

## MONSTERS IN OUR MIDST "FACING THE MONSTER OF CRITICISM" PSALM 141:1-10

### This Week's Core Competency

**Peace** – I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, others, and me. Philippians 4:6-7 *Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. 7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

In a former life as Vice President of Student Life at Trinity Western University, I used to tell students, especially the ones on academic probation, that their best friends might, in fact, be their worst enemies. Then I would go through the following hypothetical scenario: You have an exam on Friday; the guys in your dorm invite you to hang out on Thursday night when you had planned to study for your exam. Instead of going to the library you go out with your dorm, telling yourself that you'll get up early Friday to go through your notes before class. Guess what happens. In closing, I would go on to disclose the key to academic success, which I got from a student who had gotten off probation. "You don't have to be a genius to succeed as a student. You just have to do what you have to do when you have to do it!" Come to think of it, that key unlocks a lot of other doors in life as well.

As I suggested above, peer pressure is a powerful force. It can be a powerful force for good. Nothing but good can happen when we respond to the

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***All mortals tend to turn into the thing they are pretending to be.***

– C. S. Lewis

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influence of spiritually gifted people in the body of Christ. Spiritual transformation takes place best in the context of biblical community. As Paul says, "From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and build itself up in love, *as each part does its work*" (Eph 4:16 italics added). On the other hand, it can be a powerful force for evil. Nothing good can happen when we succumb to the influence of sketchy people to *be like* they are or *do like* they do in order to be accepted by them or have what they have. Wisdom warns against this kind of negative social pressure: "Do not envy wicked men, do not desire their company; for their hearts plot violence, and their lips talk about making trouble" (Pr 24:1). Wisdom not only warns us against such pressure, it wants to rescue us from it. Listen to this sage advice to a son: "Wisdom will save you from the ways of wicked men, from men whose words are perverse, who leave the straight paths to walk in dark ways, who delight in doing wrong and rejoice in the perverseness of evil, whose paths are crooked and who are devious in their ways" (Pr 2:12-15).

We think of David as a psalmist but he was a sage as well. In a personal lament psalm, he petitions the LORD to shield him from the influence of wicked men. "Let not my heart be drawn to what is evil, to take part in wicked deeds with men who are evildoers," he prays. "Let me not eat of their delicacies," which the NLT renders, "May I never take part in their feasts." Eating what the wicked eat, i.e., enjoying the luxuries of life they enjoy, is not his central concern. Taking part in their wicked deeds and, consequently, enjoying the fruits of their wickedness is. He did not want to

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become one with the wicked. One commentator writes: "To eat of their dainties implied a much closer bond of friendship than it necessarily would in our society . . . C. S. Lewis describes its equivalent with his usual penetration: 'There is a subtle play of looks and tones and laughs by which a mortal can imply that he is on the same party as those to whom he is speaking . . . He will assume, at first only by his manner, but presently by his words, all sorts of cynical and skeptical attitudes which are not really his. But . . . they may become his. All mortals tend to turn into the thing they are pretending to be'" (Derek Kidner, *Psalms 73-150*, TOTC, vol. 16, 507-508). Paul puts it this way: "Do not be misled, 'Bad company corrupts good character'" (1Co 15:33).

Freedom from anxiety and the peace it entails, with regard to others anyway, depends on a right relationship with them. That right relationship involves not falling under the influence of those people who are evil or just foolish. Succumbing to negative social pressure to be like them, whether criticism or praise, in order to be with them or share in their luxuries never turns out well.

## day 1 ENCOUNTER – read God’s word to put yourself in touch with him.

### Psalm 141:1-10

A psalm of David

1 O LORD, I call to you; come quickly to me.

Hear my voice when I call to you.

2 May my prayer be set before you like incense;

may the lifting up of my hands be like the evening sacrifice.

3 Set a guard over my mouth, O LORD;

keep watch over the door of my lips.

4 Let not my heart be drawn to what is evil,

to take part in wicked deeds

with men who are evildoers;

let me not eat of their delicacies.

5 Let a righteous man strike me--it is a kindness;

let him rebuke me--it is oil on my head.

My head will not refuse it.

6 their rulers will be thrown down from the cliffs,

and the wicked will learn that my words were well spoken.

7 [They will say,] "As one plows and breaks up the earth,

so our bones have been scattered at the mouth of the grave. "

8 But my eyes are fixed on you, O Sovereign

LORD;

in you I take refuge--do not give me over to death.

9 Keep me from the snares they have laid for me,

from the traps set by evildoers.

10 Let the wicked fall into their own nets,

while I pass by in safety.

Yet my prayer is ever against the deeds of evildoers;

## EXAMINE – what the passage says before you decide what it means.

\* Underline "come quickly" in v. 1.

\* Underline "lifting up of my hands" in v. 2.

\* Box "like" (2x) indicating *comparison* in v. 2.

\* Circle "mouth" in v. 3.

\* Bracket "door of my lips" in v. 3.

\* Circle "heart" in v. 4.

\* Bracket "eat of their delicacies" in v. 4.

\* Underline "it is a kindness" and "it is oil on my head" in v. 5.

\* Box "yet" indicating *contrast* in v. 5.

\* Highlight v. 7.

\* Box "but" indicating *contrast* in v. 8.

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## day 2

**EXPLORE** – the answer to these questions to better understand what the passage means.

Consult the explanation of the message and the notes to follow if you need help.

1. The psalmist *sounds* a bit impertinent in verse 1—don't! you agree? Explain.
2. In verse 2 he says his prayer is "like incense" and "like the evening sacrifice." Explain the point of the *comparisons*.
3. Interpret the figurative words ("mouth" and "door of my lips") in verse 3 to clarify what he wants the LORD to do.
4. Replace the figurative word ("heart") in verse 4 with a word that conveys literally what it means.
5. The psalmist doesn't want "to eat of their delicacies." What does that figurative language mean?
6. Can you believe what the psalmist asks God for in verse 5? Explain.
7. Regarding the destiny of the wicked, put the psalmist's view in a nutshell.
8. Explain the *contrast* introduced in verse 8.
9. Explain what the psalmist means by "do not give me over to death."
10. **Discussion:** Paul said, "Bad company ruins good morals." Talk about any connection you see between his words and Psalm 141.

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## day 3

## EXAMINE – an explanation of the message to better understand the meaning of the passage.

About Psalm 141 one author writes: "This is a prayer psalm of the individual. Its first half focuses on the speaker's relationship to God (vv. 1-2) and on God's restraining him from temptation (vv. 3-5a). Its second half turns to the retribution of evildoers (vv. 5b-7) and his preservation from their schemes (vv. 8-10). The spirituality reflected in this prayer psalm is decidedly more reflective and introspective than what is found in most. We see here the realization that 'there but for the grace of God go I.' The speaker admits the possibility that the line between himself and the wicked is not sharply drawn. They are not merely enemies; they are also a temptation (esp. v. 4). Moreover, God is called upon not only to ensure the wicked are entrapped (v. 10) but also to direct the speaker's heart (esp. vv. 3-4). God is to influence social circumstances as well as one's internal choices and will" (Craig C. Broyles, *Psalms*, NIBC, 27-28).

The superscriptions to Psalms 141-145 attribute them to David. While superscriptions are not inspired (although they're generally considered reliable) and the words "of David" can have a variety of denotations, they are commonly identified as his prayers (e.g., Allen P. Ross, "Psalms," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: Old Testament*, 893).

Psalm 141 opens with David's introductory cry to God (vv. 1-2). In verse 1 he asks the LORD to "come quickly" suggesting the urgency of his situation. He needs immediate help. In verse 2 he says much the same thing but in a roundabout way using *comparison*. He prays that his prayer will be *like* the "incense" offered to God every morning and evening in the temple and *like* "the evening sacrifice," both of which pleased the LORD. Just as God responded favorably to these, David wanted him to respond favorably to his prayer. In other words, he asks the LORD to hear his prayer in verse 1 and to respond favorably to it in verse 2.

Verses 3-5a contain David's petition, i.e., what he urgently needs God to do for him. According

to verse 3, he needs God to guard his mouth to keep him from speaking evil. According to verse 4a, he needs God to preserve his heart to keep him from being attracted to evil. And according to verse 4b, he needs God to restrain him to keep him from taking part with others in evil. He wants God to keep him from eating their "delicacies;" in other words, he wants God to prevent him from keeping company with them and thereby becoming one of them. What's more, given the pressure to join them, he assures the LORD that he would consider a firm hand of correction "a kindness," and a strong rebuke "oil on his head," which he would nowise refuse. In a nutshell, he would welcome any form of discipline intended to deliver him from evil.

Verses 5b-7 contain David's confession of trust. In these verses, he sides with God over against those who do evil; he affirms God will not let them get away with it. Ultimately, their rulers will be destroyed, leaving him to say "I told you so." God will thus vindicate him and his decision to shun them. Looking back on their fate, they will cite the proverb that likens their scattered bones to clods of dirt scattered by a farmer's plow.

Verses 8-10 contain David's final vow and petition. "My eyes are fixed on you, O Sovereign LORD," he says. "In you I take refuge—do not give me over to death." Unlike evildoers whose eyes are fixed on wickedness, his eyes are fixed on God. His faith and trust rests in him. "Do not give me over to death," he begs. In other words, he doesn't want to die the death of an evildoer. He wants God to keep him from dying like a wicked man or a fool. He wants to see them die by their own evil enticements and devices while he escapes.

David's prayer is a prayer for today, a prayer that we can all pray for ourselves given its "lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one" theme.

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## The Message of the Passage

*Ask the Lord to guard your mouth, preserve your heart, and restrain you personally from evil speech, from evil desires, and from evil conduct and companions, knowing that all these end badly.*

### day **4** **EMBRACE** – how God spoke to you in his word.

Our desire is to not be merely hearers of the word, but doers of the word as James teaches in James 1:22. Try some of the challenges below to apply what you have learned this week.

- **Journal your thoughts on the passage:**

–Write about how God revealed himself to you . . .

–Write about how God wants you to change you . . .

–Write about how God wants to use you to change your world . . .

**“Facing the Monster of Criticism”**  
(Use the space below for Sunday’s message notes)

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# notes **N** STUDY – the commentaries to answer the questions.

## A psalm of David

The Heb. phrase may, but doesn't necessarily, indicate authorship. "David" can mean either the historical individual or the Davidic king (Jer. 30:9; Ezek. 34:23-24; 37:24-25; Hos. 3:5 do not promise the resurrection of David himself but a restoration of the Davidic dynasty). The preposition 'of' (Hb. *le*) is even more ambiguous in Hebrew than it is in English. It could mean: (1) 'of' or '(belonging) to' David in the sense of possession, because he authored the psalm; (2) '(belonging) to' the Davidic collection of psalms (similar phrases are so used in other ancient Near Eastern poetry)-in other words, a royal collection of psalms (as distinct from Levitical collections, such as those of Asaph and Korah), reflecting the royal patronage of the temple; (3) '(dedicated) to' David or to the Davidic king (like a book dedication); (4) 'for (the use of)' David or the Davidic king, that is, for the king to use either personally or as the leading liturgist in public worship; (5) 'concerning/about' David" (Broyles, 27-28).

### v. 1 *come quickly*

Cf., "please hurry" (NLT); "hurry to me" (NJB); "help me now" (GNT). "It stresses the urgency of the situation rather than his impatience with God. Far more common is the synonymous phrase 'hasten to my aid' (22:19 (M.T. 20), 38:22 (M.T. 23), 40:13 (M.T. 14), 70:1 (M.T. 2), 71:12)" (A. A. Anderson, Psalms 73-150, NCBC, 918).

### v. 2 *like incense*

Incense was to be burned on the altar of incense "in front of the curtain before the ark of the Testimony" in the holy place every morning and evening (Ex 30:1-9). "In the Book of Revelation incense appropriately pictured prayer (Rev. 5:8; 8:3-4). Lifting up his hands as a gesture in prayer is also mentioned in Psalms 28:2; 63:4; 134:2" (Ross, 893).

### v. 2 *like the evening sacrifice*

Each morning and evening a year-old lamb was offered on the altar of burnt offering in front of the entrance to the holy place (Ex 29:38-41; Nu 28:3-6). The sense of the psalmist's words and point of the comparison is as follows: "Let my daily prayer be acceptable to Thee as are the daily sacrifices of Thine own appointment" (J. J. Steward Perowne, *The Book of Psalms*, 452); "Verse 2 is essentially a plea to God to accept the prayers of the afflicted man even as he accepts the sacrifices which he himself had ordained" (Anderson, 919). So the meaning of verse 2 is essentially the same as verse 1: "It is clear that Yahweh is to regard 'my prayer' as a pleasing ritual rite" (Broyles, 493), and therefore, respond favorably to it.

### v. 3 *mouth, lips*

I.e., figures (*metonymy*) for speech (Pr 4:24; 8:7; 16:23; 18:6, 7; cf., "tongue," Jas 1:26; 3:1-12).

### v. 4 *my heart*

I.e., a figure for the psalmist's innermost inclinations and desires: cf., "do not let me have evil desires" (NET); "keep me from wanting to do wrong" (GNT). "*Incline not my heart to evil* is a petition framed in the same striking way as 'Lead us not into temptation'. This way of putting it, although it may invite a quibble about God's attitude to evil (answered by Jas 1:13), entrusts to him 'the first springs of thought and will', with the humility of a plea and the clarity of a renunciation-for one cannot pray it with either complacency or reservations" (Kidner, 507).

### v. 4 *eat . . . delicacies*

I.e., share with them in their lifestyle. "This probably refers to the enjoyment that a sinful lifestyle appears to offer" (the NET Bible, 7sn on Ps 141:4). What's more, it suggests companionship with evildoers. "To eat of their dainties implied a much closer bond of friendship than it necessarily would in our society" (Kidner, 507). "The company of the wicked is always a potential danger, and therefore the Wisdom writers often warn the naïve optimists to avoid such companionship. In the Story of Ahikar there is the advice: 'My son, pour out thy wine on the graves of the righteous, rather than drink with evil men' (cf. *APOT*, ii, p. 730, no. 10)" (Anderson, 920). As Paul said, "Bad company ruins good morals" (1Co 15:33 ESV).

### v. 5 *oil on my head*

The parallel expression in verse 5 implies this is a good thing, "a kindness." "The anointing of the head of important and welcome guests was a common oriental custom" (Anderson, 920) considered "helpful and refreshing (cf. Prov. 9:8b; 15:31; 17:10; 19:25; 25:12)" (Ross, 983-84).

### v. 7 *They will say*

Lit., "As when one plows and breaks up the earth, so shall our bones be scattered at the mouth of Sheol" (ESV). Although "the meaning of the Hebrew of verses 6, 7 is uncertain," (ESV, footnote b), the NIV makes sense of them by putting the words of verse 7 into the mouths of the wicked by inserting "They will say" (cf., v. 6), making "our bones" the bones of the wicked. One commentator concurs: "The language of verse 7 is difficult, but the sense seems to be thus: even as a farmer breaks up the soil and brings up the rocks, so the bones of the wicked will be scattered without a decent burial" (Willem A. VanGemeren, *Psalms*, EBC, rev. ed., 5: 973).

## Family Talk

Encouragement from one parent's heart to another

The moment Emily got in the car after school, she burst into tears. The second grader was obviously heartbroken. When her mother could get her calmed down enough to talk, Emily told her that her teacher thought the picture she had turned in today was awful. Mrs. Jones had smiled when she gave it back to her but there written across the top was the word "Awful!". Surprised, her mom asked to see the picture. When Emily pulled the crumbled piece of paper out of her backpack her mom smiled too. It didn't say "Awful!". It said "Awesome!" Our words are indeed powerful! Solomon says they have the power of life and death (Pr. 18:21). Careless words can hurt. Kind words can heal. Sometimes, in our families, our words get reckless, impatient and hurtful. We can become the biggest critics instead of the loudest cheerleaders in each other's lives. Take this opportunity to do a checkup. Do your words build others up in your home or tear them down? Are you quick to offer praise or words of comfort when needed? Sometimes a word not spoken is as hurtful as a misspoken one. Are your words full of mercy, grace and forgiveness when you have been wronged? Do your words encourage others to press on or give up? May your words this week be given an "A" for awesome!

### What Does The Bible Say

Weekly Verse: Psalm 141:1-10

1. What does David ask God to do in verse 3?
2. Fill in the blanks. Let not my \_\_\_\_\_ be drawn to what is \_\_\_\_\_. (v. 4)
3. Where does David say his eyes are fixed? (v. 8)

### What Do You Think

In verse 5 David says the strike and rebuke of a righteous man are like kindness and oil on his head. What do you think he means by that? (Ask your parents for help if needed.)

### What R U Going To Do

Eph 4:29 says "Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen." Write this on a piece of paper and post it in your house where everyone can read it. Gently hold each other accountable for the words you speak.

## MEMORY TIME

Core Comp

Peace: I live without worry because things are good between God, others, and me.

Memory Verse

Psalm 141:8 *But my eyes are fixed on you, O Sovereign Lord; in you I take refuge.*

## KIDPIX COUPON

I memorized CC \_\_\_\_\_ and Verse \_\_\_\_\_. Family completed **Say** \_\_\_\_\_ **Think** \_\_\_\_\_ **Do** \_\_\_\_\_

Child's name \_\_\_\_\_ Grade \_\_\_\_\_ Parent's signature \_\_\_\_\_

Earn tokens by completing the Bible study portion of this page.  
Questions: Kids@pantego.org

# 30 CORE COMPETENCIES

## 10 CORE BELIEFS

### **Trinity** *2 Corinthians 13:14*

I believe the God of the Bible is the only true God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

### **Salvation By Grace** *Ephesians 2:8-9*

I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.

### **Authority of the Bible** *2 Timothy 3:16-17*

I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

### **Personal God** *Psalms 121:1-2*

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

### **Identity in Christ** *John 1:12*

I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

### **Church** *Ephesians 4:15-16*

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

### **Humanity** *John 3:16*

I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

### **Compassion** *Psalms 82:3-4*

I believe God calls all Christians to show compassion to those in need.

### **Eternity** *John 14:1-4*

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

### **Stewardship** *1 Timothy 6:17-19*

I believe that everything I am or own belongs to God.

## 10 CORE PRACTICES

### **Worship** *Psalms 95:1-7*

I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

### **Prayer** *Psalms 66:16-20*

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

### **Bible Study** *Hebrews 4:12*

I read the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

### **Single-mindedness** *Matthew 6:33*

I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

### **Spiritual Gifts** *Romans 12:4-6*

I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

### **Biblical Community** *Acts 2:44-47*

I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

### **Giving Away My Time** *Colossians 3:17*

I give away my time to fulfill God's purposes.

### **Giving Away My Money**

*2 Corinthians 8:7*

I give away my money to fulfill God's purposes.

### **Giving Away My Faith** *Ephesians*

*6:19-20*

I give away my faith to fulfill God's purposes.

### **Giving Away My Life** *Romans 12:1*

I give away my life to fulfill God's purposes.

## 10 CORE VIRTUES

### **Joy** *John 15:11*

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

### **Peace** *Philippians 4:6-7*

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself, and others.

### **Faithfulness** *Proverbs 3:3-4*

I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

### **Self-Control** *Titus 2:11-13*

I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

### **Humility** *Philippians 2:3, 4*

I choose to esteem others above myself.

### **Love** *1 John 4:10-12*

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

### **Patience** *Proverbs 14:29*

I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

### **Kindness/Goodness** *1 Thess. 5:15*

I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others.

### **Gentleness** *Philippians 4:5*

I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

### **Hope** *Hebrews 6:19-20*

I can cope with the hardships of life and with death because of the hope I have in Jesus Christ.

## About the Authors

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**Wendy Hollabaugh** (B.S.W. University of Texas at Arlington) is the Children's Minister at Pantego Bible Church. Wendy has over ten years of experience in Children's Ministry. She has a passion for leading families to connect with God and each other. She enjoys creating compelling environments where kids fall in love with God and His Truth. Wendy and her husband, Greg, are also involved in their own personal youth ministry as they are training their three teenagers, Hannah, Aaron and Noah.



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The mission of THE SCROLLS is to help you develop the beliefs, practices, and virtues of a follower of Jesus Christ called The 30 Core Competencies through your own active reading of the Bible. Send any questions or comments you may have about this lesson to Tom Bulick. His e-mail address is [tbulick@pantego.org](mailto:tbulick@pantego.org).