

THE BOOK OF
Psalms

GATEWAY TO THE PSALMS

LESSONS 1 – 6



COMMUNITY
BIBLE STUDY

Introduction to the Psalms



The book of Psalms, also known as *the Psalter*, is a collection of poems, songs, and prayers inspired by the Holy Spirit. Each psalm expresses the highs and lows of life for the Israelites. Even today, they put words to the emotions God's people experience as they try to live for Him in the world. The word *psalms* in Hebrew means "praises" or "praise songs." These songs, often sung in community, have been the hymnbook of the faithful through the ages.

History and Authors

The 150 psalms were put into their present form late in Israel's history. Some were written during the Israelites' Babylonian exile. David wrote his psalms between 1010–971 BC. Psalm 90 is attributed to Moses, who lived centuries earlier. The collection is organized in five "books": Psalms 1–41; 42–72; 73–89; 90–106; and 107–150. David wrote almost half the psalms, but there were many other psalm writers, also. Asaph, one of Israel's worship leaders, wrote Psalms 50 and 73–83. The sons of Korah, who were Levites, authored Psalms 42; 44–49; 84–85; and 87–88. Psalms 72 and 127 are attributed to David's son Solomon.

The psalms cover many different themes. Some are laments. Although most of the psalms express praise to God, many are also cries to God during times of struggle. Scattered throughout the Psalter are songs of trust, thanksgiving, and wisdom. And there are also some jarring imprecatory psalms, which curse God's enemies. Several of the psalms foreshadow the arrival of the Messiah, Jesus.

This study groups the psalms topically rather than from start to finish. This approach allows us to explore the main themes and learn how to use them in our own prayers.

Gateway into the Psalms

The first two psalms are a gateway into the Psalter. They have a common theme: everyone must choose between two very different paths in life. One leads to blessing and the other to destruction.

Psalm 1. This psalm is a wisdom psalm, which gives advice for living well. The opening presents two distinct ways of life, which the rest of the psalm explains the results of. Ultimately, a person who chooses right will be blessed.

Those who are blessed do not decide their life path based on advice from unbelievers. They do not choose the same ways that people who persist in sin do. They do not spend time with those who mock God and His law. They know there is a better way, which comes from delighting in God's instruction.

"Law" here is the word *torah*, which means "instruction." Though it can refer to the Pentateuch, the five books of Moses, it is not limited to that. It describes all God's instruction, meaning all of Scripture. As we read the Bible, we come to know the very mind and will of God. We learn how to experience intimate relationship with Him. That relationship brings delight. Yet we may resist having our way of life assessed and corrected by God's instruction. So if we wish to experience this delight, we must cultivate faith.

One way to cultivate faith is to meditate on God's word "day and night." This constant meditation should be a way of life (see Deut. 6:6-9). All of life should be guided by God's word. The result will be a stable, fruitful life. The psalmist compared it to a tree planted by "streams of water" that enable it to grow deep roots. God's counsel is like life-giving water. It provides the nourishment that keeps people healthy and fruitful through life's various seasons.

Think about the water source that keeps the leaf of the tree from withering. Psalm 1 does not imply that righteous people will never endure life's difficulties. But it does show us that even though the righteous face difficult seasons, the Scriptures bring refreshment. Meditating on them "plants" us by a spiritually flowing stream of living water. The Scriptures point us to Jesus, who gives "living water" that sustains life (Jn. 4:10). He invites anyone who is thirsty to come to Him and drink (see Jn. 7:37).

When the psalmist said that the righteous person prospers in all that he does, he had in mind this thriving tree. Following God's word is not about living like the rich and famous. A healthy tree does not produce fruit for itself but for others to enjoy. The prosperity this psalm talks about is confidence and trust in God that allows His people to delight in Him and with Him. God blesses such people with His favor, presence, and friendship. That is what true prosperity is all about.



The image of those who follow the wicked path is unpleasant. Their lives produce no fruit for others. Instead, they produce chaff. Chaff is the useless by-product of the grain harvest. It is separated from the edible grain and blown away by the wind or thrown away. Though the paths of the righteous and wicked intersect at times, one day they will separate. God will condemn those who choose their own path. They will not be able to withstand His judgment.

Think about the two paths in Psalm 1. There are only two choices: relationship with God or separation from Him. Some people want to follow Him halfway, when it seems convenient. The rest of the time they want to follow their own paths. But God does not leave that option. Christ's sacrifice demands a choice. We either follow Him wholeheartedly or we do not.

Psalm 2. This is the first “royal psalm” in the Psalter. Royal psalms highlight Israel’s king and coming Messiah. Psalm 2 describes the rebellious nations that refused to submit to the Lord and His anointed king. God’s people had endured the rage of nations against Israel and its kings. But they still believed that God would fulfill His promises to His people. The end had not come, and God would remain faithful. The New Testament writers saw the fulfillment of this psalm in Jesus, the Messiah (see Acts 4:25; Rev. 2:27).

The psalm opens with the picture of a meeting attended by the world’s power brokers, men who oppose God. They call for war against God and His Anointed—not just Israel’s king, but the King of kings, Jesus Christ. Unlike the righteous in Psalm 1 who delight in God’s law, these rulers consider His law oppressive. They want to break what they consider to be chains of bondage. This is the essence of the “counsel of the wicked” that Psalm 1 describes.

Psalm 2 portrays people throughout the ages who challenge the rule of God and His Anointed. They find His law offensive and want to live by their own rules instead. In Acts 4:25-27, Luke, author of the New Testament books Luke and Acts, referenced Psalm 2. He correlated Herod and Pilate with “the kings of the earth”

and the Gentiles and Israelites with “the nations ... and the peoples.” In putting Jesus to death, they played out the roles of Psalm 2. They showed that they would rather kill the Anointed One than obey Him.

But God mocks their arrogance. He laughs at the tiny, temporary, finite kings who dare to attack the Almighty. Their efforts are vain and futile. God ridicules and holds in derision those who reject Him. But instead of responding with cosmic thunder, God pours all His authority into His chosen King. God gave His Son dominion over all the earth.

No Israelite king could have dreamed of such an empire. Centuries later, the New Testament writers recognized that these verses refer to Jesus. But Jesus was always God’s Son! How did He become the Son? This reference points back to the covenant God had made with David (see 2 Sam. 7:12-16). God promised He would establish an eternal kingdom through David’s offspring. Jesus is that prophesied offspring.

But the wrath of God, seen in Psalm 2:5, was poured out not on guilty rebels but on innocent Jesus. Jesus gave His life on the cross for arrogant sinners who rebelled against Him. Then at His resurrection, Jesus defeated sin and death, making Him King forever. And now God has given Him authority over all things, including the nations. Jesus is the King whom Psalm 2 was written about. The only wise response to this King, the psalm writer warned in 2:11, is to serve Him and rejoice with trembling. If we submit to the King, we experience joy. What we receive from Him is much more than anything we give up for Him.

The kings of the earth should submit to the true King with a kiss as one might kiss a signet ring to show loyalty. One day God’s patience will end, and His wrath will kindle against those who refuse to honor His Son. When that time comes, we do not want to be found walking the path of the wicked. We want to be found taking refuge in Him.

PERSONALIZE THE TRUTH

Consider what the way of righteousness and the way of sinners looks like today. What do you notice about each path? Which path are you drawn to, and why?



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Psalms to Deepen Our Trust

MEMORIZE THE TRUTH

I will say to the LORD, “My refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.” — Psalm 91:2

DAY 1: Psalms 4; 11—Relief in Distress

1. What circumstances caused David to seek God in Psalm 4? In Psalm 11?
2. What did David believe about God that gave him hope in Psalm 4? In Psalm 11?
3. From Psalm 4, how would you say that David’s trust in God affected the way he lived? Is there anything you learn from him that you would like to apply to your life?
4. Read 11:5 alongside James 1:2-4 and 1:12. When the Lord tests the righteous, what outcome is He seeking? If you have experienced this in your life, share what happened.

LEARN THE TRUTH

In Psalm 11:1-2 we see that David was tempted to flee from what threatened him. But instead, he chose to trust the Lord. When you experience stress or fear, what is your first thought? Do you automatically look for a way to escape? Or do you instinctively choose to trust God? Ask God to help you make a habit of turning to Him first in trust.

DAY 2: Psalm 16—Secure Forevermore

5. David’s trust in God was active and intentional. What parts of this prayer show this?
6. Read 16:5-6 with Numbers 18:20. What did David mean when he wrote about his beautiful inheritance?
7. Read 16:8-11 again.
 - a. How did David show that he trusted God not just with his life, but also with his death?
 - b. Peter referenced these verses in his sermon recorded in Acts 2:22-28. About whom did Peter say David was prophetically writing these words? And why is this so significant?



DAY 3: Psalm 63—Satisfied in God

8. What deep longing did David express in this psalm, and what words convey it?
9. Have you ever had this kind of longing? If so, what was that like? If not, why do you think that is?
10. Read Matthew 5:6 and John 4:13-14. What did Jesus promise to those who feel a longing similar to David's?

DAY 4: Psalm 73—New Perspectives

11. Why did the psalm writer, Asaph, nearly stumble? Can you relate to his experience in any way?
12. What caused Asaph's perspective to change?
13. How could you use this psalm to encourage yourself or someone else who struggles to trust God with injustices in their life or in the world?

DAY 5: Psalm 91—A Safe Dwelling Place

14. What images did the writer of Psalm 91 use to portray God's protection? Choose a favorite and say why you chose it.
15. Psalm 91 does not mean that God's people will never have trouble. What insights do these verses give about this?
 - a. John 16:33
 - b. Romans 8:35-39
16. How can we reconcile the suffering that believers face in this life with the truth of Psalm 91?

APPLY THE TRUTH

Psalm 91 describes the way our souls can rest secure. When we make God our home, our shelter, our refuge, our dwelling place, nothing can harm us in any ultimate sense. Ask God to show you if you are trusting something other than Him for your security. Then express in prayer your desire to find refuge in Him alone.

DAY 6: Participate in Class





Psalm to Deepen Our Trust

Study Commentary

We rarely get to hear people's deepest thoughts and prayers while they are in crisis. But these psalms give a glimpse into the souls of people who trusted God in hard times. They give us words for when we do not know what to pray.

Psalm 4. David based his trust on past experiences of the Lord's faithfulness. In previous times of distress, God had helped him. Remembering those times gave David confidence that God would answer his prayer again. David is a model of trust. His psalm shows us what enables us to trust God and what hinders us from it.

David's trust came from his identity in God. He knew God had chosen him. So David did not allow people's vain words and lies to shame him. David was angry about how they treated him, but he did not sin. He gave his anger to God. When we are upset, we too can trust God and "offer right sacrifices." What are these? Psalm 51:17 describes right sacrifices as "a broken spirit ... and contrite heart." When we humbly seek God in prayer, He answers.

Psalm 4:6 reveals the main point of David's prayer: that God would show good to His people. It is hard to trust God when we worry that He will not provide what we need. But true joy comes from God's favor and gracious attention to us, even more than a rich harvest of "grain and wine" could provide.

Verse 8 shows us what trust looks like in practice. David's identity, honor, and everything he needed all came from God. Because he believed this, David was able to sleep peacefully, knowing God kept him safe.

Think about how God provides. Jesus told people not to be anxious about food, drink, or clothing. He said, "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you" (Matt. 6:33). He fulfilled our greatest need by sending Jesus to die for our sins (1 Pet. 2:24). Surely, we can trust Him to meet all our needs.

Psalm 11. We do not know the context of this psalm, but David was in serious trouble and felt like running. Yet, David stood his ground and trusted God. We can understand David's tension. In difficulty, many of us are tempted to run away and find our own security. But David did not yield to this temptation. His response was powerful and profound: The world may feel chaotic, but God still reigns. When everything seems shaky, God remains steady. The wicked have power, but God is still in charge. He judges the wicked and also "tests the

righteous," to refine their faith until it is true, reliable, and pure (see 1 Pet. 1:6-7).

Psalm 16. The main idea of Psalm 16 is that God is the supreme good in life. He alone provides what is good in both life and death. The psalm describes two paths. The saints follow God's path. But those who run after other gods—such as pleasure, significance, or security—find sorrow. David wanted nothing to do with that path. Rather, David rejoiced that the Lord was his and his people's "portion." An Israelite's portion (inheritance) was the land given to him in the Promised Land (see Josh. 13:6-7). But priests and Levites did not receive land. The Lord Himself was their portion (see Num. 18:20). David proclaimed his inheritance was beautiful because it was the Lord Himself.

David trusted in God and His path, "the path of life," which led to security and joy. He trusted God with his life and did not fear death. Although David would not have known much about life after death, he did know that death would not end his relationship with the Lord. His hope was fulfilled by Jesus, who lived, died, and rose again to give eternal life to all who believe in Him. The night before He died, Jesus promised His disciples that He would go and prepare a place for all who would follow Him. He added, "I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also" (Jn. 14:3).

Psalm 63. David wrote Psalm 63 in the wilderness after running for his life. Yet the tone of this psalm is not fearful. Rather, we see David's deep trust in the Lord and longing for His presence. David compared his longing for God to a desperate need for water. David yearned for God as a desert wanderer yearns for water.

In 63:2-4, David explained that, in the sanctuary, he had seen God and His justice, forgiveness, and grace. David longed to see God's power and glory again. So he praised the Lord, knowing His love was better than life. David would satisfy his soul with the spiritual "food" God gave. His lips would praise the Lord. Jesus restated this idea in His Sermon on the Mount: those who hunger and thirst for righteousness will be satisfied (see Matt. 5:6). Jesus is the living water, the water of life that quenches the thirst of all who follow Him (see Jn. 4:13-14).



Psalm 73. Asaph, a Levite, was one of the worship leaders commissioned by King David (see 1 Chron. 16:1, 4-5). Twelve psalms about learning to trust God, including Psalm 73, are attributed to Asaph.

But at one time, Asaph envied those who prospered, even though they were arrogant and wicked. Asaph expected that obedience to the law would bring blessing. Similarly, he assumed that disobedience would bring curses. But the wicked seemed to experience the shalom, or peaceful life, intended for God's people. Asaph wondered if he had followed God in vain. What was the use of keeping his heart and hands clean only to watch the wicked thrive? Asaph found himself becoming bitter toward God. His doubt almost caused his faith to slip away.

But Asaph's perspective changed after he went into God's sanctuary to seek Him. He realized that the wicked were chasing temporary earthly desires. They did not choose God as their eternal portion. They accepted a counterfeit of shalom (peace) instead of the true shalom of God. Finally, Asaph saw life from the right perspective. He realized that God's steadfast love is worth more than anything this world offers. It is worth more than life itself. Trusting God brings true shalom. That is far better than any prosperity the rich and powerful enjoy.

Think about a change in perspective. At the beginning of Psalm 73, Asaph was looking at things from an earthly point of view. From that perspective, the world seemed unjust to Asaph. Why do wicked people prosper while the righteous suffer? But then Asaph entered God's presence and looked at things from God's point of view. He realized that the Lord is not asleep—He sees everything. He will bring justice in His good time. The wicked will not escape the judgment they deserve. Until then, God is continually with His people, holding them in His right hand. He guides them now and promises, after this life is done, to welcome them into glory—forever.

Psalm 91. This psalm uses powerful and intentional imagery meant to show God is the only source of true security. God is a fortress. He is a shield. He certainly has spared some of us the pain of tragedy and destruction. But others of us have experienced terrible suffering and evil. How should we think about a poem like this?

To begin, we should remember that the poet was not naive. He knew the dangers he wrote about and had certainly seen their effects. God's people had been persecuted, exiled, oppressed, and killed. He was not saying that if you trust God your life will be easy and free of suffering. To think that would be to misread the text. Jesus addressed this issue. Quoting 91:11-12, Satan tempted Him to jump off the temple, saying God had commanded angels to bear Jesus up so He would not strike His foot against a stone. But Jesus rebuked Satan for misusing the text. Jesus told him not to put God to the test (see Matt. 4:5-7; Deut. 6:16).

We should not test God either. Physical safety is not a right and God has no obligation to protect us. He does provide refuge, but He may also allow tragedy and suffering. Jesus knew that truth firsthand (see Acts 2:23). Likewise, we are not promised a pain-free life. But our suffering will not be in vain. Paul said that our physical afflictions are light and temporary compared to the "eternal weight of glory" (2 Cor. 4:17) awaiting those of us who belong to Jesus.

God may spare us from certain tragedies entirely. Or He may walk with us through them, giving His indescribable peace. Either way, the promises in Psalm 91 are true. God can surely be trusted to watch over His children.

PERSONALIZE THE TRUTH

When the psalmists were in crisis, they took their concerns to God. God has a purpose for everything, even hardship. When we talk to Him about our concerns, He might even share His perspective with us, as He did with Asaph. What burdens you today? Take it to God. Tell Him honestly how you feel. Then watch and listen to see what He might share with you to help you trust Him.



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Longing for God

MEMORIZE THE TRUTH

My soul longs, yes, faints for the courts of the LORD; my heart and flesh sing for joy to the living God. — Psalm 84:2

DAY 1: Psalm 23— The Lord as Provider and Protector

1. The psalmist lacked nothing because the Lord was his shepherd. List all his different needs that the Lord provided for.
2. Read John 10:11-15. Who is the embodiment of the shepherd in Psalm 23, and how would you describe His relationship to His sheep?
3. Reflect on your answers to questions 1 and 2. Is there a longing stirred in you as you think about the good shepherd and what He wants to do for His sheep? If so, be ready to share your response.

DAY 2: Psalm 27—The Lord as Light and Salvation

4. What difficulties was David apparently facing when he wrote this psalm? List as many as you can find.
5. If you faced difficulties similar to David's, what might you ask God for?
6. What did David ask for, long for, and seek from the Lord?
7. David believed that God Himself was more necessary than anything else in life. What did David say in this psalm that helps to explain why he believed this?

LEARN THE TRUTH

How good are you at waiting for God? The psalmist urges us to be strong, take heart, and wait for the Lord. This week when you have a need or desire, instead of immediately working to find a way to take care of it yourself, take time to wait on the Lord. What does He want to say to you about this need or desire? Where is He at work already concerning this? Plan to talk about what you learn or notice in your small group.



DAY 3: Psalms 42–43—Lord of the Downcast Soul

Note: These two psalms read as one long poem with a similar theme and refrain.

8. What word pictures did the psalmist use to show the intensity of his longing? What was it that he longed for?
9. The psalmist was suffering because of what people did to him and because of what God seemed *not* to do for him. Give examples of both.
10. Even though it seemed as if God was not acting, how did the psalmist show that he still trusted Him?

DAY 4: Psalm 61—The Lord as Rock and Refuge

11. David's longing for God seemed to be almost physical in its expression. What words or phrases suggest this?
12. Psalm 61:6-7 indicate that David longed for more than just relief from difficult circumstances. Read 1 Chronicles 17:11-14, which is about God's covenant with David. Then read Revelation 11:15. Who is the one David yearned for, even if he did not fully realize it?

DAY 5: Psalm 84—Better Than 1,000 Days Elsewhere

Note: In Old Testament times when God's people wanted to be in God's presence, they went to the temple in Jerusalem. When the psalm refers to God's *dwelling place* or *house*, it is talking about the temple.

13. Joy seems to overflow from this psalm.
 - a. List some examples of this joy along with the references.
 - b. From these verses as well as from your own experience, how would you explain the joy created by simply being in God's presence?

Note: "Valley of Baca" can also be translated as "Valley of Weeping."

14. Psalm 84:5-7 describes pilgrims traveling toward God's house in Zion, or Jerusalem.
 - a. The journey included passing through a difficult valley. How did the pilgrims find encouragement to continue?
 - b. Has God ever encouraged you during a season of weeping? If so, how?
15. Do you learn anything about God in this psalm that deepens your longing for Him? If so, be ready to share in class.

APPLY THE TRUTH

When the Israelites wanted to be in God's presence, they went to the temple in Jerusalem. But now God's Spirit lives in and with those who have put their faith in Christ. If you belong to Jesus, you can meet with Him anywhere. Where do you go and what do you do when you want to enjoy the presence of Jesus? Plan to talk about this in your small group.

DAY 6: Participate in Class





Longing for God

Study Commentary

God created us to enjoy a relationship with Him. In these psalms, the psalmists longed to be near God and dwell in His presence. They expressed the longing for spiritual intimacy with God that we still have today.

Psalms 23. The beauty and assurance of this psalm have made it a favorite Bible passage. Here, David described God as his shepherd and host. David used images of green pastures and still waters to show how the Lord provides for His sheep. God took care of David. But David knew life is not always serene. Sometimes life leads us through frightening valleys. And the Lord protects and comforts His children even there. Whether difficult or pleasant, David wanted God to lead him on righteous paths.

David also used the analogy of a gracious host to show the Lord's provision and protection. The Lord made a feast for him, anointed his head, and filled his cup to overflowing. David could enjoy the feast even while his enemies stood nearby, watching. That is because he knew that God was protecting him. David described his experience of God's care with the words *goodness* and *mercy*. David only knew this good and merciful shepherd as "the LORD." But from John 10:11, we know this shepherd as Jesus. He is the good shepherd who laid His life down for His sheep. He is the provider and protector we long for on the path to righteousness.

Think about following the good shepherd. *Who knows best, the shepherd or sheep? Sometimes we, the "sheep" in this analogy, think we know what is best. We go on our way – but we end up more vulnerable, confused and anxious! Jesus is "the Shepherd ... of our souls" (1 Pet. 2:25). He knows what we really need.*

Psalms 27. David called God his *light* and *salvation*. Scripture regularly contrasts light and darkness. Light describes the experience of God's salvation and pleasure (see 4:6; 18:28; 43:3). Even as enemies approached, David did not dread or fear them but longed to remain in God's presence and safety. His confidence came from knowing the character of God and remaining close to Him. We see David's desire for God most clearly in 27:4: more than anything else, David longed to be in the Lord's presence and to enjoy His beauty. He longed for God Himself. He was utterly preoccupied with knowing God.

But David knew that it was impossible to dwell in God's presence without first making the proper payment for sins. Sacrifice makes access to God possible. So he made sacrifices while shouting with joy and singing to the Lord.

Today, our hope of intimacy with God completely depends on Jesus's sacrifice of Himself for our sins. He alone can bring us to the Father (see Jn. 14:6; Heb. 9:22).

After offering sacrifices, David pleaded with God to not turn away from him. He wanted to live God's way. David shows us that a relationship with God is not just about emotion. It also means following and obeying Him in hard times. David ended his prayer with the assurance that God would bless the people. He urged them to wait prayerfully on God. Seeking the Lord transforms anxiety and fear into confidence that lets us face life with courage.

Psalms 42–43. Originally these two chapters seem to have been one psalm. Both contain the common refrain: "Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God." The author compared his soul's longing for God to a deer's panting for water. That is because living in the presence of God is as essential as water! But instead of refreshing spiritual water, the psalmist had salty, mocking tears. He wondered, *Where is God?* His memory of joyful pilgrimages to Jerusalem in the past magnified his feeling of being cut off from God's presence. We see his inner turmoil—the tension between a soul that despairs and a faith that hopes.

In 42:7, the psalmist felt overwhelmed by God, as though raging waters were rolling over him. Then his enemies made his misery even worse by asking, "Where is your God?" (42:10). Even though the psalmist had been remembering God, he wondered if God was remembering him. But the psalmist combated his enemies' oppression by reminding himself to hope in God. The unending tears of 42:3 contrast with the steadfast love and song of 42:8.

In 43:1–4, we see the psalmist petitioning God to be his legal advocate. He asks God to vindicate him and ease his mourning (see 42:9; 43:2) by shedding light and sending truth. The psalmist was being mistreated and lied to, but he trusted God to meet him at the altar in His holy dwelling. There, the psalmist would find joy again and would give praise to the Lord. The downcast soul would come before God and praise Him. This psalm shows us that we must choose whether to fix our eyes on circumstances or on God. God is with us and is able to lift our weary souls.



Psalm 61. This Davidic song is a model prayer for anyone who feels fainthearted and longs for God's strength. Although David was a king, it gives words to the desires of all God's people. David began with a plea for God to attend to his cry. The "end of the earth" is a metaphor for spiritual distance. David was at the end of his own resources and courage. He longed for God's refuge—a place like solid rock where he could be secure.

The images of a tent and wings in 61:4 show that God is not only strong but also gentle. The tent was God's dwelling place on the earth (see Ex. 33:7, 9). The wings signify God's loving care. David's prayer shows his belief that the way to deal with hardship is to return to God's presence. The nearer he was to God, the safer David's life and kingdom would be. In our times of stress, we also can rely on our loving God's strength and care instead of our own weak efforts.

David knew that God had heard his vows and had made him a king over His people. God had made a covenant with David to put one of his descendants on an eternal throne (see 1 Chron. 17:11-14). David referred to that promise when he said, "May he be enthroned forever" (Ps. 61:7). God answered that prayer 1,000 years later in Jesus, often called *the son of David*. When Jesus Christ is on His throne, God's blessings flow from Jesus to all who are saved. Even though David did not know Jesus, he knew what God wanted to do through His anointed king. With that confidence, David could worship God—his shelter and strong tower. He is the ultimate strengthening for the faint-hearted.

Psalm 84. Of all this week's psalms, this one may best show the longing for God conveyed in the Psalter. The psalmist desired God so greatly that he was weak and nearly fainted. The solution was to enter the Lord's courts in Jerusalem. Four times he referred to God as *the Lord of hosts*—the commander of heaven's armies. All powers in heaven and earth are under the Lord's authority. In a world that often seems out of control, we share this longing.

The psalmist called those who dwell in God's house and sing His praises *blessed*. This describes a deep joy based on relationship with God and not on circumstances. When God's pilgrims had trouble on their way to Jerusalem, they found strength in Him. The Valley of Baca, (also translated as "Valley of Tears") refers to an arid land where God's people found refreshment in Him. Our journey to true fellowship with God is often filled with trials. Yet even in our desert experiences, God can refresh us. He gives life-giving water to the spiritually parched.

Think about Jesus's offer to give us "living water." In John 7:37-38, Jesus invited anyone who is thirsty to go to Him and drink. He said that whoever believes in Him would receive the Holy Spirit and that rivers of living water would flow from within them. Is your soul dry and thirsty? Do you long to have your spiritual thirst quenched? Ask Jesus to give you His living water!

Next the psalmist asked the Lord to look with favor on Israel's king. The king served as Israel's shield. He also was responsible for leading the people in developing their covenant relationship with God. As part of this relationship, God would not withhold anything good from His people. No wonder the psalmist would have preferred a single day in the Lord's house to 1,000 elsewhere. He concluded with the assurance that blessing and trust are closely associated. Pilgrimage is never easy. We need to trust God enough to leave old comforts and press on toward something—Someone—new.

PERSONALIZE THE TRUTH

In Psalms 42–43, the psalmist told his downcast soul to "hope in God." How could you encourage your own soul toward hope and faith? Write some ideas and return to them when you go through turmoil.



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Contrition and Confidence

MEMORIZE THE TRUTH

O Israel, hope in the LORD! For with the LORD there is steadfast love, and with him is plentiful redemption. — Psalm 130:7

DAY 1: Psalms 6; 25; 32 — The Basis of God's Forgiveness

1. In each of these psalms, David expressed concern over his sin. Find at least one example of this from each psalm and list it. Give the reference where you found it.
2. David knew he did not deserve God's forgiveness. But he knew he could rely on God's character. What do you observe about God's character from 6:4; 25:6; and 32:10?
3. From 32:1-2 and 32:3-4, how did David contrast the person whom God has forgiven with the one who has not admitted his sin or received forgiveness?

LEARN THE TRUTH

What would it be like if God was *not* unfailingly merciful and full of faithful love? How would your life be different if God did not love you the way He does? Think about that this week, especially when you sin and plan to discuss it in class.

DAY 2: Psalm 51—The Prayer of a Repentant King

4. The context of this psalm is an event that is recounted in 2 Samuel 11–12.
 - a. From 2 Samuel 11:2-5 and 12:7-11, what sins had David committed, and against whom had he sinned?
 - b. Compare 2 Samuel 12:13 with Psalm 51:4. In what sense was David's sin against God?
5. What part of David's prayer from verses 7-12 stands out to you most, and why?
6. David asked God not to take the Holy Spirit from him. From 1 Samuel 16:14-16, why might David have prayed this?
7. Read John 14:16-17. What do you learn about the Holy Spirit's presence in believers today?



DAY 3: Psalm 85—A Prayer for Israel’s Restoration

8. In verses 1-3, the psalmist recalled the ways the Lord had shown mercy and favor to Israel. List them.
9. In verses 4-7, the psalmist made requests of God not just for himself, but for all the people of Israel.
 - a. What did the psalmist ask God to do for His people?
 - b. How could you adapt this prayer for a group of Christians you care about?
10. Like the other psalms you have studied so far, this psalm is based on confidence in God’s character, not on the worthiness of the person praying. What did the psalmist believe about God? Give as many details as you find.

DAY 4: Psalm 130—Waiting for God’s Redemption

11. God is full of mercy and faithful love. And He is also holy and offended by our sin. What did the psalmist ask in verse 3? And what is the answer, according to Romans 3:10-12?
12. What good news do Romans 3:21-24 and 1 John 1:9 declare to anyone worried about God keeping a record of their sins?

DAY 5: Psalm 143—A Prayer for Help to Do God’s Will

13. This psalm, like the others we have studied this week, takes a solemn attitude toward sin. What thoughts and feelings did David express that show how serious he understood his sin to be?
14. Even though David’s sin was serious, he did not despair. What do you see in this psalm that shows the reason David could hope, even though he had sinned? Give as many examples as you can find.
15. David wanted to be forgiven, obviously. But he also wanted to be free from committing the same sin again. What do you see in this psalm that shows this?

APPLY THE TRUTH

Psalm 32:3-5 shows two ways to deal with our sin: stay quiet or humbly admit it to God. Think of times you have chosen these options. What did you learn from both? How does that affect the way you deal with your sin?

DAY 6: Participate in Class





Contrition and Confidence

Study Commentary

Repentance is a vital part of our relationship with the Lord. Admitting our sin is the way to restoration. Penitential psalms like the ones in this lesson show us that we need to express regret and sorrow over our sin. They emphasize the necessity of admitting our sin to God and repenting. But they also provide the confidence that God forgives us.

Psalm 6. David appears to have written this psalm while suffering a serious illness. But at the beginning of the psalm David asked God not to rebuke him in His anger. It seems that an unspecified sin was at the core of David's anguish. Still, David anticipated God's forgiveness because he trusted in God's faithful love. David knew that God forgives the penitent out of His covenant love for His people. God's enduring love is the basis of David's request for mercy. But David was weary of waiting and asked, "How long?" He pointed out that the dead cannot praise God. He seemed to be suggesting that God should save him so that God could receive David's praise!

David was impatient, yet he remained confident in the Lord. When his enemies tried to exploit his weakened state, David knew they would not succeed. The Lord had heard his plea and accepted his prayer. That is why he could confidently say, "Depart from me, all you workers of evil." Jesus quoted these words in Luke 13. He was describing people who pretended to have a relationship with Him but did not really know Him at all (see Lk. 13:22-30).

Psalm 25. Like Psalm 1, Psalm 25 highlights two ways of life. David wanted to trust in God and please Him. But others lived treacherous lives and did not care what God thought. David asked God to teach him His ways and to lead him in His truth. As he attempted to live God's way, however, he became even more aware of his own sinfulness. That is why in 25:6-7 he prayed that the Lord would remember His mercy and steadfast love and not remember David's sin.

In 25:8-15, we see David's confidence in God's guidance and forgiveness. The Lord directs the path of the one who "fears the LORD." People who have a holy reverence for God are the ones He invites into His circle of friendship. God actually confides in such people. Psalm 25 helps us understand that God wants our friendship. Because sinners cannot live closely with Him, He longs to guide us in His way and forgive us when we disobey. We confess our sin so we can walk in a renewed relationship with God.

Psalm 32. Some scholars link Psalms 32 and 51. They believe both psalms are David's response to his sins against Bathsheba and Uriah (see 2 Sam. 11-12). Psalm 32 begins with David's joyful relief because God forgave him. It ends with an exhortation to God's people to acknowledge their sins and walk in His ways. Verses 1-2 detail three ways God deals with sin.

First, He forgives it and takes it away. Second, He covers it, removing evil deeds from sight. In the Old Testament, animal sacrifices covered sins (see Lev. 4:34-35). Third, God does not place sin in the sinner's account (see Rom. 4:8). But before David admitted his sin, he felt guilty. God's hand was heavy on him. His strength dried up. His spiritual dryness prompted him to diligently seek God.

Think about trying to cover up sin. God is the only one who can cover our sin. David tried to cover up his sin with Bathsheba, but that caused more sin—like having her husband killed. God loved David too much to let his sin stay in the dark. God sent the prophet Nathan to confront David, who acknowledged his sin and was restored. Nothing is hidden from God (see Heb. 4:13). Trust God, not yourself, to cover your sin.

Psalm 51. This psalm's title clearly states that it is about the time David sinned against Bathsheba. Second Samuel 12:13 includes only a brief admission of sin by David: "I have sinned against the LORD." His short confession hardly matches the gravity of his sin. But Psalm 51 reveals what was going on in David's heart. The psalm begins with a tortured plea for mercy: "I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me." Then in 51:4, David said something that may be hard for us to understand: that his sin was against God only. David had clearly sinned terribly against Bathsheba, Uriah, and Israel's army. But his sin against God was even greater. In Mark 12:28-31, Jesus said the command to love God is the first and greatest commandment. The command to love others is next. When we break the first command, invariably, we will break the second also.



David realized he was sinful to the core. He said that he had even been conceived in sin. This means that David—and all humans—are born with a sinful nature. But when we, like David, admit to God how deeply sin has stained us and ask for His forgiveness, we can be released from its bondage. That release comes at great cost—the Son of God’s death on a cross. But it was a price Jesus was happy to pay because of His great love for us.

David asked the Lord to create a clean heart within him. He also pleaded with God not to take His Spirit from David. Believers today know that because of Jesus’s death and resurrection, the Holy Spirit indwells them permanently. But David could not have imagined such a guarantee in his day.

He may have feared that the Holy Spirit would leave him the way the Spirit had left King Saul (see 1 Sam. 16:14-16). David did not want to lose God’s anointing. His plea also helps us see that God would be justified in breaking relationship with us when we sin. But He wants to remain with His people, so He chooses to forgive.

Psalm 51 ends with a focus on sacrifices. The Law of Moses required sacrifices to atone for sin. So we should not interpret 51:16-17 to mean that sacrifices were unimportant. God forgives not only because we confess with contrite hearts, but also on the basis of sacrifice. Jesus is the ultimate sacrifice (see Heb. 10:12). The Lamb of God suffered in our place. So we can be confident that God forgives when we admit our sins and trust in Jesus’s sacrifice. Because of God’s steadfast love, God is faithful to forgive us and cleanse us from all unrighteousness (see 1 Jn. 1:9).

Think about how to confess sin. In Old Testament times, a repentant sinner would take a sacrificial animal to the priest who would intercede for the sinner before God. But Jesus changed all that. The book of Hebrews tells us that He is both the ultimate sacrifice and the ultimate high priest. Because Jesus is our sacrificial Lamb, we no longer need to offer sacrifices to cover our sins. And because He is our great high priest, we can go directly to Him to confess our sin.

Psalm 85. This psalm addresses the sins of a nation instead of an individual. It may have been written in response to a drought or famine in Israel (see the references to land in verses 1 and 12). Presumably, God was disciplining His people for their age-old rebellion and idolatry. The psalmist pleaded with God to restore Israel, to turn toward His people again. God’s past acts of grace gave him confidence to ask the Lord to act again. This plea for mercy was based on God’s revelation about Himself in Exodus 34:6-7. God holds the unrepentant accountable. But because He is merciful, gracious, loving, faithful, and slow to anger, God forgives those who repent. God does not restore and renew people because of something they do but because of His own character.

Psalm 130. One of 15 ascent songs, the Israelites sang this psalm as they traveled up to Zion to worship God. Its message summarizes the gospel. It recognizes that if the Lord were to keep a count of every human’s sin, no one could survive. That is why the psalmist pleads for mercy. But verse 4 brings the good news: there is forgiveness! God’s forgiveness is certain because it is based on His steadfast love. Forgiveness comes at an infinitely high price for God—the death of His Son. But through this sacrifice, He forgives those who cry out for mercy.

Psalm 143. The last of our penitential psalms is another of David’s. Though he mentioned no specific sin, he pleaded to be spared God’s judgment. David knew that no one is righteous before God. No one can survive God’s judgment. David was desperate for restored relationship with God. To not have God’s face shining on him felt like death. That passion for God may be what made him a man after God’s own heart (see Acts 13:22). We see this passion in Psalm 143:10 where he asked God to teach him to do His will. He depended on God’s Spirit to lead him. It is important that we do not allow sin in our lives to remain unconfessed. When we keep our hearts clean before Him, we are open to His instruction. We can be confident that He will guide us through even the most difficult times.

PERSONALIZE THE TRUTH

Do you know for sure that God forgives you? If you do not feel confident, what Scriptures from this week’s lesson could help you be sure of His forgiveness? If you are not sure you have received Christ’s gift of salvation and forgiveness, talk to your class leader.



COMMUNITY
BIBLE STUDY





Songs to the Creator

MEMORIZE THE TRUTH

O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth. — Psalm 8:9

DAY 1: Psalm 8—God’s Majesty in Creation

1. What examples of God’s glory and majesty do you find in this psalm?

2. Read 1 Corinthians 1:27. What example of this truth do you find in Psalm 8?

3. David asked a question in 8:3-4.
 - a. What did the psalmist, David, find so amazing?

 - b. Have you ever pondered this same question? If so, explain.

DAY 2: Psalm 29—The Lord’s Powerful Voice in Creation

4. What did the psalmist, David, say about the Lord’s voice? List as many details as you can find.

5. From verses 1-2 and 9, who should respond to the Lord’s majesty? And how should they respond?

LEARN THE TRUTH

God speaks through His creation. Sunrises, weather, plants, animals, mountains, streams—they all say who He is. This week, notice what He has made in our world. What does it say about Him? How can you praise Him for it? Share with your small group about what you notice.

DAY 3: Psalm 33—The Creator Watches Over His Creation

6. Read Genesis 1:3-26. How does Psalm 33 confirm the account of God’s creation of the world? Give references for the verses on which you base your response.



7. God did not just create the world and then remove His involvement from it. In this psalm, what examples of His ongoing interest in His creation do you find?
8. What difference does it make to you personally to know that the Lord is looking down from heaven—on you?

DAY 4: Psalm 65—God Provides for His Creation

9. This psalm declares God to be the “hope of all the ends of the earth.”
 - a. What examples of God providing for the earth and its inhabitants do you find in this psalm?
 - b. Do any of these give you hope? Explain.
10. Verse 8 gives a reason God does these awesome deeds.
 - a. What is that reason?
 - b. How does Romans 1:19-20 express a similar idea and expand on it?

DAY 5: Psalm 104—Celebrating Creation

11. Read the psalm aloud and notice its rich and poetic imagery. What are one or two of your favorite images, and why?
12. From 104:27-30, what evidence do you see of creation’s dependence on the Creator?
13. From 104:31-35, how did the psalmist respond to God’s creation?
14. How would you like to respond to your Creator for creating you, providing for you, and sustaining you? Consider writing your own poem or psalm of praise and thanksgiving.

APPLY THE TRUTH

These psalms and many other passages of Scripture tell us that the world did not happen by chance. It does not exist because of a random accident. The world is here—and you are part of it— because God wanted it to be so. What difference does it make to believe that God made you and the universe you inhabit? Plan to talk about this in your small group.

DAY 6: Participate in Class





Songs to the Creator

Study Commentary

People of ancient Israel had a personal, intimate, connection with creation. They saw it as awesome, and wonder-filled. The Israelites lived off the land and its produce. The forces of creation were a matter of life and death to them. But even though the Israelites depended on the earth, they were not to deify and worship it. Instead, they were to sing psalms to its Creator. Their songs reminded them—and us—that the earth is not out of control. There is a good and loving God behind it all. He actively sustains it and uses it for His good purposes. These psalms teach us to delight in God's creation as a gift from Him.

Psalm 8. This psalm of David starts by declaring that the Lord is over all the earth. His majesty is shown even through infants. David used the image of the battle cries of the Lord's foes being drowned out by the happy sounds of babes. God has little regard for His foes' strength, and neither should we. We should remember that God's power is made perfect in our weakness (see 2 Cor. 12:9).

To understand God's majesty, it helps to look at how small we are by comparison. When he gazed into the heavens, David saw that the universe dwarfs us. "What is man that you are mindful of him, ... that you care for him?" (Ps. 8:4), he asked in amazement. We are not just another rock, plant, or animal. We are cared for by a personal, promise-keeping Creator, who desires relationship with us. He has crowned us "with glory and honor." What a contrast to believing human life exists by chance in a universe that has no meaning. Verses 6-8 elevate humanity even further. They tell us that God gave humans dominion over all the other parts of creation, as we see in Genesis 1:28.

Think about how God sees you. If you ever feel like you have no value, like your life is worthless, this psalm can tell you the truth: the Creator of the universe sees and loves you! He made you. When sin separated you from Him, He sent His Son to die in your place, to free you from the deathly grip of sin and offer you eternal life (see Jn. 3:16). No matter what you may feel, the truth is that the God who made you says you have inestimable worth.

Psalm 29. This psalm shows how God is greater in every way than His marvelous creation. It declares God's greatness over every force on the earth. Psalm 29 tells us to praise God for being powerful and sovereign. Though the god Baal, the god of thunderstorms, is not specifically mentioned in this poem, some think David wrote it to counter the Baal worship of Israel's neighbors. That could be why David painted a picture of the Lord as a mighty thunderstorm. The God of Israel reigns over thunder, forests, and flood. No false god has that power.

Psalm 29 points to the truth that there is only one true God. He possesses incredible power but also blesses His people with peace. He has brought eternal peace through Christ (see Jn. 14:27), and He will fulfill that peace when Christ returns to reign. Real, lasting peace comes only from our Creator through Jesus Christ.

Psalm 33. This psalm is a joyful praise song to God that calls us to join in with a heart that hopes and trusts in Him. The psalmist encouraged God's followers to sing a new song to Him because of His word and watchful counsel. In 33:4-5, "word" refers to God's commands. His word prompts His people to be righteous. Verses 6-9 echo the creation account of Genesis 1-2, which says that God's word brought everything into being. This should make us "fear the LORD" (Ps. 33:8). Even people without personal knowledge of God can see that the earth is wonderful. All should "stand in awe" of the Creator.

Verses 10-19 say we can also praise God because of His counsel, which refers to God's will that stands forever. God sees those who fear and hope in Him, and He protects and saves them. But God frustrates the plans of those who do not obey His will. He brings their plans to nothing. When we submit our lives to God's will, we stand on a firm foundation. But if we live by our own will apart from Him, we are on shaky ground. Even world leaders cannot save themselves with their plans and armies. Refuge is found only in God. The last verses remind us that God's word, revealed in His laws and glorious creation, gives us the confidence to praise Him as our protector and helper. Our hearts can, and should, be glad to trust Him—our Creator and Counselor who upholds His creation.

Think about how God is revealed in creation. Since creation points people to God, why do we need churches, pastors, and missionaries? Creation tells us enough about an intelligent, good Creator that we can know this awesome universe did not come about by chance. God's existence is revealed in nature. But His salvation is revealed in Jesus Christ. That is where Christians need to do their part. As Romans 10:14



says, how can people know the good news of Jesus if no one tells them? How will they hear if no one preaches? If you are a Jesus follower, you have good news to tell—Jesus is God, He created all things, and He makes new creations out of us!

Psalm 65. Here, David celebrates God’s creation from an agricultural point of view. This psalm may have been sung as part of a harvest celebration or after a season of drought. It is a reminder that through His creation, God blesses and provides for His people. The first stanza is about the blessings of one whom God has chosen to come to His courts in Zion. It is filled with the joy of being reconciled to God. The psalmist knew that the people’s sins overwhelmed them. But God forgave them and drew them close. This encourages us to experience the joy of spiritual renewal and to enjoy a close relationship with God. These blessings are possible because God atones for and cleanses us from our sins.

In verses 5-8, David linked the “God of our salvation” to God’s awesome power shown in creating and ruling over the world. He associated God’s power and care not only with Israel but to “the ends of the earth.” The whole earth, from where the sun rises to where it sets, is in awe of God. In verses 9-13, David praised the Creator for providing agricultural bounty to the earth. He provides richly, and to show this, David used the image of a wagon so laden with produce that items fall off. Pastures, hills, meadows, and valleys proclaim the goodness of God’s provision as “they shout and sing together for joy.”

Think about where satisfaction is found. This psalm begins with David’s praise to God for His forgiveness and desire to draw us near. Only after does he sing of the richness of God’s gifts. If God’s provision is more important to us than our relationship with Him, we can become discouraged in the lean seasons. By

keeping these stanzas rightly ordered in our minds, we remember that it is God’s goodness that satisfies us, not just what He blesses us with.

Psalm 104. This psalm expands on the creation account in Psalm 33. It opens with a beautiful description of creation as a royal robe for the Creator. He wears the “splendor and majesty” of earth as signs of His glory. Verses 2-26 note aspects of God’s creation and emphasize His active involvement in it. He waters the land, makes homes for animals, and brings forth food and wine for humans to enjoy. He made the moon and sun to give rhythm to our days. Verses 27-30 remind us that nothing in creation happens apart from God. Every creature’s needs are satisfied by God’s work. The earth’s inhabitants “are filled with good things” because God provides them. He both gives life and takes it away.

Verses 31-35 contain the psalmist’s response. He sang praises to the Lord and prayed that God would find pleasure in his thoughts. Then David made his only request in this psalm—that God would erase the wicked from the earth. David wanted God to restore the earth to what it was intended to be: a paradise without sin. In Romans 8:22, we see that creation also has the same prayer—it groans from the effects of sin and longs to be restored to the perfect glory God intended for it.

PERSONALIZE THE TRUTH

When contemplating the heavens, David considered humans in comparison to God’s power and the size of His creation, asking why God thinks about and cares for people. From this week’s study, what answer did you find? How does that affect the way you view yourself? How do you want to respond to God cause of what He has shown you?



COMMUNITY
BIBLE STUDY





The King Cries to God

MEMORIZE THE TRUTH

But you, O LORD, are a shield about me, my glory, and the lifter of my head. — Psalm 3:3

DAY 1: Psalm 3; 52—He Lifts My Head

1. Psalm 3 is about the time when King David's son Absalom rebelled against him. For background, read 2 Samuel 15:10-14 alongside Psalm 3:1-2. Who were the people who rose against David? What did he do as a result?
2. How do you think you would respond if you were in David's situation? How does that compare to David's response?
3. Psalm 52 is about another time when David (sometimes referred to as *the son of Jesse*) was in trouble. Read 1 Samuel 22:6-19. Who was Doeg the Edomite, and what did he do?
4. How did David describe himself in Psalm 52, and where did his apparent peace come from?

DAY 2: Psalm 57—My Heart Is Steadfast and Confident

5. Psalm 57 is about a time when David was fleeing for his life from Saul. Instead of being shaken and unsettled, how did David describe his heart in verse 7?
6. David's belief that God would help him enabled David to remain firm and steady. From 57:2, what did he trust God to do? And how does Job 42:2 support this same idea?
7. David's trust in God was not just internal and quiet. From Psalm 57:7-9, what did David do that demonstrated His confidence in God?

LEARN THE TRUTH

When you are in a difficult or threatening situation, how do you usually respond? Be honest, and write down a few of your typical reactions. Based on what you are learning from these psalms, how would you *like* to respond? This week, look for a time to put your desired response into action. Plan to share with your small group what happened.



DAY 3: Psalm 59—Deliver Me from Evil People

8. Psalm 59 is about another time David's life was in danger. Read 1 Samuel 19:10-17. What had threatened David's life? How did David describe the situation in Psalm 59:3?
9. From verses 7-8, what did David's enemies think, and how were they wrong?
10. How could focusing on what God thinks instead of what people think help you in a worrisome situation you face?

DAY 4: Psalm 60—Have You Rejected Us, God?

11. Psalm 60 appears to have been written after a military defeat.
 - a. According to verses 1-3, what did the people think had happened, and how were they feeling about God?
 - b. What present-day example can you think of when someone might have similar feelings about God?
12. Despite these feelings, what did the psalmist believe to be true about God? List as many truths as you can find.

DAY 5: Psalm 142—No One Cares about Me

13. In your own words, what was David feeling when he wrote this psalm? And how would you describe his mood?
14. Psalm 142 gives us a model for how to turn our lament—our expression of sorrow—into prayer. From 142:5-7,
 - a. what did David ask God for?
 - b. what truths did he state about God?
 - c. how did he expect God to respond to him?

APPLY THE TRUTH

In Psalm 59, David called God his *fortress*. What is a fortress, literally, and what does it mean in the spiritual sense? How would viewing God as your fortress affect the way you think about enemies in your life?

DAY 6: Participate in Class





The King Cries to God

Study Commentary

These psalms of David are laments. Each addresses a stressful situation David experienced. Each expresses a cry of deep sorrow to God. Laments show us we can faithfully follow God while honestly enduring doubts, difficulty, and loneliness. They give us words for our pain. Sometimes David prayed out of fear and anger. But in the end, David trusted God. Because David worked through his trials with the Lord, he was able to see them from a new perspective.

Psalm 3. King David wrote this psalm about a time when his son Absalom rebelled and stole David's throne (see 2 Sam. 15–18). Imagine the betrayal David felt. His foes surrounded him and thought he was doomed. But David declared the Lord to be his shield, his glory, and the lifter of his head. Despite his sorrow, David devoted himself to God and trusted Him to answer. David was even able to sleep because he trusted God to keep him through the night. Scripture tells us to cast our worries on Him because He will take care of us (see 1 Pet. 5:7). That is exactly what David did.

Psalm 3:7-8 is a turning point in the psalm. Instead of many enemies "rising against" David, it is the Lord who will "arise"! David declared to those who said there was no salvation for him that salvation is the Lord's. His enemies would not prevail. God would strike them on the cheek and break their teeth, leaving them powerless. This salvation would be not just for David but for all God's people. David prayed a blessing for all Israel, even though many had turned their hearts toward Absalom (see 2 Sam. 15:13). David's intercession reminds us of another king who knew the hurt of rebellion and betrayal. This King, Jesus, prayed while dying on the cross, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do" (Lk. 23:34). Not only did Jesus forgive His betrayers, but He also bore the cost of their salvation.

Psalm 52. David wrote this psalm while fleeing from King Saul, who wanted to kill him. Ahimelech the priest helped David in the town of Nob. When Saul learned this, he ordered the execution of all 85 priests who lived there. Doeg the Edomite carried out the murders. This psalm was written about him. Doeg killed not only the priests but everyone else in Nob. He even killed women, children, and livestock (see 1 Sam. 21–22).

Psalm 52:1-5 focuses on the wicked who love lies and hate truth. They trust in riches rather than in God. But the "mighty man" who loves evil soon perishes. God uproots him from "the land of the living." But the righteous are rooted like flourishing olive trees. Believing these truths enabled David to wait for God's justice. The descriptions of Doeg may sound familiar. Many today oppose God and plot destruction. This psalm reminds us that God will take vengeance on those who reject His ways. Doeg had allied himself with the wrong king. This psalm points us to a better way. The righteous make God their refuge. They

trust in His steadfast love and wait patiently for His deliverance.

Psalm 57. A common historical context links Psalms 57 and 142. After David's anointing as Israel's future king (see 1 Sam. 16), he fled from Saul. Twice David lived in caves to hide from him (see 1 Sam. 22:1-2; 24:1-3). One of these times likely prompted this psalm. Psalm 57 is a lament. It also shows David's conviction of God's purpose for his life and his desire to see God exalted. David believed that God would fulfill His purpose for him. His confidence in God's purposes gave him freedom from anxiety and fear. In this way, David was like Jesus. Knowing His purpose and that His arrest and crucifixion were imminent, Jesus said, "What shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? But for this purpose I have come to this hour" (Jn. 12:27). When we trust in God's purpose for our lives, enemies and hardships lose their power over us. God uses hardship to grow our faith and mold us into His Son's image.

David felt like every step was a trap. Even so, David knew that God's steadfast love and faithfulness would sustain him. Because David was sure of this, he could have a steadfast heart. God delivered David, and He has provided deliverance for us in Christ Jesus. His plans to finish this salvation by bringing believers to glory will not fail.

Psalm 59. This chapter of Psalms reflects on an event described in 1 Samuel 19. King Saul sent men to David's house to kill him. Saul's daughter Michal, David's wife, helped her husband escape. Psalm 59 does not give the details, but the "bloodthirsty men" seem to have been working for Saul. David responded to this threat by taking refuge in the Lord. He knew that defending himself and taking his own vengeance could lead to sin.

David compared the wicked men to a dog pack that returns each evening to attack. They thought they could avoid consequences. But David knew that the God who holds "all the nations in derision" saw them and laughed at them. David's prayer in 59:11-13 asks God to deal with his enemies. His prayer sounds harsh, but it shows the seriousness of opposing God. Sin will not go unpunished (see Rom. 6:23). It also shows us that it is up to God to dispense justice. David knew that evil occurs when we try to do God's job for Him without having His purity and knowledge.



Think about praying for our enemies. We may hesitate about asking God to consume our enemies in wrath. However, that is exactly what will happen to them if they do not repent. Maybe that is why Jesus said to love our enemies and bless them (see Lk. 6:28-29). They need to be convicted of their sin so they can repent and turn to the Lord. That is what we should pray. Because if they do not, then the only thing they can look forward to is God's wrath.

Psalm 60. This psalm asks a question we can relate to: When enemies seem to be winning, where is God? The setting for this psalm seems to be when David led Israel's army in battle against the Arameans in the north. But at that same time, Israel's longtime enemies, the Edomites, attacked in the south. Israel eventually defeated the Edomites. But David struggled to understand why God had not protected Israel from them. Even so, David was confident that God's banner was still over His people. Verses 6-8 show us why David had such confidence in God. The passage presents as divine speech. The promises about the land belonging to God and His people were proof God had not abandoned them. Israel's warring neighbors, Moab, Edom, and Philistia, would be conquered. But God's people, "Ephraim," would remain His strength (His "helmet"). And God would rule through Judah (His "scepter").

In the final stanza, we see David's fresh perspective. In the end, God is the one who brings victory. Only He can provide salvation. We may feel defeated sometimes. We may be tempted to feel that God has left us and that we are fighting our battles alone. In fact, on the cross, even Jesus asked, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Matt. 27:46). But David's defeat turned into a resounding victory over thousands of Edomites. Jesus, though the ones He came to save despised and rejected Him (see Isa. 53:3; see also Jn. 1:11), won the final battle, defeating the power of sin and death. Through Jesus, we can also have victory over sin and death (see 1 Cor. 15:57).

Psalm 142. Psalms 57 and 142 share a similar context. David wrote them while running from enemies, hiding in

a cave. The anointed king felt emotions we have all felt: he was weary, fearful, alone, and uncared for. When David looked around, he saw no refuge. He looked "to the right," the place where an advocate or defender would stand, but found no one. It seemed to him that no one noticed, that no one cared about his soul. Yet even in his anguish, David continued pursuing the very one he felt abandoned by. He cried to the Lord, his refuge and portion. David knew God had chosen him to be a king. But is this how God treats His anointed one? The answer, sometimes, is yes.

Think about God's promise to never forsake you. Loneliness and rejection are hard emotions to express in prayer. It is easy feel trapped in self-pity, hopelessness, and addiction. But Psalm 142 shows us a better way. David trusted God to be his refuge. God has promised He will never leave us or forsake us (see Heb. 13:5). Believe His promise and trust Him to respond.

We know that Jesus was rejected by His own people. He was captured, tortured, and crucified. According to His perfect plan, God allowed all of this to happen to His anointed King. Jesus was confident that His humiliation would display God's glory in a way that the world had never seen. That is why He prayed, "Not my will, but yours, be done" (Lk. 22:42). God's plans sometimes include placing His called ones in hardships that demand that they trust Him. In these dark valleys (see Ps. 23:4) we learn to dwell in God's presence; it is in life's "caves" where He trains His chosen ones. This psalm teaches us to step back from our pain and see the bigger picture of what God is doing.

PERSONALIZE THE TRUTH

What enemy threatens you? Is it related to your physical or mental health? Or is it a spiritual enemy like greed, lust, or pride? Use some of David's words to deliver you from this enemy. Ask Him to protect you from anyone or anything that would rise against you (see 59:1).



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