosperity

is temporary. The wicked 'will soon fade like the grass.' The whole psalm is an argument for the long view over the short view.

Explain the difference between the two views. The short view sees only the present snapshot, the wrongdoer winning today, and concludes that evil pays. The long view sees the whole story, including the ending, and knows that the green grass of the wicked is already drying out. Faith is largely a matter of which timeline we believe is real.

Connect fretting to a deeper unbelief. When we fret over the success of the wicked, we are implicitly believing that God is not just, not watching, or not in control, and often that their kind of success is the success we actually want. The command not to fret is therefore a call to trust God's justice and to examine our own definition of the good life.

Reassure that the command is not a denial of reality. David fully admits the wicked prosper; he is not pretending. He is refusing to let a true but partial picture govern his heart. We can acknowledge injustice honestly and still refuse to be ruled by it.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The long view of God versus the short view of present appearances.
- The temporary nature of the prosperity of the wicked.
- Fretting as a symptom of unbelief about God's justice and rule.
- Honest acknowledgment of injustice without being governed by it.
- Faith as a matter of which timeline we believe is ultimately real.

Discussion Prompts

- What is the difference between the short view and the long view of injustice?
- What does our fretting reveal about what we believe about God?
- How can we acknowledge injustice honestly without being ruled by it?

Question 2

Student Question:

Envy of wrongdoers is the very thing David warns against (v. 1). Be honest: whose success or ease have you found yourself envying lately, even though you would not want their character or their choices? What does that envy expose about your own definition of a good life?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This self-examining question takes up the envy David warns against. Envy of wrongdoers is peculiar, because we usually would not trade places with their character; we want their results without their guilt. Help students see the incoherence in their own envy.

Press toward the definition of the good life hiding underneath. If we envy the ease and success of people we do not respect, it reveals that we secretly prize ease and success more than the character we claim to value. Envy is a diagnostic of our true treasure.

Move toward the cure. Envy shrinks as gratitude and a right vision of the good life grow. The antidote is not merely to stop envying but to want the right things, godliness, contentment, God Himself as our portion (a theme from Psalm 16).

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The incoherence of envying people whose character we reject.
- Envy as a diagnostic of our true definition of the good life.
- Gratitude and a right vision of the good life as the cure for envy.
- Wanting the right things rather than merely suppressing envy.

Discussion Prompts

- Whose success or ease have you envied lately?
- What does that envy reveal about what you actually treasure?
- How might gratitude begin to loosen envy's grip?

Question 3

Student Question:

David gives a series of commands: "Trust in the Lord... delight yourself in the Lord... commit your way to the Lord... be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him" (vv. 3–7). How do these four actions work together as God's alternative to fretting, and why is trusting God an active discipline rather than a passive feeling?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Walk through the four imperatives of verses 3–7 as God's alternative to fretting. 'Trust in the Lord' is the foundation, a settled reliance on His character. 'Delight yourself in the Lord' reorders our desires so that He becomes our joy. 'Commit your way to the Lord' hands Him the whole situation. 'Be still and wait patiently' rests in His timing.

Stress that these are active, not passive. Trusting God is not doing nothing; it is doing these specific things instead of fretting. The fretful heart is busy with worry; the trusting heart is busy with trust, delight, committing, and waiting. We replace one activity with another.

Note the promise attached: 'He will act' (v. 5). Committing our way to God does not mean nothing happens; it means we stop trying to force outcomes and let God work. The result is not in our hands, and that is precisely the relief.

Apply it practically. Help students see how each command answers a particular form of fretting: trust answers the fear that God is not good, delight answers the envy that He is withholding, committing answers the urge to control, stillness answers the impatience that cannot wait.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Trust, delight, commit, and be still as God's active alternative to fretting.
- Trust as an active discipline, not a passive feeling.
- Committing our way to God and trusting that 'He will act.'
- Each command answering a particular form of anxiety.
- Releasing outcomes to God as the source of relief.

Discussion Prompts

- How do trust, delight, commit, and be still work together?
- Why is trusting God active rather than passive?
- Which of the four do you most need to practice right now?

Question 4

Student Question:

To "commit your way to the Lord" (v. 5) means to roll the whole burden of a situation onto Him and leave it there. What is the situation you keep picking back up after you have prayed about it, taking the worry back into your own hands? What makes it so hard to leave it with God?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This self-focused question takes up 'commit your way to the Lord' and presses the all-too-common pattern of praying about a burden and then taking it right back. Help students name the specific worry they keep reclaiming.

Explain why we take it back. Usually it is because we still believe, at some level, that the outcome depends on our worrying, or because letting go feels like not caring. But worry has never changed an outcome; it only steals today's peace.

Offer a concrete practice. Some find it helps to name the burden specifically in prayer, picture handing it over, and then, each time the worry returns, to say, 'I have already committed this to You.' Committing is often not a single act but a repeated returning of the same burden to God.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The pattern of praying and then taking the burden back.
- The false belief that worry affects outcomes.
- Committing as a repeated practice, not a single act.
- Releasing control as an act of trust, not indifference.

Discussion Prompts

- What burden do you keep picking back up after praying about it?
- Why is it so hard to leave it with God?
- What practice could help you actually leave it there?

Question 5

Student Question:

David repeats a striking promise: “those who wait for the Lord shall inherit the land” and “the meek shall inherit the land” (vv. 9, 11). Jesus echoes this in the Beatitudes: “Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.” What does this inheritance actually refer to for the people of God, and why should we not read it as the promise of an earthly political kingdom or material reward?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This question carries an important doctrinal point, so handle it clearly. The psalm repeatedly promises that the meek and those who wait for the Lord ‘shall inherit the land,’ and Jesus deliberately echoes it: ‘Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth’ (Matthew 5:5).

Explain the original sense. For Israel, ‘the land’ was the promised land, and to ‘inherit’ it meant to dwell securely in it under God’s blessing while the wicked were cut off. The promise was about secure belonging in God’s place, not about amassing wealth or seizing political power.

Now guard the boundary. Do not read ‘inherit the land’ or ‘inherit the earth’ as a promise of an earthly political kingdom or a coming material windfall. Jesus did not promise His meek followers real estate or a future earthly reign to wait for. The New Testament fulfills the promise in the inheritance of the saints, our secure place in God’s kingdom now and, ultimately, the new heavens and new earth where righteousness dwells (2 Peter 3:13; Revelation 21:1–7; Romans 8:17).

Apply the comfort. The meek look like the losers in the world’s short view, always yielding, never grasping. But they are the true heirs. Everything finally belongs to those who belong to Christ (1 Corinthians 3:21–23). The grasping wicked inherit nothing that lasts; the trusting meek inherit everything in Him.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- ‘Inherit the land/earth’ as secure belonging in God’s place, not material or political reward.
- Jesus echoing the promise for the meek (Matthew 5:5).
- Not reading the promise as an earthly political kingdom or future windfall.
- Fulfillment in the inheritance of the saints and the new heavens and earth (2 Peter 3:13; Revelation 21).

- The meek as the true heirs of everything in Christ (1 Corinthians 3:21–23).

Discussion Prompts

- What did ‘inherit the land’ originally mean for Israel?
- Why should we not read it as an earthly kingdom or material reward?
- How does the New Testament fulfill this promise for us in Christ?

Question 6

Student Question:

The psalm commends the meek, those who entrust their cause to God rather than grasping and pushing for their own advantage (v. 11). In a culture that rewards self-promotion, where are you most tempted to grasp and push rather than trust God with your future? What would meekness look like in that specific area?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This self-focused question takes up meekness, which the world misreads as weakness. Biblical meekness is strength under control, the willingness to entrust our cause and our future to God rather than grasping for our own advantage.

Locate the temptation. In a culture of self-promotion, grasping feels like wisdom and meekness feels like losing. Ask students where they feel the pull to push, posture, and grab rather than trust God with the outcome, in their career, their reputation, their relationships.

Show the model. Jesus, ‘gentle and lowly in heart’ (Matthew 11:29), entrusted Himself to the Father who judges justly (1 Peter 2:23) and was exalted. Meekness is not passivity; it is confidence that God will lift up at the right time those who refuse to lift up themselves (1 Peter 5:6).

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Biblical meekness as strength under control, not weakness.
- Entrusting our cause and future to God rather than grasping.
- Jesus as the model of meekness exalted by the Father (1 Peter 2:23; Matthew 11:29).
- God’s promise to lift up the humble in due time (1 Peter 5:6).

Discussion Prompts

- Where are you most tempted to grasp and push rather than trust?
- What would meekness look like in that specific area?
- How does Jesus redefine meekness as strength rather than weakness?

Question 7

Student Question:

David contrasts the destinies: “the wicked will perish... they vanish, like smoke they vanish away,” while “the righteous is generous and gives... the steps of a man are established by the Lord” (vv. 20–23). How does this psalm’s teaching about the final end of the wicked and the righteous prepare us for the fuller New Testament revelation of judgment and reward, and why does the final accounting matter for how we live now?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Verses 20–23 sharpen the contrast of destinies. The wicked ‘vanish, like smoke’; the righteous are ‘established by the Lord.’ The psalm keeps insisting that the two ways end very differently, even when the present moment suggests otherwise.

Connect to the fuller New Testament revelation. The Old Testament often speaks of the end of the wicked in terms of their being cut off from the land and the community. The New Testament makes explicit what this anticipates: a final judgment before Christ (2 Corinthians 5:10; Matthew 25:31–46) and an eternal inheritance for the righteous. Frame the psalm’s justice in those New Testament terms rather than as merely earthly outcomes.

Explain why the final accounting matters now. If this life were all there is, the prosperity of the wicked would be a devastating problem. But because there is a judgment and an inheritance beyond this life, present injustices are not the final word. The certainty of the ending steadies us in the middle.

Caution against impatience for vengeance. The doctrine of final judgment is not fuel for gloating over the wicked but release from the need to settle scores ourselves (Romans 12:19). We can leave justice to God precisely because we are sure He will do it rightly.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The contrasting final destinies of the wicked and the righteous.
- The New Testament revelation of final judgment (2 Corinthians 5:10; Matthew 25:31–46).
- Framing the psalm’s justice in New Testament terms, not merely earthly outcomes.
- The certainty of the ending as the steadying truth in the middle.
- Leaving vengeance to God rather than settling scores ourselves (Romans 12:19).

Discussion Prompts

- How does the New Testament fill out this psalm’s teaching on judgment?
- Why does the final accounting matter for how we live now?
- How does trusting God’s justice free us from the need for revenge?

Question 8

Student Question:

David promises that the Lord upholds the righteous when they stumble: “though he fall, he shall not be cast headlong, for the Lord upholds his hand” (vv. 23–24). When you have stumbled, have you experienced God upholding you, or have you assumed He had given up on you? How does this promise change the way you handle your own failures?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This self-focused question takes up the tender promise of verses 23–24: the righteous may fall, but the Lord upholds his hand. The godly life is not a life without stumbles; it is a life held by God through them.

Counter a common despair. Many believers assume that when they fall, God is finished with them. This verse says the opposite: the fall is real, but it is not fatal, because God holds the hand of the one He is establishing. Failure is not the end of the relationship.

Apply it to how we handle our failures. The believer who knows God upholds them gets up, confesses, and keeps walking, rather than wallowing in condemnation or abandoning the path. God’s upholding grace is the reason we can be honest about our stumbles.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The righteous life as held by God through stumbles, not free of them.
- Failure as real but not fatal to the relationship.
- God’s upholding grace as the basis for getting up again.
- Honesty about our failures grounded in God’s sustaining hand.

Discussion Prompts

- Have you experienced God upholding you after a fall, or assumed He had given up?
- How does this promise change the way you handle failure?
- What does it look like to get up rather than wallow after stumbling?

Question 9**Student Question:**

Near the end David testifies, “I have been young, and now am old, yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken or his children begging for bread” (v. 25), and, “the salvation of the righteous is from the Lord; he is their stronghold in the time of trouble” (v. 39). How does the whole psalm teach us to trust God’s justice and timing when life seems unfair, and how does the cross and resurrection of Christ assure us that final justice and final reward are secure in Him?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Bring the whole psalm together here. David's testimony in verse 25, 'I have been young, and now am old, yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken,' is the wisdom of a long life. He is not claiming the righteous never suffer; he is testifying that God does not finally abandon His people. The long view, confirmed by experience, is that God is faithful.

Address the honest tension. Sometimes the righteous do go hungry, and their children do struggle; Scripture elsewhere acknowledges the suffering of the godly (think of Job, or the persecuted believers of Hebrews 11). David speaks in the broad terms of wisdom literature, describing the general shape of how God's justice works out, ultimately and certainly, even when particular seasons look otherwise. The final guarantee is not perfect ease in this life but God's unfailing salvation (v. 39).

Now ground the certainty of final justice in Christ. The reason we can be sure the account settles is the cross and the empty tomb. At the cross, the greatest injustice in history, the righteous One condemned, became the means of our salvation, and God vindicated Him by raising Him from the dead. If God brought ultimate justice and triumph out of Calvary, we can trust Him with every lesser injustice.

Show how the resurrection secures both judgment and reward. Because Christ is risen and reigning, He is the appointed Judge of the living and the dead (Acts 17:31), and He is the guarantee of the inheritance kept for His people (1 Peter 1:3–4). Final justice is not an abstract hope; it is anchored in a Person who has already conquered.

Bring it to rest. 'The salvation of the righteous is from the Lord; he is their stronghold in the time of trouble' (v. 39). The believer's confidence amid injustice is not that they will see every score settled in this life, but that the risen Christ holds the final accounting, and that nothing committed to Him is ever lost.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- God's faithfulness to never finally forsake the righteous (v. 25).
- The general wisdom shape of the psalm versus the reality of present suffering (Job; Hebrews 11).
- The cross and resurrection as the ground of certain final justice.
- The risen Christ as appointed Judge of all (Acts 17:31).
- The resurrection guaranteeing the believer's kept inheritance (1 Peter 1:3–4).
- Confidence resting in God's final accounting, not in scores settled now.

Discussion Prompts

- How does the psalm teach us to trust God's timing when life seems unfair?
- How do the cross and resurrection assure us that justice is secure?
- What does it mean that the risen Christ holds the final accounting?

Question 10

Student Question:

Look back across the whole psalm, from “fret not” to the quiet confidence that God will never forsake the righteous. Name one specific way you sense Jesus forming you through it. What is the single truth from Psalm 37 that you most need to carry into this coming week?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This capstone traces the arc from ‘fret not’ to settled confidence in God’s faithfulness, and asks students to name one way Jesus is forming them. Give them quiet to reflect.

Press toward the concrete. The formation here is usually the release of a specific resentment, the committing of a particular injustice to God, or the choice of meekness in a place they have been grasping. Help each student name their next step.

Close by lifting their eyes to the risen Christ who reigns and will judge all things rightly. The psalm refuses to let injustice have the last word, and so should the lesson. We can rest, because the account is in nail-scarred hands.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Releasing resentment by committing injustice to God.
- Choosing meekness where we have been grasping.
- Rest grounded in the risen Christ who will judge rightly.
- Refusing to let injustice have the last word.

Discussion Prompts

- What specific resentment do you most need to commit to God?
- What single truth from Psalm 37 will you carry into this week?
- Where is God calling you to meekness rather than grasping?