

a study of
PSALMS

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introduction

The Old Testament book of Psalms has been cherished from generation to generation by those who seek to follow the living God. They are the most powerful and complete expression of the worship of ancient Israel and are easily incorporated into our personal and corporate worship today. This book of songs, poems, and prayers was the hymnal of the temple. These personal and often emotional words connect the heart of the reader to the heart of God.

The words of the Psalmists provide a profound and honest portrayal of human emotions, covering a wide range of experiences such as joy, gratitude, sorrow, fear, repentance, and anger. Theologian John Calvin called it “an anatomy of all parts of the soul.”

Bible commentator James Johnston said, “We go to the Psalms when we’re laughing and when we’re crying. Amazingly, they often say what we feel but couldn’t find the words to describe.”

The Psalms, however, are not just emotional outpourings that soothe the soul; they are also designed to help us mature in the faith. Theologian Benjamin Shaw made this claim about the Psalms, “The man who would grow as a Christian will benefit by reading and meditating on any portion of the Word of God. But if a man would grow in the vibrant piety that is the lifeblood of the virile Christian life, he could not do better than to immerse himself in the book of Psalms.”

These poems have broad benefit for spiritual formation. This book teaches us theology. It models for us how to worship, repent, fast, and pray. It guides us in how to live. It reminds us of God’s work in the past. It prophesies God’s work in the future. Theologian Martin Luther called Psalms a “little Bible” because it encapsulates the entire biblical message. If one needed a recommendation of the book of Psalms, then look no further than the New Testament. Psalms is the most quoted book by the New Testament authors.

Professor Allen Ross writes in the Bible Knowledge Commentary, "Of all the books in the Old Testament the Book of Psalms most vividly represents the faith of individuals in the Lord. The Psalms are the inspired responses of human hearts to God's revelation of Himself in law, history, and prophecy. Saints of all ages have appropriated this collection of prayers and praises in their public worship and private meditations."

As a whole, the book of Psalms does have structure. There are 150 Psalms presented in five books or major sections. Each book ends with a doxology, Psalm 150 being the culminating doxology.

There are also smaller collections of psalms within the larger sections. These smaller collections include David's psalms, the songs of ascent (Ps 120-134), the writings of Asaph (Ps 73-83), the psalms of Korah's descendants (Ps 42-49), and the hallelujah psalms (Ps 113-118, 146-150).

The Psalms were written throughout the Old Testament from the time of Moses until after the Exile. Old Testament scholar Eugene Merrill places the time period of the Psalms between 970 and 550 BC with Moses' Psalm 90 being an outlier (1440 BC). They are attributed to David (almost half of the book), Asaph, the sons of Korah, Solomon, Moses, Ethan and Heman the Ezrahites, and possibly others as some psalms have no cited author.

These songs, prayers, and poems are beautiful pieces of art using vivid language. Many are songs meant to be accompanied by music. The psalmists incorporated the use of various literary devices such as: parallelism, merism, chiasm, inclusio, and acrostic.

These 150 *chapters* present an opportunity for a unique approach to studying a book of the Bible. The standard verse-by-verse teaching beginning in Psalm 1 through Psalm 150 is not the only approach.

In this series, we will study the psalms by type. Within the book of Psalms there are specific themes that are repeated despite varying time periods, situations, and authors. For example, many psalms focus on gratitude or thanksgiving to God for who He is and what He has done. These psalms appear in different places within the book, are penned by different authors, and are inspired by different circumstances in history. Other psalms focus on lamenting injustice or evil, while still others focus on confession of sin and asking for forgiveness. Breaking down the book by type or theme gives us a topical anchor point for sermons, devotions, and small group discussions.

There is disagreement on how many different types of psalms are in the book. Some scholars describe six categories, while others might identify up to 12. For simplification, we will focus our time on 10 types or categories.

Each week in this study, we will feature a psalm as an example of the category, serving as the basis of the teaching. We will also offer six other psalms from the category for daily devotional reading.

We pray that this study connects your heart to the heart of God.

art inspiration

The Psalms are deeply personal and raw expressions of joy, sorrow, trust, and longing. They do not present a polished faith but rather an honest dialogue with God. This study guide is designed to reflect that vulnerability, creating space for real interaction with scripture. Rather than just reading, the goal is to engage and respond. Hand-drawn annotations like circles, underlines, arrows, and doodles visually mirror this process. The intent is to make scripture feel personal, tangible, and lived-in, similar to what you would find in a lived-in Bible.

This study guide embraces the vulnerable honesty of the Psalms by visually representing engagement—marking, questioning, and responding. Annotations will not be decorative but intentional, inviting the reader into an ongoing conversation with God. The typography will reflect this contrast, mixing soft, handwritten elements with bold, structured type to mirror the tension between quiet reflection and strong declarations of faith. The design will embrace natural textures, imperfections, and a lived-in feel, reinforcing that faith is not always neat or structured.

The Psalms were written in the midst of real, messy life. This study guide is designed to honor that reality, creating a space where readers feel the freedom to bring their full selves before God, just as the psalmists did.

How to use this study guide

The Psalms Study Guide is laid out in weekly sessions with resources for daily engagement to help us grow together.

Each session includes the following:

- daily readings to guide your study throughout the week
- contextual introduction to aid in the study of the week's passages
- scripture passage for the week
- discussion questions to help you process the passage in personal and small group settings

Use this guide wherever you study Psalms—in your personal time with God, in small group meetings, and in corporate worship. Discover how the Psalms can guide and encourage you today.

psalms facts

- The Book of Psalms is the longest book in the Bible, with 150 chapters and 2,461 verses.
- Psalms were originally written in Hebrew.
- The Hebrew name for the book is *Tehillim*, meaning “praises.”
- The word “psalm” comes from the Greek word *psalmoi*, meaning “songs sung to a harp.”
- David wrote at least 73 psalms.
- Psalms is divided into five books (1-41, 42-72, 73-89, 90-106, 107-150).
- Each of the five books ends with a doxology, a short hymn of praise.
- The final psalm, Psalm 150, is a grand doxology for the entire collection.
- Psalm 23 is one of the most well-known and often-quoted passages in the Bible.
- Psalm 119 is the longest chapter in the Bible, with 176 verses.
- Psalm 117 is the shortest chapter, with 2 verses.
- Psalm 117 is the middle chapter of the entire Bible.
- Psalms is quoted or referenced in the New Testament 116 times.
- Psalm 90, written by Moses, is the oldest psalm.
- They were often sung with musical accompaniment, such as harps and lyres.
- Psalm 22 foreshadows the crucifixion.
- Psalm 110 is quoted in the New Testament more than any other psalm.
- Psalm 16 points to the resurrection.
- Psalm 14 and Psalm 53 are nearly identical in wording.
- The book of Psalms contains the Bible’s shortest verse in the original Hebrew: Psalm 117:1.

hebrew poetry

The book of Psalms is a beautiful piece of ancient Hebrew poetry. In order to effectively study and interpret this collection of poems, we need to understand a few common literary features used by the authors.

HEBREW PARALLELISM

Parallelism is a defining characteristic of Hebrew poetry, and the Psalms rely heavily on it for structure, rhythm, and emphasis. Instead of rhyme or meter (as in Western poetry), Hebrew poetry uses parallel lines of thought to reinforce meaning.

We need to understand this in order to correctly understand these poems. Lines of Hebrew poetry are usually two thoughts that complement one another. Our English Bibles will show this by indenting the second line (sometimes 2-3 lines) to show that it continues the first half. Sometimes the second half will complete the thought of the first. At other times it will restate the first half in other words or state a contrasting idea. Learning to read the Psalms with the rhythm of these lines will help us to follow the poetry well.

TYPES OF HEBREW PARALLELISM

(adapted from Dr. Thomas Constable, *Notes on the Book of Psalms*)

Affirming (Synonymous) parallelism: the writer repeats the thought of the first line in the following line (e.g., 1:2; 24:1-3; 25:4).

Psalm 25:4

Show me your ways, LORD,
teach me your paths.

Opposing (Antithetic) parallelism is the reverse: the second line expresses a contrasting thought compared to the first line (e.g., 1:6; 20:8; 37:9).

Psalm 1:6

For the LORD watches over the way of the righteous,
but the way of the wicked leads to destruction.

Advancing (Synthetic) parallelism: the second line explains or expands the thought expressed in the first line (e.g., 1:1; 19:7-9; Prov 1:7).

Psalm 1:1

Blessed is the one
who does not walk in step with the wicked
or stand in the way that sinners take
or sit in the company of mockers...

When the second line completes the thought of the first line, we have climactic parallelism (e.g., 29:1; 96:7).

Emblematic parallelism: the first line contains a figure of speech, and the following lines expand or explain the figure (e.g., 1:3)

Psalm 1:3

That person is like a tree planted by streams of water,
which yields its fruit in season
and whose leaf does not wither—
whatever they do prospers.

It is important to observe parallelism in Hebrew poetry, because failure to do so can result in erroneous interpretation. For example, one might conclude that the writer is making an important distinction when all he is doing is restating the same idea in different words—in the case of affirming parallelism.

OTHER LITERARY DEVICES AND FEATURES:

In addition to parallelism, there are other stylistic features that often appear in the Psalms:

Word pair: two related words or concepts appear together to enhance meaning

Examples: righteous and wicked; light and darkness; refuge and strength

Merism: where two opposite extremes represent a totality or completeness

Examples: heaven and earth; morning and night; going out and coming in

Chiasm: the restatement of material in reverse order to emphasize a central idea. This symmetrical or mirrored pattern often follows something like this: A B C D C' B' A'

Example: Psalm 8:3-6

A When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers,
B the moon and the stars, which you have set in place,
C ⁴ what is mankind that you are mindful of them,
D human beings that you care for them?
C' ⁵ You have made them a little lower than the angels
B' and crowned them with glory and honor.
A' ⁶ You made them rulers over the works of your hands; you put everything under their feet...

By placing line "D" at the center of the chiasm, the psalmist highlights God's care for human beings.

Inclusio: the material at the beginning is repeated at the end of a section or chapter in order to frame the material in between.

Example: Psalm 118

Verse 1: Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good;
his love endures forever.

Verse 29: Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good;
his love endures forever.

Acrostic: the arrangement of material in alphabetical order (this is only noticeable in the original Hebrew). This gave the poem form and enabled it to be memorized.

Example: Psalm 119 has 22 sections each containing eight verses, one for each of the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet.

Selah: generally understood to have one of four purposes related to the structure or meaning of the text, the term “Selah” is found 71 times in the Psalms.

- **Pause or Rest:** Many believe “Selah” is a musical or liturgical instruction, indicating a pause or break in the singing or reading of the psalm.
- **Lift Up or Exalt:** Derived from the Hebrew, it could mean “to lift up,” possibly referring to lifting up one’s thoughts to God or a crescendo in music.
- **Reflection:** It may serve as a prompt to meditate on the message or significance of the preceding verses, encouraging the worshiper to internalize the truths just expressed.
- **Musical Notation:** Some suggest it could have been a direction for musicians, signaling a change in melody, tempo, or instrumentation.

In practical terms, when encountering “Selah” in the Psalms, many readers take it as a moment to pause and reflect deeply on the spiritual or emotional weight of the passage.

Palms of WISDOM

The wisdom psalms are the most practical of the ten categories covered in this study. Similar to other wisdom literature in the Scriptures (e.g., Proverbs and Ecclesiastes), the focus is on choosing God's wise and righteous ways. The wisdom psalms are hands-on and applicable for daily life. They emphasize the value and importance of God's law for fulfillment in life. These psalms often contrast the fate of those who obey the word of the Lord with those who reject it. Psalms of wisdom flesh out this contrast in poetical form. The wise man is presented juxtaposed to the foolish or wicked man. The wisdom psalms answer the question, *How should we live?* They vividly declare that those who trust in the Lord will be blessed while those who reject Him will not.

1

- ¹ Blessed is the one
who does not walk in step with the wicked
or stand in the way that sinners take
or sit in the company of mockers,
² but whose delight is in the law of the LORD,
and who meditates on his law day and night.
³ That person is like a tree planted by streams of water,
which yields its fruit in season
and whose leaf does not wither—
whatever they do prospers.
⁴ Not so the wicked!
They are like chaff
that the wind blows away.
⁵ Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment,
nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous.
⁶ For the LORD watches over the way of the righteous,
but the way of the wicked leads to destruction.

notes



study questions

Can you recall a story from your childhood that resulted in a reward or consequence for choosing the right or wrong path?

How does Psalm 1 summarize the two ways of living?

How does this poem feature parallelism (refer to pages 12-13)?

How does the psalm contrast the two outcomes or destinies that are at the end of each path? What vivid language is used?

How does the psalm emphasize the importance of God's Word?
How does it describe the mindset a wise person will have towards the Scriptures?

How can you practically incorporate God's Word into your life so that you can flourish?

daily readings

Psalm 1

Psalm 119

Psalm 14

Psalm 128

Psalm 37

Psalm 73

Psalm 112

Psalms of PRAISE

To “praise” is to express admiration, approval, or commendation for someone or something. The psalms of praise do just that. They feature a primary focus on glorifying God for who He is and what He has done. These songs and poems exalt God for His attributes, mighty acts, and ongoing provision for His people. The psalms of praise celebrate the God who was, who is, and who is to come. These heartfelt expressions of worship celebrate the past, rest in the present, and look hopefully into the future. They flow from a heart of gratitude and adoration. The psalmist takes a posture of awe and reverence in the presence of the living God and boldly declares Yahweh is worthy of honor and glory forever and ever. These words remind us that it is an honor and privilege to know and be known by the Creator of the universe.

103

OF DAVID.

- ¹ Praise the LORD, my soul;
all my inmost being, praise his holy name.
- ² Praise the LORD, my soul,
and forget not all his benefits—
- ³ who forgives all your sins
and heals all your diseases,
- ⁴ who redeems your life from the pit
and crowns you with love and compassion,
- ⁵ who satisfies your desires with good things
so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.
- ⁶ The LORD works righteousness
and justice for all the oppressed.
- ⁷ He made known his ways to Moses,
his deeds to the people of Israel:
- ⁸ The LORD is compassionate and gracious,
slow to anger, abounding in love.
- ⁹ He will not always accuse,
nor will he harbor his anger forever;
- ¹⁰ he does not treat us as our sins deserve
or repay us according to our iniquities.
- ¹¹ For as high as the heavens are above the earth,
so great is his love for those who fear him;
- ¹² as far as the east is from the west,
so far has he removed our transgressions from us.

- ¹³ As a father has compassion on his children
so the LORD has compassion on those who fear him;
¹⁴ for he knows how we are formed,
he remembers that we are dust.
¹⁵ The life of mortals is like grass,
they flourish like a flower of the field;
¹⁶ the wind blows over it and it is gone,
and its place remembers it no more.
¹⁷ But from everlasting to everlasting
the LORD's love is with those who fear him,
and his righteousness with their children's children—
¹⁸ with those who keep his covenant
and remember to obey his precepts.
¹⁹ The LORD has established his throne in heaven,
and his kingdom rules over all.
²⁰ Praise the LORD, you his angels,
you mighty ones who do his bidding,
who obey his word.
²¹ Praise the LORD, all his heavenly hosts,
you his servants who do his will.
²² Praise the LORD, all his works
everywhere in his dominion.
Praise the Lord, my soul.

*You, O Lord, are worthy of
honor and praise forever and ever!*

daily readings

Psalm 103

Psalm 104

Psalm 111

Psalm 113

Psalm 135

Psalm 145

Psalm 148

notes

study questions

What is your favorite attribute of God? How does this inspire your personal worship?

What does it mean to praise the LORD with all of your soul?
How do you praise him with all of your inmost being (verse 1a)?

What does this psalm tell us about who God is?

What does the psalm tell us about what God has done?

What hope does this psalm offer you in light of who God is and what He has done?

write a psalm of praise

Keep it simple. Praise God for who He is (how He has revealed Himself to you).

Praise God for what He has done (how He has worked in your life).

Praise God for the hope He has offered you.

Share your psalm with a friend or your small group.

Psalms of LAMENT

Poetry often flows from the deepest emotions within us. One of the strongest expressions of emotion is to lament. When we lament, we express grief, anger, sorrow or complaint. The psalms of lamentation express distress over suffering, injustice, or the apparent absence of God in difficult times. These poems often include cries for God's intervention and longings for hope. Within the collection of 150 psalms in the Bible, this category is the largest. There are both individual and national psalms of lament.

As fallen people living in a fallen world, we all will encounter times of personal grief and sorrow. What do we do when our hearts are heavy with despair? How do we pray when we feel like the Lord is absent or life is unfair? These psalms model for us how to cry out or complain to God. Note that a typical psalm not only includes a complaint and petition but also expresses trust in God. Many include a vow to praise God even in the midst of calamity.

- ¹ As the deer pants for streams of water,
so my soul pants for you, my God.
- ² My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.
When can I go and meet with God?
- ³ My tears have been my food
day and night,
while people say to me all day long,
“Where is your God?”
- ⁴ These things I remember
as I pour out my soul:
how I used to go to the house of God
under the protection of the Mighty One
with shouts of joy and praise
among the festive throng.
- ⁵ Why, my soul, are you downcast?
Why so disturbed within me?
Put your hope in God,
for I will yet praise him,
my Savior and my God.
- ⁶ My soul is downcast within me;
therefore I will remember you
from the land of the Jordan,
the heights of Hermon—from Mount Mizar.
- ⁷ Deep calls to deep
in the roar of your waterfalls;
all your waves and breakers
have swept over me.
- ⁸ By day the LORD directs his love,
at night his song is with me—
a prayer to the God of my life.
- ⁹ I say to God my Rock,
“Why have you forgotten me?
Why must I go about mourning,
oppressed by the enemy?”
- ¹⁰ My bones suffer mortal agony
as my foes taunt me,
saying to me all day long,
“Where is your God?”
- ¹¹ Why, my soul, are you downcast?
Why so disturbed within me?
Put your hope in God,
for I will yet praise him,
my Savior and my God.

43

- ¹ Vindicate me, my God,
and plead my cause
against an unfaithful nation.
Rescue me from those who are
deceitful and wicked.
- ² You are God my stronghold.
Why have you rejected me?
Why must I go about mourning,
oppressed by the enemy?
- ³ Send me your light and your faithful care,
let them lead me;
let them bring me to your holy mountain,
to the place where you dwell.
- ⁴ Then I will go to the altar of God,
to God, my joy and my delight.
I will praise you with the lyre,
O God, my God.
- ⁵ Why, my soul, are you downcast?
Why so disturbed within me?
Put your hope in God,
for I will yet praise him,
my Savior and my God.

NOTE

Psalms 42-43 are considered by many to be one psalm. Many of the ancient Hebrew manuscripts do not break these into two psalms.

daily readings

Psalm 42/43

Psalm 3

Psalm 13

Psalm 17

Psalm 44

Psalm 60

Psalm 130

Why, my soul, are you downcast?
Why so disturbed within me?
Put your hope in God.

notes

study questions

Think of an example in your life when you filed an official complaint (left a bad Google review, asked to speak with the manager, called for a meeting with HR, etc.). How did it make you feel?

What is a psalm of lament? How do these encourage us to communicate with God when we are experiencing sorrow, anger, or distress?

What is the complaint being expressed in these psalms?

What is the petition or request being asked of God?

How do these psalms express trust? How do they pledge faithfulness?

What is something that has caused or is causing you to lament?

Psalms of IMPRECATION

Psalms of imprecation are expressions of anger and/or frustration inspired by the reality of earthly injustice. To “imprecate” is to invoke judgment upon another. It is to pray disaster upon an offender. In these psalms, the poet expresses frustration with an experienced inequity inflicted by the enemies of God. There is then an appeal or prayer for God to bring down His divine justice.

These Old Testament verses can be controversial because they seem to flow against the New Testament idea of “love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you” (Matt 5:44). In the context of the Old Testament community of Israel, we have to remember that the nation waited and hoped expectantly for the covenant-promises to be fulfilled. They did not have the words of Jesus nor could they feel the peace about God’s ultimate establishment of justice as revealed in the entirety of the Scriptures. They, however, did know God as a covenant-keeping God. The Abrahamic Covenant says, “I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse...” (Gen 12:3a). The Mosaic Covenant says, “I will be an enemy to your enemies” (Ex 23:22b), and “The LORD your God will put all these curses on your enemies who hate and persecute you” (Deut 30:7). When the psalmist prayed for curses to fall on the enemies of God, he was simply asking Him to fulfill the covenant promises made to Abraham and Moses.

When reading imprecatory psalms, keep in mind that the psalmist is asking for God to be the deliverer of His righteous justice. This is His job and not ours. Romans 12:19 instructs us to leave judgment in the hands of the Almighty and to not seek revenge on our own. The psalmist is staying in line with this command. Keep in mind that those under judgment are the unrepentant enemies of God. The psalmist is appealing to God to enact justice on those who have offended Him by stubbornly thwarting His truths, His purposes, and His people.

We can certainly learn about the character of God in these psalms. His holiness, sovereignty, truthfulness, faithfulness, and justice are on full display. These psalms also give us a model for expressing anger and frustration in the midst of injustice and evil. We must, however, remember to incorporate our New Testament ethic into our prayers.

Dr. Thomas Constable offered this advice, “With the coming of Jesus Christ, and the added revelation that He provided, believers now have a fuller picture of how God will balance the scales of justice. It is therefore inappropriate for us to pray imprecations of the sort we find in the Old Testament. God has recorded them for our benefit, not as examples to follow in their wording, but as examples to follow in their spirit of zeal for God’s glory.”

- 1 Save me, O God,
for the waters have come up to my neck.
- 2 I sink in the miry depths,
where there is no foothold.
I have come into the deep waters;
the floods engulf me.
- 3 I am worn out calling for help;
my throat is parched.
My eyes fail,
looking for my God.
- 4 Those who hate me without reason
outnumber the hairs of my head;
many are my enemies without cause,
those who seek to destroy me.
I am forced to restore
what I did not steal.
- 5 You, God, know my folly;
my guilt is not hidden from you.
- 6 Lord, the LORD Almighty,
may those who hope in you
not be disgraced because of me;
God of Israel,
may those who seek you
not be put to shame because of me.
- 7 For I endure scorn for your sake,
and shame covers my face.
- 8 I am a foreigner to my own family,
a stranger to my own mother's children;
- 9 for zeal for your house consumes me
and the insults of those who insult you fall on me.
- 10 When I weep and fast,
I must endure scorn;
- 11 when I put on sackcloth
people make sport of me.
- 12 Those who sit at the gate mock me,
and I am the song of the drunkards.
- 13 But I pray to you, LORD,
in the time of your favor;
in your great love, O God,
answer me with your sure salvation.
- 14 Rescue me from the mire,
do not let me sink;
deliver me from those who hate me,
from the deep waters.
- 15 Do not let the floodwaters engulf me
or the depths swallow me up
or the pit close its mouth over me.

- 16 Answer me, LORD, out of the goodness of your love;
in your great mercy turn to me.
- 17 Do not hide your face from your servant;
answer me quickly, for I am in trouble.
- 18 Come near and rescue me;
deliver me because of my foes.
- 19 You know how I am scorned, disgraced and shamed;
all my enemies are before you.
- 20 Scorn has broken my heart
and has left me helpless;
I looked for sympathy, but there was none,
for comforters, but I found none.
- 21 They put gall in my food
and gave me vinegar for my thirst.
- 22 May the table set before them become a snare;
may it become retribution and a trap.
- 23 May their eyes be darkened so they cannot see,
and their backs be bent forever.
- 24 Pour out your wrath on them;
let your fierce anger overtake them.
- 25 May their place be deserted;
let there be no one to dwell in their tents.
- 26 For they persecute those you wound
and talk about the pain of those you hurt.
- 27 Charge them with crime upon crime;
do not let them share in your salvation.
- 28 May they be blotted out of the book of life
and not be listed with the righteous.
- 29 But as for me, afflicted and in pain—
may your salvation, God, protect me.
- 30 I will praise God's name in song
and glorify him with thanksgiving.
- 31 This will please the LORD more than an ox,
more than a bull with its horns and hooves.
- 32 The poor will see and be glad—
you who seek God, may your hearts live!
- 33 The LORD hears the needy
and does not despise his captive people.
- 34 Let heaven and earth praise him,
the seas and all that move in them,
- 35 for God will save Zion
and rebuild the cities of Judah.
Then people will settle there and possess it;
- 36 the children of his servants will inherit it,
and those who love his name will dwell there.

daily readings

Psalm 69

Psalm 35

Psalm 55

Psalm 59

Psalm 83

Psalm 109

Psalm 137



notes

What do the following quotes tell us about the concept of revenge?

“An eye for an eye will leave the whole world blind.”

“He who seeks revenge should dig two graves: one for his enemy and one for himself.”

How does Psalm 69 depict the suffering of the psalmist at the hands of his enemies?

How does the psalmist call on God to rescue him for his suffering?
How does he call for imprecation or vengeance?

What does Romans 12:19 say about judgement? What is our role?
What is God's role?

How have the teachings of Jesus transformed our approach to dealing with our enemies (Matthew 5:38-48)?

What can we learn about God's character from the imprecatory psalms? How are these a model for us in how to handle our frustration/anger in the face of earthly injustice?

Psalms of TRUST

Psalms of trust express confidence in the Lord's presence, protection, and deliverance in the midst of trial and tribulation. These words bring calm in the midst of chaos and peace in the presence of danger.

Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High
will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. (Psalm 91:1)

The LORD is my light and my salvation—
whom shall I fear? (Psalm 27:1a)

God is our refuge and strength,
an ever present help in trouble. (Psalm 46:1)

Psalms of trust employ memorable imagery to remind us of God's strength. God is portrayed as a shepherd, rock, fortress, refuge, and shield. These poems encourage both the individual and the community to rely on the Lord even though they are in the midst of adversity. These words offer peace and comfort in our fear, grief, and uncertainty. They convey a sense of security in times of uncertainty and danger. As the psalmist affirms the attributes of God, he is convincing himself and his audience that those who know the Lord are not alone. We can be assured that the Almighty is with us and He is able to protect and deliver us. This is often contrasted with the futility of trusting in other people or things.

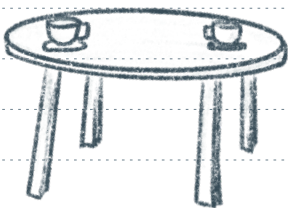
Psalms of trust contain many of the most memorable and often quoted words in the entirety of the Scriptures. Many have committed verses from these psalms to memory because they guide and comfort us when we need it most.

23

A PSALM OF DAVID.

- ¹ The LORD is my shepherd, I lack nothing.
- ² He makes me lie down in green pastures,
he leads me beside quiet waters,
- ³ he refreshes my soul.
He guides me along the right paths
for his name's sake.
- ⁴ Even though I walk
through the darkest valley,
I will fear no evil,
for you are with me;
your rod and your staff,
they comfort me.
- ⁵ You prepare a table before me
in the presence of my enemies.
You anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.
- ⁶ Surely your goodness and love will follow me
all the days of my life,
and I will dwell in the house of the LORD
forever.

notes



study questions

What is your favorite verse you have memorized from the Psalms?
How have you found this to be helpful?

Many consider Psalm 23 to be the most favored and quoted chapter of the entire Bible. Why do you think this is true? What draws you to these words?

What does the psalm teach you about the nature and character of God? What does the image of a shepherd teach you about the Lord?

How does Psalm 23 acknowledge adversity? Why do you think it is important to take our struggles to the Lord and ask for help?

How does the psalm declare trust or confidence in God? How do declarations of trust help you cope with your fear, worry, and grief?

daily readings

Psalm 23

Psalm 25

Psalm 27

Psalm 31

Psalm 46

Psalm 91

Psalm 139

write a psalm of trust

Keep it simple. Make an opening declaration about God's character (try using imagery). Express confidence in the Lord's attributes and abilities. Acknowledge your trouble and struggles. Declare your intention to trust in Him regardless of your circumstances.

Share your psalm with a friend or your small group.

Psalm of
THANKSGIVING

Psalms of thanksgiving offer expressions of gratitude for God's specific deliverance or blessings. The goal of these poems is to acknowledge the abundant blessings of God. These psalms typically open with a call to gratitude, often inviting the audience to join in worship. They are designed to lead all who hear to reciprocate the thankfulness of the author. The psalms put God's attributes on full display. They acknowledge God for His graciousness and His benevolence. These are words of appreciation. The psalmist often recounts specific ways that the Lord has delivered or provided for His people. In the end, the only fitting response is to be grateful. These psalms call us to overflow with appreciation. They implore us to worship the Lord for His abundant goodness and mercy.

136

- ¹ Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good.
His love endures forever.
- ² Give thanks to the God of gods.
His love endures forever.
- ³ Give thanks to the Lord of lords:
His love endures forever.
- ⁴ to him who alone does great wonders,
His love endures forever.
- ⁵ who by his understanding made the heavens,
His love endures forever.
- ⁶ who spread out the earth upon the waters,
His love endures forever.
- ⁷ who made the great lights—
His love endures forever.
- ⁸ the sun to govern the day,
His love endures forever.
- ⁹ the moon and stars to govern the night;
His love endures forever.
- ¹⁰ to him who struck down the firstborn of Egypt
His love endures forever.
- ¹¹ and brought Israel out from among them
His love endures forever.
- ¹² with a mighty hand and outstretched arm;
His love endures forever.
- ¹³ to him who divided the Red Sea asunder
His love endures forever.
- ¹⁴ and brought Israel through the midst of it,
His love endures forever.
- ¹⁵ but swept Pharaoh and his army into the Red Sea;
His love endures forever.

- ¹⁶ to him who led his people through the wilderness;
His love endures forever.
- ¹⁷ to him who struck down great kings,
His love endures forever.
- ¹⁸ and killed mighty kings—
His love endures forever.
- ¹⁹ Sihon king of the Amorites
His love endures forever.
- ²⁰ and Og king of Bashan—
His love endures forever.
- ²¹ and gave their land as an inheritance,
His love endures forever.
- ²² an inheritance to his servant Israel.
His love endures forever.
- ²³ He remembered us in our low estate
His love endures forever.
- ²⁴ and freed us from our enemies.
His love endures forever.
- ²⁵ He gives food to every creature.
His love endures forever.
- ²⁶ Give thanks to the God of heaven.
His love endures forever.

daily readings

Psalm 136

Psalm 9

Psalm 95

Psalm 17

Psalm 100

Psalm 106

Psalm 107

notes

Enter His gates with thanksgiving,
enter His courts with praise.

study questions

Begin with thanksgiving. Share with the group an expression of gratitude for one of the following:

- a. An attribute of God
- b. God's deliverance in your life
- c. God's provision in your life

How does Psalm 136 call for us to be thankful for who God is?

God's loyal and steadfast love (*hesed*) is mentioned in each of the 26 refrains of the psalm. Why is it important for us to remember God's love?

How does the psalm call for us to be thankful for what God has done? What did He specifically do for Israel?

Why do you think it is important for us to express thanksgiving privately and publicly?

write a psalm of gratitude

Psalm 136 is often referred to as the Great Hallel Psalm.

These psalms are to be used in communal worship as a part of the liturgy.

As a group, write and recite a Hallel Psalm using the pattern found in Psalm 136. Substitute your own lines of testimony about who God is and what He has done, then follow it with “His love endures forever.”

EXAMPLE:

Give thanks to the God who...

His love endures forever.

Share your psalm with a friend or your small group.

Prayers of ASCENT

The psalms of ascent are a collection of songs used by the Israelites as they made pilgrimages to Jerusalem. These fifteen psalms (120-134) were sung by the Jewish people as they traveled “up” to Jerusalem, which is higher in elevation, for annual feasts (Ex 23:14-17). These pilgrims ascended both topographically and spiritually as they sought to meet with God. These songs were used to prepare the travelers for their special times of worship. You might even consider them the sound track of the journey. Many theologians believe that the ascent to Jerusalem is a metaphor of our upward pursuit of God ever increasing in intimacy and maturity. There is an interesting and relevant progression in these ascent psalms. They start with people and their problems. Then they turn to God. They remember who He is and what He has done. They give Him thanks and come to a place of unity and praise in their worship.

As you read through these fifteen psalms, you are introduced to themes of repentance, God’s presence, protection, mercy, help, goodness, and sovereignty. We are also reminded to seek help in God alone and that joy is only found in the Lord.

121

A SONG OF ASCENTS

- ¹ I lift up my eyes to the mountains—
where does my help come from?
- ² My help comes from the LORD,
the Maker of heaven and earth.
- ³ He will not let your foot slip—
he who watches over you will not slumber;
- ⁴ indeed, he who watches over Israel
will neither slumber nor sleep.
- ⁵ The LORD watches over you—
the LORD is your shade at your right hand;
- ⁶ the sun will not harm you by day,
nor the moon by night.
- ⁷ The LORD will keep you from all harm—
he will watch over your life;
- ⁸ the LORD will watch over your coming and going
both now and forevermore.

notes

When you go on a road trip, what is your preferred soundtrack?
Who plays “DJ”?

What are the psalms of ascent? For what purpose were they used by faithful Israelites?

According to Exodus 23:14-17, what were the festivals that the Israelites were required to attend in Jerusalem?

How is the pilgrim’s ascent to Jerusalem to meet with God a metaphor for our spiritual lives?

How does the pilgrim express trust in the Lord’s protection for his journey? How is this like the Lord’s care of your spiritual journey?

What do verses 7-8 teach us about God’s protection and care as we pursue Him in life?



daily readings

Psalms 120-121

Psalms 122-123

Psalms 124-125

Psalms 126-127

Psalms 128-129

Psalms 130-132

Psalms 133-134

Palms of REMEMBRANCE

The psalms of remembrance recount God's faithfulness and deliverance in the past to inspire hope and trust for the future. Often recounting the history of Israel, these psalms teach us about God's deliverance and provision. They remind us of God's power, His faithfulness, and His love. They stand not only as a historical record but as a reminder to future followers of Yahweh. They even warn us about the danger of forgetting His attributes. These psalms teach the next generation about the faithfulness of God in the lives of those who came before them. They build our faith, prompt us to worship, and give us hope. The God of the Exodus is the God who hears my prayers. The God of Jericho is the God who leads me to battle sin and temptation. The God who forgave the stubbornness of the Israelites is the God who shows me mercy each morning.

- 1 Give praise to the LORD, proclaim his name;
make known among the nations what he has done.
- 2 Sing to him, sing praise to him;
tell of all his wonderful acts.
- 3 Glory in his holy name;
let the hearts of those who seek the LORD rejoice.
- 4 Look to the LORD and his strength;
seek his face always.
- 5 Remember the wonders he has done,
his miracles, and the judgments he pronounced,
- 6 you his servants, the descendants of Abraham,
his chosen ones, the children of Jacob.
- 7 He is the LORD our God;
his judgments are in all the earth.
- 8 He remembers his covenant forever,
the promise he made, for a thousand generations,
- 9 the covenant he made with Abraham,
the oath he swore to Isaac.
- 10 He confirmed it to Jacob as a decree,
to Israel as an everlasting covenant:
- 11 "To you I will give the land of Canaan
as the portion you will inherit."
- 12 When they were but few in number,
few indeed, and strangers in it,
- 13 they wandered from nation to nation,
from one kingdom to another.
- 14 He allowed no one to oppress them;
for their sake he rebuked kings:
- 15 "Do not touch my anointed ones;
do my prophets no harm."
- 16 He called down famine on the land
and destroyed all their supplies of food;
- 17 and he sent a man before them—
Joseph, sold as a slave.
- 18 They bruised his feet with shackles,
his neck was put in irons,
- 19 till what he foretold came to pass,
till the word of the LORD proved him true.
- 20 The king sent and released him,
the ruler of peoples set him free.
- 21 He made him master of his household,
ruler over all he possessed,
- 22 to instruct his princes as he pleased
and teach his elders wisdom.

23 Then Israel entered Egypt;
 Jacob resided as a foreigner in the land of Ham.
 24 The LORD made his people very fruitful;
 he made them too numerous for their foes,
 25 whose hearts he turned to hate his people,
 to conspire against his servants.
 26 He sent Moses his servant,
 and Aaron, whom he had chosen.
 27 They performed his signs among them,
 his wonders in the land of Ham.
 28 He sent darkness and made the land dark—
 for had they not rebelled against his words?
 29 He turned their waters into blood,
 causing their fish to die.
 30 Their land teemed with frogs,
 which went up into the bedrooms of their rulers.
 31 He spoke, and there came swarms of flies,
 and gnats throughout their country.
 32 He turned their rain into hail,
 with lightning throughout their land;
 33 he struck down their vines and fig trees
 and shattered the trees of their country.
 34 He spoke, and the locusts came,
 grasshoppers without number;
 35 they ate up every green thing in their land,
 ate up the produce of their soil.
 36 Then he struck down all the firstborn in their land,
 the firstfruits of all their manhood.
 37 He brought out Israel, laden with silver and gold,
 and from among their tribes no one faltered.
 38 Egypt was glad when they left,
 because dread of Israel had fallen on them.
 39 He spread out a cloud as a covering,
 and a fire to give light at night.
 40 They asked, and he brought them quail;
 he fed them well with the bread of heaven.
 41 He opened the rock, and water gushed out;
 it flowed like a river in the desert.
 42 For he remembered his holy promise
 given to his servant Abraham.
 43 He brought out his people with rejoicing,
 his chosen ones with shouts of joy;
 44 he gave them the lands of the nations,
 and they fell heir to what others had toiled for—
 45 that they might keep his precepts
 and observe his laws.

Praise the LORD.

daily readings

Psalm 105

Psalm 77

Psalm 78

Psalm 81

Psalm 106

Psalm 135

Psalm 66

notes

study questions

If you could pick one possession to pass on to your great, great grandchildren, what would it be?

According to verses 1-5, what is the purpose of this psalm? How does the psalmist intend to accomplish these purposes?

What are key moments in the history of the nation of Israel highlighted within the psalm?

Why do you think it is important to remember how God has worked in the past?

Psalms 78:11 says, “They forgot what he had done, the wonders he had shown them.” Why do the Scriptures warn us about forgetting God’s faithfulness in the past?

If you were to write the story of God’s faithfulness in your life, what would be the key moments?

*Remember who He is
and what He has done.*

Palms of CONFESSION

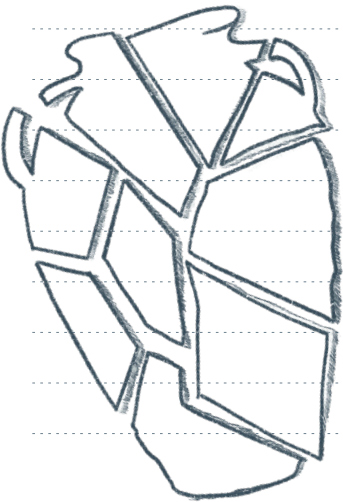
Psalms of confession, also known as psalms of penitence, are expressions of repentance and remorse for sin. These poems acknowledge guilt and cry out for God's mercy. They voice a deep sorrow for sin and a hope for forgiveness and renewal. They accurately portray truths about God and humanity. God is perfect in both justice and mercy. He simultaneously judges our sin and extends love and mercy. Humanity is portrayed as inherently flawed and in need of divine intervention for redemption. These psalms are vulnerable and real about our brokenness because of sin. In these psalms, we find the heart of the gospel which declares the good news of forgiveness and reconciliation found in the love and mercy of God for those willing to acknowledge their sin and guilt.

These psalms are relatable to all followers of Jesus because we are united in our transgression before a holy God. We have all sinned and therefore can all understand the need for confession and forgiveness. We can relate to both the weight of conviction felt by the psalmist and the joy experienced in restoration.

These psalms provide a great model for us to follow in times of confession.

- ¹ Have mercy on me, O God,
according to your unfailing love;
according to your great compassion
blot out my transgressions.
- ² Wash away all my iniquity
and cleanse me from my sin.
- ³ For I know my transgressions,
and my sin is always before me.
- ⁴ Against you, you only, have I sinned
and done what is evil in your sight;
so you are right in your verdict
and justified when you judge.
- ⁵ Surely I was sinful at birth,
sinful from the time my mother conceived me.
- ⁶ Yet you desired faithfulness even in the womb;
you taught me wisdom in that secret place.
- ⁷ Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean;
wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.
- ⁸ Let me hear joy and gladness;
let the bones you have crushed rejoice.
- ⁹ Hide your face from my sins
and blot out all my iniquity.
- ¹⁰ Create in me a pure heart, O God,
and renew a steadfast spirit within me.
- ¹¹ Do not cast me from your presence
or take your Holy Spirit from me.
- ¹² Restore to me the joy of your salvation
and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.
- ¹³ Then I will teach transgressors your ways,
so that sinners will turn back to you.
- ¹⁴ Deliver me from the guilt of bloodshed, O God,
you who are God my Savior,
and my tongue will sing of your righteousness.
- ¹⁵ Open my lips, Lord,
and my mouth will declare your praise.
- ¹⁶ You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it;
you do not take pleasure in burnt offerings.
- ¹⁷ My sacrifice, O God, is a broken spirit;
a broken and contrite heart
you, God, will not despise.
- ¹⁸ May it please you to prosper Zion,
to build up the walls of Jerusalem.
- ¹⁹ Then you will delight in the sacrifices of the righteous,
in burnt offerings offered whole;
then bulls will be offered on your altar.

notes



When you were growing up, did you ever have a moment of confession after hiding your disobedience?

What was the context of David's situation as he wrote Psalm 51? (See 2 Samuel 11:1-12:13.)

How does David acknowledge his sin in the psalm? How does he acknowledge God's justice?

How does David ask for forgiveness? How does he ask for restoration?

Read 1 John 1:8-9. What do these verses say about sin and confession?

Why do you think it is important to regularly spend time in confession? Why is it important to acknowledge our sin and ask for forgiveness?

daily readings

Psalm 51

Psalm 6

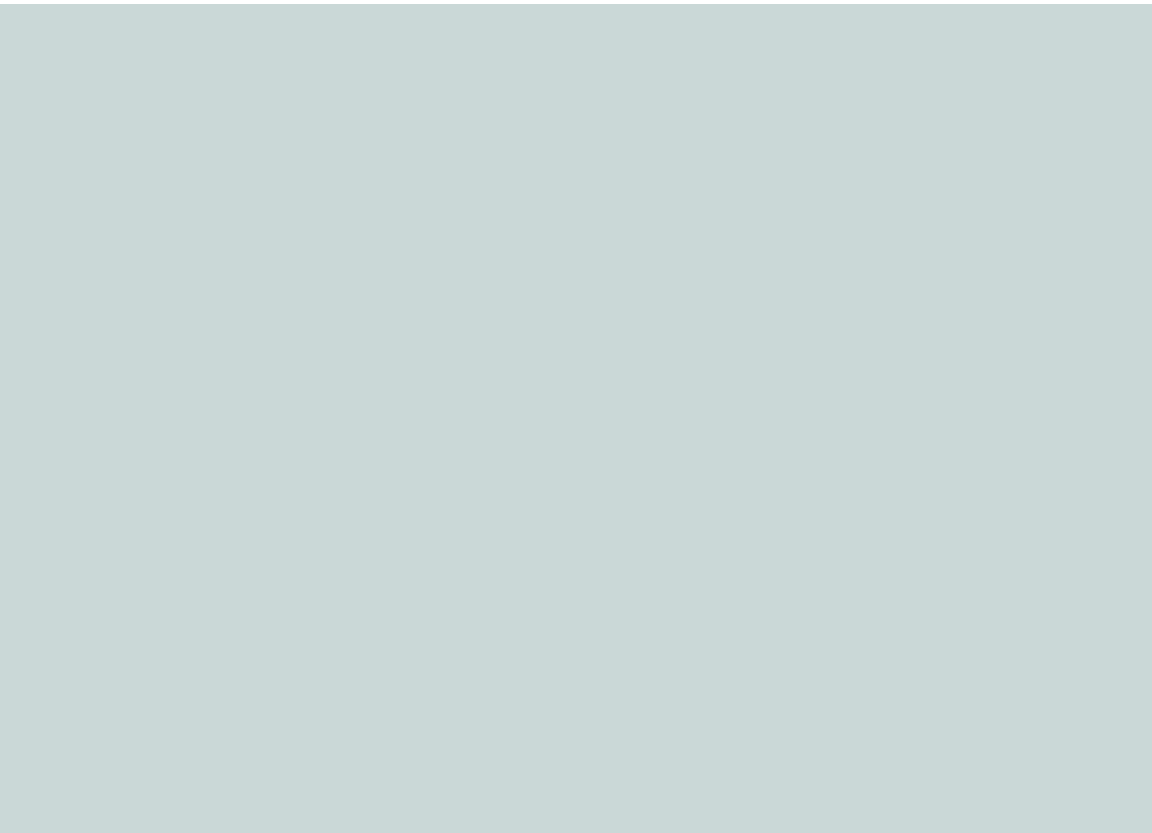
Psalm 32

Psalm 38

Psalm 102

Psalm 130

Psalm 143



Psalms of MESSIAH

Messianic psalms are poems that contain prophecies or references which point to the first and second advents of Christ. Traditionally, interpreters have considered a psalm “messianic” if, having little or no relationship to its historical context, it anticipated the coming of the Messiah or predicted the work of the Messiah. They speak in precise detail of His life, sufferings, resurrection, and kingship. Scholars have noted that these psalms accurately prophesy about Christ 30-40 times.

Not only do they tell of the future, but they were also used by Jesus Himself. The Lord often quoted the Messianic psalms:

Psalm 118:22, “a stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone...”

Psalm 41:9b, “one who shared my bread, has turned against me.”

Psalm 22:1a, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”

Psalm 31:5a, “Into your hands I commit my spirit...”

These psalms add to the depth of the story of the Messiah. They connect the Old Testament to the New. They build our trust in the entirety of the grand story of God’s redemptive plan through His Son, Jesus.

22

FOR THE DIRECTOR OF MUSIC. TO THE TUNE OF "THE DOE OF THE MORNING." A PSALM OF DAVID.

- ¹ My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?
Why are you so far from saving me,
so far from my cries of anguish?
- ² My God, I cry out by day, but you do not answer,
by night, but I find no rest.
- ³ Yet you are enthroned as the Holy One;
you are the one Israel praises.
- ⁴ In you our ancestors put their trust;
they trusted and you delivered them.
- ⁵ To you they cried out and were saved;
in you they trusted and were not put to shame.
- ⁶ But I am a worm and not a man,
scorned by everyone, despised by the people.
- ⁷ All who see me mock me;
they hurl insults, shaking their heads.
- ⁸ "He trusts in the LORD," they say,
"let the LORD rescue him.
Let him deliver him,
since he delights in him."
- ⁹ Yet you brought me out of the womb;
you made me trust in you, even at my mother's breast.
- ¹⁰ From birth I was cast on you;
from my mother's womb you have been my God.
- ¹¹ Do not be far from me,
for trouble is near
and there is no one to help.
- ¹² Many bulls surround me;
strong bulls of Bashan encircle me.
- ¹³ Roaring lions that tear their prey
open their mouths wide against me.
- ¹⁴ I am poured out like water,
and all my bones are out of joint.
My heart has turned to wax;
it has melted within me.
- ¹⁵ My mouth is dried up like a potsherd,
and my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth;
you lay me in the dust of death.

- 16 Dogs surround me,
a pack of villains encircles me;
they pierce my hands and my feet.
- 17 All my bones are on display;
people stare and gloat over me.
- 18 They divide my clothes among them
and cast lots for my garment.
- 19 But you, LORD, do not be far from me.
You are my strength; come quickly to help me.
- 20 Deliver me from the sword,
my precious life from the power of the dogs.
- 21 Rescue me from the mouth of the lions;
save me from the horns of the wild oxen.
- 22 I will declare your name to my people;
in the assembly I will praise you.
- 23 You who fear the LORD, praise him!
All you descendants of Jacob, honor him!
Revere him, all you descendants of Israel!
- 24 For he has not despised or scorned
the suffering of the afflicted one;
he has not hidden his face from him
but has listened to his cry for help.
- 25 From you comes the theme of my praise in the great assembly;
before those who fear you I will fulfill my vows.
- 26 The poor will eat and be satisfied;
those who seek the LORD will praise him—
may your hearts live forever!
- 27 All the ends of the earth
will remember and turn to the LORD,
and all the families of the nations
will bow down before him,
- 28 for dominion belongs to the LORD
and he rules over the nations.
- 29 All the rich of the earth will feast and worship;
all who go down to the dust will kneel before him—
those who cannot keep themselves alive.
- 30 Posterity will serve him;
future generations will be told about the Lord.
- 31 They will proclaim his righteousness,
declaring to a people yet unborn:
He has done it!

daily readings

Psalm 22

Psalm 2

Psalm 16

Psalm 97

Psalm 102

Psalm 110

Psalm 118

*My God, my God,
why have you forsaken me?*

notes

study questions

In your small group, open with these two things:

- Read Matthew 27:32-50.
- Listen to Chris Tomlin's version of the song, "The Wonderful Cross."

Read Psalm 22, a Messianic psalm of David. Notice the parallels between David's words about his life and the life of Christ. How do verses 1, 8, 16 and 18 point to the crucifixion?

While on the cross, Jesus quoted Psalm 22:1 (Matthew 27:46; Mark 15:34), known as the "Cry of Dereliction." What did it mean in that moment for Jesus to be forsaken? How does Isaiah 53:4-6 shed light on this moment?

Why is it important that the Messianic prophecies of the Psalms are precisely fulfilled in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus? (Note there is a 1,000-year gap between Psalm 22 and the crucifixion of Jesus.)

Take a moment and read Psalm 22 in silence. How does it make you feel to know all Christ endured on the cross for your salvation and restoration (Romans 5:8)?

Remember the Cross

Take Communion together as a small group.

For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread,²⁴ and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, “This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.”²⁵ In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.”

1 CORINTHIANS 11:23-25

Reflections on the Psalms

C.S. Lewis

The Psalms: Rejoice, the Lord Is King

(Preaching the Word series)

James Johnston

The Message of Psalms: Songs for the People of God

(The Bible Speaks Today series)

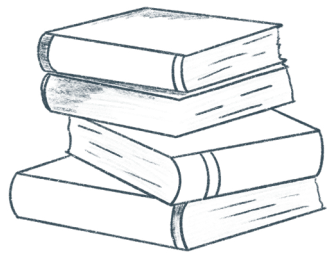
Michael Wilcock

Nearing a Far God: Praying the Psalms with Our Whole Selves

Leslie Leyland Fields

The Treasury of David: Spurgeon's Classic Work on the Psalms

Charles H. Spurgeon



FURTHER STUDY

This study guide is designed to help you understand and apply the Scriptures accurately to your life.

The Training Center offers Core Classes such as Personal Bible Study, Panorama of the Bible, and Our Faith that can help you deepen your time in the Word. If you have not yet taken these classes, we encourage you to do so to experience the riches that come from intentional exploration of God's written Word.

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