Addressing the Heart of **Worldly Pursuits**

Anyone who labors under the false pretense that this life is all that matters will build up their own little kingdom here on earth. We are all tempted by such worldly pursuits which pull our hearts away from God. Yet those who seek first God's kingdom and His righteousness will practice humility, patience, confession, and hope. Ultimately, the true believer looks to Jesus who made the most of His short life in order to redeem ours.

How to do this study:

With a Bible open to Psalm 39, prayerfully read through the entire psalm. Next, thoughtfully work through the guided questions and journaling prompts below. When you are finished, review what you have learned. Whom could you invite to pray Psalm 39 with you?

1. **First, remember that life is short:**
    - Hold up your four fingers pressed together. The distance from your pinky to your index finger is the measure of a handbreadth (Psalm 39:5a). Now meditate on the other images David employs to describe life's brevity: a drawn-in breath (vv. 5b, 11b), a shadow (v. 6a), a moth too close to the flame (v. 11b), a sojourn through a strange land (v. 12c). Does this reality of life's shortness make each day seem more or less important to you?

    - How would you live life differently if you knew you had only one year left to live? How would this change your view of wealth and possessions? In what way does keeping death before you help you live a better life?

    - Memorize Psalm 90:12, "So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom." How can you grow in wisdom and relationships for the remaining years God grants you in this life (see v. 10)?

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2. **Then, examine your humility in speech:**
    - In what situations do you need to "keep" your "mouth with a bridle" until your heart gets right with God (Psalm 39:1)? What makes it hard for you to hold your tongue when others criticize you (vv. 2–3)?

    - How can a prideful heart lead either to sinful speech or to sinful silence?

    - What do you learn about humility in speech both from David and from our Lord Jesus Christ (Isaiah 53:7)?

3. **Next, consider your investments:**
    - Where do you currently invest most of your time, treasure, and thoughts? Would you say you are a good steward of the resources God has given you?

    - How might God remove certain earthly securities until you rightly reorder your priorities (Psalm 39:7–11)? Describe a time when your Father's discipline led you to seek His mercy and forgiveness (Hebrews 12:5–6).

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- Read Jesus' parable of the wealthy fool (Luke 12:15–21). How does this warning help you to find peace amidst anxiety as you prepare for your Master's return (vv. 22–40)? How can a "sojourner mentality" guard you against building your kingdom on this earth?

- If you have income from a job or allowance, prayerfully ask the Lord how He wants you to steward those resources. Speak with a wise adult in your life who can help you plan a personal budget for both your short-term expenses and long-term investments.

4. **Finally, focus your eternal perspective:**
   - Read Isaiah 40 and reflect on the glory of our infinite, eternal God. Compare His marvelous glory to your own limited glory.

   - Reflect back on your thoughts, words, and actions this past week. How much of what you accomplished will truly matter for eternity? What specific changes can you make to store up your treasures in heaven (Matt 6:19–21)?

   - Are you more focused on developing résumé virtues (e.g., knowledge, experience, skill) or eulogy virtues—the ones to be spoken at your funeral? What can you do to shift your focus to the latter?

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5. **Pray Psalm 39 back to God as you reflect on the following truth claims:**
    - Life's too short to waste my words, so help me guard my speech (vv. 1–3).
    - Life's too short to store up earthly wealth, so teach me how to humbly measure my days (vv. 4–6).
    - Life's too short to stray in sin, so cleanse me by Your loving discipline (vv. 7–11).
    - Life's too short to build my kingdom on this earth, so empower me to put first Your heavenly kingdom (vv. 12–13).

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