

## REWIND 2012

### "ONE LESS" PSALM 82:1-8

#### **This Week's Core Competency**

**Compassion** – I believe God calls all Christians to show compassion to those in need. Psalm 82:3, 4

*3Defend the cause of the weak and fatherless;  
maintain the rights of the poor and oppressed.*

*4Rescue the weak and needy;  
deliver them from the hand of the wicked.*

Here's a modern example of Psalm 82:3, 4 carried out by the International Justice Mission. It's hard to believe but human trafficking is an enormous moral and social problem worldwide and even here in Texas. Since I recently returned from Bangalore, India, I was especially interested in this report from Mumbai.

MUMBAI, INDIA - IJM Mumbai got a call from the Kolkata police department. The police had been looking for Sundari, a teenage girl who had gone missing three years earlier. Her brother had been the one to report the case, and he had refused to give up hope.

After months and months of false starts and dead ends, the Kolkata police believed they had finally found Sundari—she had been trafficked from Kolkata to a red-light district outside of Mumbai, nearly 1,000 miles away.

Since the Kolkata police had worked with IJM to conduct dozens of rescue operations in their region, they knew the IJM Mumbai team would have the

***There is something cowardly about taking advantage of the weak. There is something noble about championing their cause.***

-H. C. Leupold

on-the-ground expertise to assist them with this complex operation. The Kolkata police boarded a train, along with Sundari's brother. As they started the journey—a 36-hour train ride—the IJM investigators and social workers in Mumbai prepared for the operation.

IJM set up a meeting with a high-level Mumbai police officer, and when the Kolkata police arrived the rescue team was ready for action. As soon as they got to the brothel where they believed Sundari was trapped, the police spread out around the building. A team of IJM staff, police and Sundari's brother made their way up the dark staircase to the fourth floor.

As soon as Sundari saw her brother, she "literally jumped for joy," according to one IJM staff member. Then Sundari burst into tears and ran to him. She had not seen him for three years, and could not believe he had been looking for her all this time. As he held his long-lost sister in his arms, he kept repeating, "don't worry, don't worry."

Police, visibly moved by the tearful reunion between Sundari and her brother, asked her and another girl with her about their life in the brothel. It was clear they wanted out.

IJM Mumbai's Police Liaison held the hands of both young women as they walked out of the dark brothel. She felt them trembling. She spoke softly to them, explaining they did not have to be afraid. Sundari and the other girl said they had not seen the sun for three years.

Police arrested two suspects who will face trafficking charges if indeed they were running the brothel where Sundari and the other girl endured unspeakable violence.

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Back at the Mumbai police station, the brave survivors answered questions. They gave harrowing reports of the brutal brothel, which operated on a "token system." A brothel customer would buy a token and get ten minutes with a girl, meaning the girls were raped by multiple men, multiple times in an hour. If they did not comply, the girls were beaten.

The police treated both Sundari and her friend with compassion and respect as they collected information. They spent their first night in a temporary shelter, and two days later they were on a train headed back home to Kolkata.

Sundari was eager to return home with her brother, and IJM will continue to support her so she can thrive in freedom. The other young survivor has been settled into an aftercare home for minors, where she can get the care and counsel she needs (<http://www.ijm.org/news/ijm-mumbai-they-hadnt-seen-sunlight-three-years>).

## For Discussion

Talk about your reaction to the report from IJM regarding Sundari. For example, do you find it horrific yet overwhelming, leaving you with a feeling that doing anything about such injustice is impossible? Or do you find yourself motivated to do something even though the problem is enormous? If the latter, describe what you consider doing.

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

### Ps 82:1-8

A Psalm of Asaph.

1 God presides in the great assembly;  
he gives judgment among the "gods":

2 "How long will you defend the unjust  
and show partiality to the wicked?"  
Selah

3 Defend the cause of the weak and fatherless;  
maintain the rights of the poor and oppressed.  
4 Rescue the weak and needy;  
deliver them from the hand of the wicked.

5 "They know nothing, they understand nothing.  
They walk about in darkness;  
all the foundations of the earth are shaken.

6 "I said, 'You are "gods";  
you are all sons of the Most High.'  
7 But you will die like mere men;  
you will fall like every other ruler."

8 Rise up, O God, judge the earth,  
for all the nations are your inheritance. (NIV, (c)1984)

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

- \* Circle "presides" in v. 1.
- \* Bracket "great assembly" in v. 1.
- \* Circle "gods" in vv. 1, 6.
- \* Underline "defend the cause" and "maintain the rights" in v. 3.
- \* Double underline "rescue" and "deliver" in v. 4.
- \* Circle "they" in v. 5.
- \* Bracket "all the foundations of the earth are shaken" in v. 5.
- \* Highlight "I said, 'You are "gods"'" in v. 6.
- \* In the margin next to v. 6 write, "Cf., Jn 10:35, 36."
- \* Box "but" indicating *contrast* in v. 7.
- \* Box "for" indicating *reason* in v. 7.

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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. Do you think the same person is speaking in vv. 2-7 that is speaking in vv. 1, 8? Explain.
2. The psalmist envisions God presiding over an assembly in verse 1. What appears to be going on?
3. Who could the "gods" there *possibly* be?
4. Explain the *significance* of the rhetorical question in verse 2.
5. Verses 3, 4 describe what God expects from his deputies, in particular, and from his people, in general. How activist are his expectations?
6. Who are "they" in verse 5?
7. Explain the meaning of the *figurative* language in verse 5b, i.e., "walk in darkness," and "foundations . . . shaken."
8. Read John 10:34-36. How did Jesus use verse 6 to defend himself against the charge of blasphemy?
9. Explain the *contrast* in verse 7.
10. **Discussion:** Talk about whether you think Psalm 82 has any implication or application to government.

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

About Psalm 82 one author writes, "This short psalm has generated an enormous amount of scholarly attention"—and he's got the bibliography to prove it—"And well it may, because it is *sui generis* in the Psalter; there is no other psalm like it" (Marvin E. Tate, *Word Biblical Commentary*, vol. 20, *Psalms 51-100*, 332). Without wading through the details suffice it to say that the psalm has been read primarily in two different ways.

It has traditionally been read as a condemnation of Israel's *human judges* for showing partiality to the powerful in society at the expense of the powerless. A proponent of the traditional view summarizes its interpretation this way, "Declaring that God judges His human judges, Asaph called for him to act on His justice. Asaph warned that judges without understanding, who ignore God's appointment of them, will perish" (Allan P. Ross, "Psalms," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: Old Testament*, 854).

More recently, it has been read as a polemic against *pagan deities* who "know nothing . . . understand nothing" and "walk about in darkness" (v. 5). A proponent of the more recent view summarizes its interpretation this way, "The gods of the nations are portrayed in this psalm as being nothing more than God's subjects, who must render an account to the God of Israel for all of their evil and unjust acts. The imagery of the pagan pantheon of gods is here used *dramatically* to present God's judgment on the rule of evil and the darkness of the world" (Willem A. VanGemeren, "Psalms" in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, rev. ed., 5:624). In either case, the judgment pictured and the words recorded in the psalm are *visionary* rather than *historical*. And as you may have already surmised, the psalm's interpretation turns *wholly* on the identity of the "gods" and addressees of verses 2-7, which all things considered (see notes) are better understood in the traditional way.

Reading Psalm 82 we catch a glimpse of heaven. As we peer into the Great Hall of Justice, we see a grand assembly. The psalmist helps us at the beginning by putting the spectacle in context. We hear his whispered commentary. "God is standing," he tells us. "He is passing judgment on his deputies" (v. 1). The psalmist envisioned God sitting as Judge over a gathering of human judges from every town in Israel. They served as God's judicial representatives among his people. The Hebrew word translated "rulers"

(NASB) or "gods" (NIV) is *elohim* (lit. strong ones). This word usually describes God in the Old Testament, but sometimes it refers to the strong ones in Israel, namely, its human rulers or authorities (cf. 45:6; Exod. 21:6; 22:8-9) (Thomas L. Constable, "Notes on Psalms," 156, 57, [www.soniclight.com](http://www.soniclight.com)).

We don't hear the psalmist's voice again until at the end we hear him shout, "Rise up, O God, judge the earth for all the nations are your inheritance" (v. 8). "Asaph concluded this psalm by calling for God to judge the whole earth, not just Israel. The world, then as now, needed righteous judgment that only God, the righteous Judge, can provide" (157).

Between Asaph's opening and closing remarks, we hear God himself speak. First, he delivers a stinging indictment against his deputies (v. 2). "How long will you judge unjustly and show partiality to the wicked?" he asks.

Then he reminds them that he had commissioned them to "defend" . . . "maintain the rights" . . . "rescue" . . . and "deliver" the powerless from the powerful in society (vv. 3, 4) pausing to comment that, "They know nothing" . . . "understand nothing" . . . and "walk about in darkness" (v. 5a). Too bad, because as a result of their negligence justice, the very foundation of society, was being undermined (v. 5b). "The essence of proper judging was making sure that the defenseless got justice. Israel's judges, who should have been the wisest of the people, were ignorant of the importance of fair judgment and the consequences of unfair judging. Consequently law and order, the foundations of life on earth, were unstable" (157).

Finally, he warns them that they would not get away with it. He had said, "You are gods" when he commissioned them as his deputies. They ruled in his stead as "sons of the Most High." Nevertheless, because of their insubordination, they would perish like mere men. "God warned the unjust judges that they would suffer judgment themselves for their injustice. God had appointed them as "gods" (i.e., individuals with power by God's authority). He had made them His sons in the sense of His representatives on earth (cf. 2 Sam. 7:14). Nevertheless because they had not behaved as God, who judges justly, they would die as mere men without honor as God's sons. They would die as all the other Israelites would" (157). Ironically, God turned the

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tables by judging his judges.

By the way, when charged with blasphemy by the Pharisees (Jn 10:33), Jesus defended himself by quoting verse 6 (vv. 34, 35) to remind them that God had once called Israel's judges "gods." And if it was appropriate for God to call those whom he set apart and sent as judges "gods," it wasn't *inappropriate* for

him "whom the Father set apart as his very own and sent into the world" to call himself God's Son (v. 36).

Asaph's mock trial, regardless how one reads it, clearly teaches that God stands up for the weak, the orphan, the poor, the oppressed, and the needy in society, and what's more, he expects his people, especially leaders who represent him, to do the same.

***The Message of this Passage***  
***God expects the powerful in society to protect the powerless***  
***from those who would exploit and victimize them.***

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

Our desire is to not be merely hearers of the word, but doers of the word as James suggests 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 what God wants you to know . . .

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

–Write about what God wants you to do . . .

**“One Less”**

(Use the space below for Sunday's message notes)

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# notes STUDY – the commentaries to answer the questions.

v. 1 **presides** Lit., "stands" (the NET Bible, NKJV); cf., "has taken his place" (ESV, HCSB); "takes his stand" (NASB, NJB). "The word *nitzabh* denotes a deliberate and formal act, connected with a definite purpose 1 Sam. xix. 20" (J. J. Stewart Perowne, *The Book of Psalms*, 2:105). "Ps 82 opens abruptly, without an introduction, with an immediate focus on God (Yahweh) having taken his stand in the midst of a council, or assembly . . . De Vaux argues that during the arguments in a case the judge remained seated, but stood up to pronounce the sentence, while the contending parties remained standing (cf. Isa 50:8) . . . [regardless] The standing of Yahweh indicates that a very important matter is being decided" (Tate, 335).

v. 1 **great assembly** Lit., "assembly of El" (the NET Bible); cf., "divine council" (ESV, NRSV), "divine assembly" (HCSB, NJB), "heavenly council" (TEV), "congregation of the mighty" (NKJV). "(1) Some understand 'El' to refer to God himself. In this case he is pictured presiding over his own heavenly assembly. (2) Others take ['el] as a superlative here ('God stands in the great assembly'), as in Pss 36:6 and 80:10. (3) The present translation [the NET Bible] assumes this is a reference to the Canaanite high god El, who presided over the Canaanite divine assembly . . . If the Canaanite divine assembly is referred to here in Ps 82:1, then the psalm must be understood as a *bold polemic against Canaanite religion*. Israel's God invades El's assembly, denounces its gods as failing to uphold justice, and announces their coming demise. (the NET Bible, 3<sup>tn</sup> on Ps 82:1, italics added).

v. 1 **"gods"** Most likely a *metaphor* for human judges. "There are at least three ways of explaining 'the great assembly' of the 'gods.' First, the gods are nothing but human judges condemned by the Great Judge for being unjust (so Calvin, 3:330; K&D 2:402). In support is the legal language in Exodus 21:6 and 22:8-9, according to which the coming 'before God' could be interpreted as 'before the judges' (see NIV). This reading could also be inferred from Jesus' allusion to 82:6: 'If he called them "gods," to whom the word of God came . . . what about the one whom the Father has set apart as his very own and sent into the world?' (Jn 10:35-36). According to a second interpretation, the 'gods' are the principalities and powers of other nations [i.e., angelic beings] that oppress Israel (so Briggs 2:215 [and Kidner, 328]; cf. Eph. 6:12). The psalm gives little in support of this interpretation. A third view, though more difficult, is more likely. The 'gods' are pagan deities. The gods of the nations are portrayed in this psalm as being nothing more than God's subjects, who must render an account to the God of Israel for all of their evil and unjust acts. The imagery of the pagan pantheon of gods is here used dramatically to present God's judgment on the rule of evil and the darkness of the world" (VanGemeren, 5:624; so Craig C. Broyles, *Psalms*, NIBC, 335, 36; cf., the NET Bible). One author combines the first and third views. "The most likely solution to the problem combines the strengths of these two views. The rulers are actual human kings (cf. vv. 2-4) who, for rhetorical effect and in accord with their arrogant self-perception, are addressed as if they were members of the divine assembly known from Canaanite myth (vv. 1, 6-7) . . . Thus psalm 82 attests to the general failure of human rulers [e.g., judges] to fulfill adequately God's desire for justice" (Robert B. Chisholm, Jr., "A Theology of the Psalms," in *A Biblical Theology of the Old Testament*, ed. Roy B. Zuck, 276).

v. 2 **How long . . .** An accusation is stated in the form of a rhetorical question. "The expression of the indictment in the form of a question, as in v.2, seems to have been a feature of Israelite judicial procedure (Ackerman, 336-37). See 1 Sam. 22:13; 2 Sam 1:14; 1 Kgs 2:42-43" (Tate, 335).

v. 2 **defend the unjust** Cf., "judge unjustly" (ESV), "hand down unjust decisions" (NLT).

v. 2 **show partiality** Lit., "'lift up the face of the wicked' (as in a legal acquittal)" (Broyles, 336, 37).

vv. 3, 4 **weak . . .** Vv. 3, 4 "must recall the commission of the gods [judges], since it would make little sense to command them to do what they will no longer have the opportunity to do because of their sentence in v 7. Their commission has been to provide judgment for those who lack the wealth and power to defend themselves in human society" (Tate, 336). "The summary in vv. 3, 4 indicates that all classes of the lowly, weak, and afflicted that suffer wrong are the special objects of His care . . . See Ps 72:12ff.; Is. 11:3, 4" (H. C. Leupold, *Exposition of the Psalms*, 595).

v. 5 **they** Cf., "you" (2nd per. pl.) in verse 2. The pronoun "they" (3rd per. pl.) likely refers to the corrupt rulers referred to in the indictment (v. 2)—the verdict on the accused is often delivered in the 3rd person (Broyles, 337)—although one author writes, "I take it [v. 5] to describe the plight of the misgoverned and misled, who are 'destroyed for lack of knowledge' (Hos. 4:6), and groping for lack of light or of any moral certainties (cf. Isa. 59:9ff.)" (Derek Kidner, *Psalms 73-150*, TOTC, 329).

v. 5 **foundations . . .** "That is, law and order are undermined" (Ross, 854).

v. 7 **like mere men** Lit., "like men" (ESV, NKJV, HCSB); neither "mere" nor "other" are in the Hebrew text; cf., "like human beings" (NJB), "like mortals" (the NET Bible, NRSV). "Verse 7, with its simile, *like men*, seems fatal to the view that these are human judges" (Kidner, 330). But not necessarily, "the Hebrew comparative preposition *ke* - does not always indicate a true comparison of unlike objects, but sometimes has the force of 'in every respect like.' Consequently the NIV translation of verse 7, though interpretative, is certainly grammatically possible, in which case the rulers may be understood as human" (Chisholm, 276).

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### Family Time

Family time will help you take a break from your busy schedule and spend time connecting with your family.  
**Tips for your Family Time: Keep it simple! Be flexible! Do it often! HAVE FUN!!**

As parents, there are many character traits we want our children to adopt. The list is long but includes: acting responsibly, being a good citizen, showing respect to self and others, being honest and many others! This week we have the opportunity to teach our kids about compassion. Compassion is one of those virtues that is taught and caught. Kids will learn to be compassionate when they see us being compassionate. What we believe about people will dictate how we respond to those in need. Is every person loved by God and uniquely created in His image? Or, do we judge those in need and decide they are not "our problem"? The desire to help others who are suffering and in need manifests itself when we support ministries that are meeting the needs of those on the other side of the world and when we take the time to mow our sick neighbor's yard.

As we enter the holiday season, let's look for opportunities to show compassion. As a family, discuss which compassion ministry you will support with your time and money. Broaden your definition of those in need to include those who need friends and community as well. Have every family member think of someone they know who needs a kind word or deed and then commit to doing it this week.

#### What Does The Bible Say

Weekly Verse: Psalm 82

1. Who presides in the great assembly?
2. Fill in the blanks from verses 3-4. \_\_\_\_\_ the cause of the weak and fatherless; \_\_\_\_\_ the rights of the poor and oppressed. \_\_\_\_\_ the weak and needy; \_\_\_\_\_ them from the hand of the wicked.

#### What Do You Think

1. What does it mean that God presides in the great assembly?
2. Read verses 3-4 again. How do you think God feels about those in need?
3. What are some ways we can show compassion to those in need?

#### What R U Going To Do

Make a "Thankful Tree." Use a brown poster board to create a tree trunk. Cut out leaves on colored construction paper. Hang this tree in a prominent place all month so your family will see it grow as you add things you are thankful for. This week add leaves that list all of the tangible blessings you have been given (food, housing, etc.).

### MEMORY TIME

Post the kid-friendly Core Competency and the Memory Verse throughout the house.

#### Core Comp

Compassion - I believe God wants me to help others in need.

#### Memory Verse

Psalm 7:17 "I will give thanks to the LORD because of his righteousness; I will sing the praises of the name of the Lord Most High."

### 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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**Keith Smith** (B.A. in Speech Communication, Texas Tech University and M.A. in Religious Education, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary) is the Family and Children's Pastor at Pantego Bible Church. Keith is a featured communicator for Song of Solomon for Students and speaks at children/student camps across the country. He has developed a number of relational parenting seminars designed to motivate parents to empower their parenting by emotionally connecting with their kids. Keith lives with his wife, Denise, and their two children, Jordan and Alex.



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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).