

February 2004, *Equipping*

### Psalm 86



For several weeks I meditated daily on Psalm 86.

*Incline your ear, O Lord, and answer me, for I am poor and needy.<sup>v1</sup>*

*Preserve my life, for I am devoted to you; save your servant who trusts in you.<sup>v2</sup> ...*

*Gladden the soul of your servant, for to you, O Lord, I lift up my soul.<sup>v3</sup> ...*

*All the nations you have made shall come and bow down before you, O Lord, and shall glorify your name<sup>v9</sup> for you are great and do wondrous things; you alone are God.<sup>v10</sup>*

*Teach me your way, O Lord, that I may walk in your truth; give me an undivided heart to revere your name.<sup>v11</sup>*

*I give thanks to you, O Lord my God, with my whole heart, and I will glorify your name forever.<sup>v12</sup>*

*For great is your steadfast love toward me; you have delivered my soul from the depths of Sheol.<sup>v13</sup>*

*O God, the insolent rise up against me; a band of ruffians seeks my life, and they do not set you before them.<sup>v14</sup>*

*But you, O Lord, are a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness<sup>v15</sup>*

*Turn to me and be gracious to me; give your strength to your servant; save the child of your serving girl!<sup>v16</sup>*

*Show me a sign of your favour ...<sup>v17</sup> .*

**Perhaps you will resonate with my thoughts or find that they stimulate your own reflection.**

1. The first need of all Christians, and especially of those called to leadership, is to realize that we cannot save ourselves (vv. 1, 2, 13, 16). We are utterly dependent on God for salvation and for all the other resources we need. Most church leaders know they are “poor and needy;” but often they feel the need to hide that from the people they serve. It is not appropriate to “use the pulpit for personal confession” of our failures and shortcomings, but we must never neglect to admit before God, and as appropriate, before our family, colleagues and fellow believers, our dependence upon God. And we need constantly to remember how great is the God we serve (vv. 9-10).
2. Leaders in churches must be careful about their attitudes and the language they use to talk about people who disagree with them. Often we feel challenged and beset by “the insolent...band of ruffians [who] seek my life” (v. 14), but who may in fact be sincere Christians who also have the best interests of the church at heart. We must learn to emulate the character of God, who is “merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness” (v. 15).
3. Many pressures impinge on our time and energy. Though we need to do many things, and divide ourselves between many obligations, let at least our hearts be “undivided to revere [God’s] name.” And let us learn both God’s way (character, attitude, behaviour) and God’s truth (values, ideas, wisdom) (v. 11).
4. We are reminded from time to time that we need God’s provision of strength (v. 16), and wisdom, and many other gifts. It is also vital to our spiritual, emotional and even physical well-being that we also receive God’s gift of a glad heart (v. 4).

I pray that your lives would be graced by all the gifts that God has to offer, and for those who are called to leadership responsibility I especially pray that God will show you a sign of favour (v. 17).

Sincerely,  
Dan Nighswander, General Secretary