



PSALMS

Honest To God

ev/church



PSALMS
Honest To God

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1-150

How blessed is the man
Who stands in the open
But his
and in the

He will be like
Which yields no
And

But the
Therefore
Not
For

PSALMS: HONEST TO GOD

WEEK	THEME
1	EV Grow – Church: Its Nature and Purpose
2	EV Grow – Church: Glorifying God by Reaching the Lost
3	EV Grow – Church: Glorifying God by Growing Together
4	Songs of the Messiah
5	Songs of Trust and Commitment
6	Songs of Confession and Longing
7	Songs of Lament and Cursing
8	Songs of Thanks and Declaration
9	Songs of the Word
10	Songs of Praise

We want to encourage each other to be on mission to our non-Christian friends, family and contacts.

Who are you on mission to?
Make a list and start praying for them (and yourself).

Pray for three friends, once a week, for one minute (3-1-1).

List the names of your family and friends here:

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK:

1. Personal reading

- Use this guide to help you read your Bible every day.
- Scribble down your thoughts and questions each day, and remember to pray and ask God to speak to you by His Spirit, through His word.

2. Growth Groups

- Take this guide with you to your Growth Group each week so you can write down prayer points that come from the study that week and prayer requests from the members of your group.
- Let your group know who you are on mission to.

3. Church

- Keep this guide with your Bible and bring it with you to church.
- Scribble down sermon notes in the space provided.

SIGN UP FOR THESE NOTES AS A DAILY EMAIL AT:

www.evchurch.info/series

GIVING AT EV CHURCH:

The New Testament teaches us to give generously, regularly and joyfully. Please join with us in bringing to the Coast solid hope in Jesus.

More info on giving and account details:

www.evchurch.info/giving

READ THE BIBLE IN TWO YEARS:

Something you might like to use to extend your daily Bible reading.

The Bible is truly an extraordinary book, unique among all other books. It consists of 66 individual books, written by 40 different authors, in three different languages across 1,500 years of history. Yet for all of this diversity it contains a unified message that focuses on the coming of Jesus and the amazing salvation He offers through His death and resurrection!

The Bible contains words written by men in all the richness of literary types making it fun, challenging and enjoyable to dig into. Yet, at the same time, the Bible is also the very words of God given to us by His Spirit (1 Peter 1:21; 2 Timothy 3:16-17). These are not just words spoken in times past, but words that are alive for us to read today (Hebrews 4:12-13). The God of the universe actually addresses us today clearly in the pages of the Bible – amazing!

Jesus says the entire Bible points us to Him, that He is the focal point of it all. Listen to what He says, “He said to them, “This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.” (Luke 24:44). Or, again Jesus says, “You study the Scriptures diligently because you think that in them you have eternal life. These are the very Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life.” (John 5:39-40).

Knowing this is helpful in motivating us to read the Bible regularly, to keep building a bigger understanding of God’s purposes and how they are being fulfilled in Jesus. To help with this, the Daily Reading Notes now include an extra challenge: to read the whole Bible in two years. It’s totally optional, are you up for it?

There is a list of around 15 chapters of additional reading for each week of the term that will help you achieve this challenge. These readings can be done on whatever days work best and in whatever order you prefer to read them. At the end of each term you have a chance to catch up before the next term’s suggested readings begin again. You can also track your readings across the two years right here. Enjoy!

YEAR 1: TERM 1

Week 1	Genesis 1-5; Psalms 1-4; Genesis 5-10; Matthew 1-2	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 2	Genesis 11-15; Psalms 5-7; Genesis 16-20; Matthew 3-4	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 3	Genesis 21-25; Psalms 8-10; Genesis 26-30; Matthew 5-6	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 4	Genesis 31-35; Psalms 11-16; Genesis 36-40; Matthew 7-9	<input type="checkbox"/>

Week 5	Genesis 41-45; Psalms 17-19; Genesis 46-50; Matthew 10-11	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 6	Exodus 1-5; Psalms 20-24; Exodus 6-10; Matthew 12-13	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 7	Exodus 11-15, Psalms 25-27; Exodus 16-20; Matthew 14-15	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 8	Exodus 21-25; Psalms 28-31; Exodus 26-30; Matthew 16-17	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 9	Exodus 31-35; Psalms 32-34; Exodus 36-40; Matthew 18-19	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 10	Leviticus 1-5; Psalms 35-37; Leviticus 6-10; Matthew 20-21	<input type="checkbox"/>

YEAR 1: TERM 2

Week 1	Leviticus 11-15; Psalms 38-41; Leviticus 16-20; Matthew 22-24	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 2	Leviticus 21-27; Numbers 1-3; Proverbs 1-3; Matthew 25-26	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 3	Numbers 4-13; Proverbs 4-6; Matthew 27-28	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 4	Numbers 14-23; Proverbs 7-9; Acts 1-2	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 5	Numbers 24-33; Psalms 42-44; Acts 3-4	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 6	Numbers 34-36; Psalms 45-48; Acts 5-6	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 7	Deuteronomy 1-7; Psalms 49-51; Acts 7-8	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 8	Deuteronomy 8-17; Psalms 52-54; Acts 9-10	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 9	Deuteronomy 18-27; Psalms 55-57; Acts 11-12	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 10	Deuteronomy 28-34; Joshua 1-3; Psalms 58-61; Acts 13-14	<input type="checkbox"/>

YEAR 1: TERM 3

Week 1	Joshua 4-13; Psalms 62-65; Acts 15-16	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 2	Joshua 14-23; Psalms 66-68; Acts 17-18	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 3	Joshua 24; Judges 1-9; Psalms 69-71; Acts 19-20	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 4	Judges 10-19; Psalms 72; Proverbs 10-11; Acts 21-22	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 5	Judges 20-21; Ruth 1-4; 1 Samuel 1-4; Proverbs 12-14; Acts 23-24	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 6	1 Samuel 5-14; Proverbs 15-17; Acts 25-26	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 7	1 Samuel 15-24; Proverbs 18-20; Acts 27-28	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 8	1 Samuel 25-31; 2 Samuel 1-3; Proverbs 21-22; Mark 1-2	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 9	2 Samuel 4-13; Psalms 73-75; Mark 3-4	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 10	2 Samuel 14-24; Psalms 76-77; Mark 5-6	<input type="checkbox"/>

YEAR 1: TERM 4

Week 1	1 Kings 1-5; Psalms 78-80; 1 Kings 6-10; Mark 7-8	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 2	1 Kings 11-15; Psalms 81-83; 1 Kings 16-20; Mark 9-10	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 3	1 Kings 21-22; 2 Kings 1-8; Psalms 84-86; Mark 11-12	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 4	2 Kings 9-13; Psalms 87-89; 2 Kings 14-18; Mark 13-14	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 5	2 Kings 19-25; 1 Chronicles 1-3; Psalms 90-93; Mark 15-16	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 6	1 Chronicles 4-8; Psalms 94-96; 1 Chronicles 9-13; Romans 1-2	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 7	1 Chronicles 14-18; Psalms 97-101; 1 Chronicles 19-23; Romans 3-4	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 8	1 Chronicles 24-29; Psalms 102-104; Romans 5-6	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 9	2 Chronicles 1-5; Psalms 105-106; 2 Chronicles 6-10; Romans 7-8	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 10	2 Chronicles 11-15; Proverbs 23-25; 2 Chronicles 16-20; Romans 9-10	<input type="checkbox"/>

YEAR 2: TERM 1

Week 1	2 Chronicles 21-25; Proverbs 26-28; 2 Chronicles 26-30; Romans 11-12	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 2	2 Chronicles 31-36; Ezra 1-4; Proverbs 29-31; Romans 13-14	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 3	Ezra 5-10; Nehemiah 1-4; Psalms 107-109; Romans 15-16	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 4	Nehemiah 5-13; Psalms 110-113; 1 Corinthians 1-2	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 5	Esther 1-10; Psalms 114-117; 1 Corinthians 3-4	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 6	Job 1-5; Psalms 118; Job 6-10; 1 Corinthians 5-6	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 7	Job 11-15; Psalms 119:1-48; Job 16-20; 1 Corinthians 7-8	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 8	Job 21-25; Psalms 119:49-96; Job 26-30; 1 Corinthians 9-10	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 9	Job 31-35; Psalms 119:97-144; Job 36-40; 1 Corinthians 11-12	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 10	Job 41-42; Ecclesiastes 1-8; Psalms 119:145-176; 1 Corinthians 13-14	<input type="checkbox"/>

YEAR 2: TERM 2

Week 1	Ecclesiastes 9-12; Song of Songs 1-5; Psalms 120-122; 1 Cor 15-16	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 2	Songs of Songs 6-8; Isaiah 1-7; Psalms 123-125; Luke 1-2	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 3	Isaiah 8-12; Psalms 126-130; Isaiah 13-17; Luke 3-4	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 4	Isaiah 18-22; Psalms 131-135; Isaiah 23-27; Luke 5-6	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 5	Isaiah 28-32; Psalms 136-138; Isaiah 33-37; Luke 7-8	<input type="checkbox"/>

Week 6	Isaiah 38-42; Psalms 139-142; Isaiah 43-47; Luke 9-10	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 7	Isaiah 48-52; Psalms 143-145; Isaiah 53-57; Luke 11-12	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 8	Isaiah 58-62; Psalms 146-147; Isaiah 63-66; Luke 13-14	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 9	Jeremiah 1-5; Psalms 148-150; Jeremiah 6-10; Luke 15-16	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 10	Jeremiah 11-15; Luke 17-21; Jeremiah 16-20	<input type="checkbox"/>

YEAR 2: TERM 3

Week 1	Jeremiah 21-25; Luke 21-24; Jeremiah 26-30; 2 Corinthians 1	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 2	Jeremiah 31-35; 2 Corinthians 2-7; Jeremiah 36-40	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 3	Jeremiah 41-45; 2 Corinthians 8-13; Jeremiah 46-50	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 4	Jeremiah 51-52; Lamentations 1-5; Galatians 1-6	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 5	Ezekiel 1-5; Ephesians 1-6; Ezekiel 6-10	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 6	Ezekiel 11-15; Philippians 1-4; Ezekiel 16-20	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 7	Ezekiel 21-25; Colossians 1-4; Ezekiel 26-30	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 8	Ezekiel 31-35; 1 Thessalonians 1-5; Ezekiel 36-40; 2 Thessalonians 1-3	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 9	Ezekiel 41-48; 1 Timothy 1-6; 2 Timothy 1-4	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 10	Daniel 1-10; Titus 1-3, Philemon	<input type="checkbox"/>

YEAR 2: TERM 4

Week 1	Daniel 11-12; Hosea 1-8; Hebrews 1-7	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 2	Hosea 9-14; Joel 1-3; Hebrews 8-13	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 3	Amos 1-9; James 1-5; 1 Peter 1-5	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 4	Obadiah; Jonah 1-4; 2 Peter 1-3; 1 John; 2 John; 3 John	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 5	Micah 1-7; Nahum 1-3; Jude; Revelation 1-5	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 6	Habakkuk 1-3; Revelation 6-19:10	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 7	Zephaniah 1-3; Revelation 19:11-22:21	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 8	Haggai 1-2; John 1-12	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 9	Zechariah 1-14; John 13-17	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 10	Malachi 1-4; John 18-21	<input type="checkbox"/>

INTRODUCTION: PSALMS

For at least 30 centuries God's people have worshipped Him through songs. The word 'psalms' comes from the Greek title of the book, *psalmos*, which means songs. We are holding an ancient song book, some of which date back at least 3,000 years. So, no wonder it has been so unnatural for many of us to have to refrain from singing together due to the pandemic. We're not just pausing a modern fad. As our congregations sing along with a band, we join with God's people down through history.

And as a book of songs to and for God, Psalms is also a prayer book. If the Bible is God's word to us, then some have said Psalms are our words to God, given to us by God. In the Psalms, we see how God's people have responded to Him for thousands of years.

Isn't it interesting that the biggest book in the Bible is a collection of songs? When we fall in love, we sing love songs. When we're upset, we sing sad songs... or country songs! When we're celebrating, we sing victory songs, and dance and clap. God has given us a gift in music and poetry, a precious way to express and train our hearts.

So, we quickly discover that the book of Psalms is a book full of heart and emotion, which means our emotions are not just an essential part of who God has created us to be but also an essential part of a life of worshipping Him. The Psalms speak to every situation in life, and, crucially, orient us in that situation toward our God. They help us to be honest with God.

Some psalms even seem deliberately vague about their context and the authors' circumstances – as though they are inviting us to use the author's prayer as a vessel for our prayer – so we can fill in the details with our own situations. Maybe that is why so many Christians report having loved and used the Psalms, especially in the darkest seasons of their lives.

These poems were used both publicly and privately. When God's people gathered, the psalms would have been read to the congregation, or prayed, sung or recited. Yet it's clear that some psalms are very private prayers or meditations for an individual to use alone with God.

In these psalms, you see a God who is absolutely amazing. You also see that a relationship with a God this amazing is far from boring or irrelevant; it's alive and real, an amazing mix of intimacy and awe, love and delight, confidence and purpose, fear and trust, hope and joy.

Reading poetry

Many of us may not be used to reading poetry, so here are a few poetic techniques it can be helpful to look out for:

- Imagery, e.g. metaphors
- Structure, e.g. where does the poem start and finish?
- Repetition

Authors, dates, structure

The 'book' of Psalms is actually divided into five books, with a short note at the end of each book:

- Book 1: Psalms 1-41
- Book 2: Psalms 42-72
- Book 3: Psalms 73-89
- Book 4: Psalms 90-106
- Book 5: Psalms 107-150

There are also some smaller collections within these books, such as the 'Songs of Ascents' (Psalms 120-134). These observations indicate that the book of Psalms has been compiled and arranged, perhaps by several people over some time. It is difficult to be more precise than that. The titles of individual psalms sometimes indicate that the psalm belongs to a particular person, such as David, Moses, Solomon, or the sons of Korah. They seem to have been written over a period spanning from Moses' day until at least the exile (e.g. Psalm 137).

Storyline

As we will see in the first week of these notes, there appears to be a sort of storyline across the five books. The songs of God's people reflect the hopes of God's people, focused on God's promise of a great King. So, these songs reflect the journey of God's people and this hope through history. King David seems to be the fulfilment (Book 1) until he disappoints (Book 2), and the disappointment with future kings only grows until the catastrophe of the exile (Book 3) when they realise that it really has to be God who will do this (Book 4). This confidence in God fuels celebration and anticipation that God will keep His promises in a future King (Book 5).

In the Psalms, the King is often referred to as the 'anointed one' (in Hebrew, 'Messiah'; in Greek, 'Christ'). So, should we be surprised to learn that the New

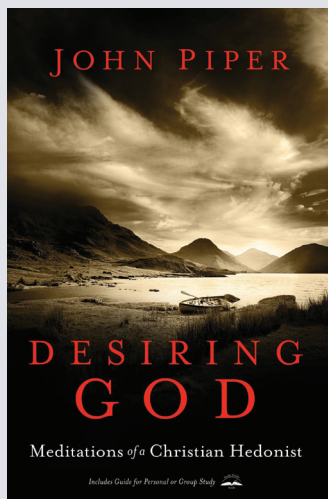
INTRODUCTION: PSALMS

Testament quotes these 'Messiah Psalms' more than any other part of the Old Testament? Ultimately, the Psalms lead us to Jesus.

Songs of the Old Covenant people

We must remember that these are the songs of the people of the Old Covenant. They have a particular set of promises from God, and they experienced a particular history of God's dealings. But we are the people of the New Covenant.

We can still learn from the Psalms. Sometimes it will be easy to simply pray them as our own prayers, since we have the same God. But at other times we may find that we need to do some mental adjusting before we make them our prayers – because the New Covenant promises are different, and better! For example, the promises of financial success (e.g. Psalm 128), the references to the house of the Lord, the city of the Lord, and even the 'law of the Lord' need to be put into the context of the story of the Bible. We need to consider the difference that Jesus' coming has made. But with that in mind, the Psalms have so much to teach us today – so let's dive in.



Book recommendations:

Desiring God by John Piper

Psalm 37:4 tells us to "take delight in the Lord". Not just serve him. Enjoy him. Until I read this book, I didn't realise it was possible to enjoy my relationship with God. This book not only showed me that it was possible but also taught me ways to grow that enjoyment. A rich and deep read, it will give you a bigger view of God. It reflects often on the psalms and will be a great accompaniment to our time reading the book of Psalms together this term.

Tune in to the Psalms playlists >> evchurch.info/sing

We have made a playlist for each week of the Psalms series, featuring some of the psalms we are looking at during that week set to music along with some other songs that explore the same theme or way of responding to God.

This will help you to experience these psalms as songs and prayers, not just writing on a page. Singing together has been difficult through COVID, and so using these playlists could be a way for us to continue to use the gift of music to make melody in our hearts to God. This playlist will also help us to be people who meditate on God's word throughout the day.

Some suggestions for how to make use of this playlist:

1. Each week, open the playlist that matches the Psalms theme for that week. Each week will have its own feel, which will help to complement the tone of the psalms that week.
2. Put the playlist on in the car while you are driving or in the house while you are cooking or cleaning. It could be something you put on while you do the Daily Reading Notes, or go for a walk, or go to the gym.
3. You might pick one song from the week to listen to more often and even try to memorise it as a way of storing up God's truth in your heart.

WEEK 4: SONGS OF THE MESSIAH

We can sometimes miss that the book of Psalms has a sort of story line. The songs of God's people trace the history of God's people, focused on God's promise of a great King (see the introduction on page 8).

So, we will begin our time in the Psalms with a quick flyover, to catch a glimpse of this story line.

DAY 1

Read Psalm 1

1. This psalm is a wisdom poem. What two paths does it present to us, and what promises are made about the destinations each path leads to?
2. What seems to be the key to avoiding the unhappy path?
3. How could Psalms, as a book of songs and poems, help us to do verse 2? Why do you think this psalm has been placed first?
4. Can you think of any Christians who have yielded fruit like a tree planted by water? What is desirable about this picture?

Prayer: Ask God to use the book of Psalms to make you the wise person who delights in God's word rather than following sinful ways. Thank Him for the promises of verses 3 and 6.

DAY 2

Read Psalm 2

BIBLE IN 2 YEARS

Obadiah; Jonah 1-4; 2 Peter 1-3;
1 John; 2 John; 3 John

1. Who are the rulers of earth rising up against (verse 2) and what is God's response (verses 4-6)?
2. God's anointed king speaks in verses 7-9 (drawing on the promises God made to King David in 2 Samuel 7:14). What promises does he say God has made to him?
3. So, what does it look like to be wise as we respond to God's king ("his Son", verse 7) according to verses 10-12?
4. Many see Psalms 1 and 2 as a package because the ending of Psalm 2 is similar to the beginning of Psalm 1 (e.g. the words "blessed" and "way", the two paths, and wisdom theme). If so, how does Psalm 2 show the ultimate way to live out Psalm 1:2? In other words, who does God's word lead us to?

Prayer: Praise God that when the rulers of this world gathered together against God's king, Jesus, to crucify Him, God used that very death to establish His kingdom forever. Pray that you and everyone on the Coast will acknowledge His rule and serve Him with fear and trembling. Thank God for the promise that all who take refuge in Him are blessed.

WEEK 4: SONGS OF THE MESSIAH

DAY 3

Read Psalm 22

1. What is the vibe of the first half (verses 1-21) and the second half (verse 22 onwards)?
2. This psalm starts with the title "a Psalm of David", like almost all the psalms in book in Book 1 (Psalms 1-41). One question raised by these psalms is whether David is the Psalm 2 king. How is David's experience according to this psalm similar to the Psalm 2 king?
3. Although David suffered and was vindicated, it is hard to find a time in David's life that exactly matches this description. It seems he used vivid poetic imagery, and in doing so he spoke prophetically (2 Samuel 23:1-2). How perfectly did Jesus fulfil the two halves of this psalm?
4. Many of us relate to the experiences expressed in the Psalms, and find them wonderful coaches on how to pray. We'll enjoy much of that this term. But even more than this, the Psalms are about Jesus. How does it increase your appreciation of Jesus (and enrich your own prayers) when you read Psalm 22 as a prayer that our Messiah prayed?

Prayer: Pray, using verses 27-31 to praise our Lord for His work in sending Jesus to bear our suffering and win our salvation.

DAY 4

Read Psalm 106 (or, if time is short, 106:40-48)

We have fast-forwarded from Book 1 to the final psalm in Book 4. It seems to come from the period when Israel were in exile. David and his descendants have, one by one, all disappointed as Psalm 2 kings. Psalm 106 recounts Israel's history to make sense of the disappointment.

1. What can you figure out about Israel's situation from verses 40-47? How does it compare with the hopes of Psalm 1 and 2?
2. What theological reason does the psalm give for Israel's sorry state of affairs? (e.g. verse 39-43)
3. What is their only hope, according to this psalm? (e.g. verse 45, 47)
4. How does this psalm shape your understanding of: (1) God, (2) His response to disobedience, and (3) where humanity can find hope?

Prayer: Confess to God that, like Israel, your sinful nature means you cannot save yourself. Thank Him that He has proven to be a God of love who keeps His covenant promises, and pray that you will look to Him alone for hope and salvation.

WEEK 4: SONGS OF THE MESSIAH

DAY 5

Read Psalm 110

The New Testament quotes this psalm more than any other chapter of the Old Testament. For example, Hebrews meditates on it to enrich our understanding of Jesus (e.g. Hebrews 1:13, 5:6).

1. According to Jesus, this psalm is about the Messiah (Matthew 22:41-46). If Psalm 110 was the only picture of the Messiah we had in the Bible, what would we know about what He is like and what He brings?
2. The LORD (in capitals) indicates the covenantal name of God, Yahweh, bringing to mind His covenant with Israel. How does Psalm 110 underline Yahweh's role in establishing the Messiah's kingdom? (And how does this address the problems of Israel's history, as we saw in Psalm 106 yesterday?)
3. We are nearing the end of the book of Psalms. From here, trust in Yahweh's determination to keep His covenant promises grows into confident praise (e.g. Psalms 145-150). What in Psalm 110 grows your:
 - a. Reason to praise Jesus?
 - b. Fear of Jesus? (remember Psalm 2:11)

Prayer: Praise God for His promised kingdom, where His loving and just rule will put a stop to all evil and where we will joyfully serve Him freely forever. Praise God for His proven history of keeping His covenant promises. Thank Him for beginning to keep these promises in Jesus' first coming, and pray that He will help you to trust Him to bring them to completion when Jesus returns. Ask that you and many across our world will serve Him as king willingly today, like the picture in verse 3.

DIGGING DEEPER:

Do you need to know the 'story' of the book of Psalms to read one of them?

No, and yes.

No. Like a song on a CD (remember those?), each psalm can be read as an independent song or prayer. That's one of the reasons we love them so much. They feel accessible; less work. We can pick one up, read or pray it, and be helped. Like favourite songs, we can put psalms 'on loop' and they can give words to the seasons of our lives. For the rest of the term, we will be getting to know some psalms that have been 'best sellers' for good reasons.

And yes. If the musician intended his album to be more than just a grab bag of hits, but rather to tell a story, then the richest way to appreciate each song is to hear them in the context of the whole album. Hopefully this week you have enjoyed seeing that the Psalms do have a historical context. Paying attention to that context, their place in the story of God's people, can enrich our understanding of them. In some cases, it even helps us avoid wrong understandings or wrong applications.

So, it can be helpful to ask:

- Where does this psalm seem to fit in Israel's history?
- How does this psalm reflect God's covenants or promises?
- How does this psalm teach me about the Messiah?

If you would like to dig even deeper, one person who has written and spoken helpfully on this topic is James Hely Hutchinson.

You can listen to a 25-minute talk on the shape of the book of Psalms here:
www.st-helens.org.uk/resources/talk/56740

And if you want to go even deeper, he has a series of five talks here:
www.st-helens.org.uk/resources/series/5132

WEEK 5: SONGS OF TRUST AND COMMIT-

As we come to know the truth about God, He invites us to respond. In the Psalms we see modeled a number of ways to express our response to God – including delight, commitment, yearning, and trust. Over the next few weeks we will explore some of these themes, starting this week with songs that help us to meditate on and declare our trust in God.

Sometimes these words perfectly express how we are feeling at a certain time. And sometimes God uses these words to grow our trust even as we pray them.

DAY 1

Read Psalm 3

The heading of this psalm links this song to the distressing time David had to flee for his life away from Jerusalem while his own son mounted a campaign to kill him and take the throne (2 Samuel 13-18 tells the sad story). Imagine being David, struggling to know who you can trust as more and more people join the rebellion against you.

1. Describe (or draw or graph) the emotional journey of this psalm.
2. Who, or what do you turn to when you're in distress? Who does David turn to?
3. What truths and imagery about God does he call to mind to support his trust in God?
4. What do you find surprising about the way David speaks to God in this psalm? What could you learn from David as you speak to God?

Prayer: Pray this psalm as your prayer to God, perhaps substituting verses 1 and 2 with a situation you are concerned or distressed about. Praise Jesus for the way He perfectly embodied the trust expressed in this song (e.g. Matthew 8:24). Praise God that this prayer will be eternally answered for all who pray it in Jesus' name.

DAY 2

Read Psalm 16

BIBLE IN 2 YEARS

Micah 1-7; Nahum 1-3; Jude;
Revelation 1-5

1. When Israel divided the promised land, they drew boundary lines around each tribe's area, and called it their portion or inheritance. In verses 5-6, who, or what does David think is his inheritance, and how does it make him feel?
 2. Which verses of this psalm express:
 - a. Contentment in God?
 - b. Trust in God?
 - c. Commitment to God?
- (You could note down verse numbers or highlight the verses in different colours in your Bible).
3. How does your level of contentment, trust, and commitment compare to David's? Can you pick up any truths about God from this Psalm that will help you grow your heart for God? (e.g. verse 11)

For further thinking: How is Jesus the perfect fulfilment of this Psalm? (e.g. Acts 2:25, 31)

Prayer: Pray this psalm as your own prayer to God. (If there are sentences that express greater faith than you feel, you might want to first of all ask God, "Please grow my faith as I declare these words you have given me to say".)

WEEK 5: SONGS OF TRUST AND COMMIT-

DAY 3

Read Psalm 23 – the most famous psalm in the world!

1. What metaphor does David, the shepherd king (Psalm 23:1-6), use to meditate on God's goodness to him?
2. Underline, list, or draw the ways that David describes God as acting like a shepherd. How is each a source of comfort or confidence?
3. Look up one of these references: John 10:11; Hebrews 13:20; 1 Peter 5:4; or Revelation 7:17. How does this verse enrich your understanding of the promise in verse 6?

Prayer: Thank and praise our Lord for being your Shepherd. Turn the truths of this psalm into your own prayer of trust and thankfulness.

DAY 4

Read Psalm 27

1. What gives David confidence? (You might like to underline or highlight each word or phrase that expresses a reason for his confidence.)

2. Before you'd read this psalm, how would you have finished this sentence: "One thing I ask from the Lord, this only do I seek..."
 - a. How does David finish that sentence?

3. Looking at verses 4 and 7, do you, like David, long to know more of God's beauty?
 - a. What could you change in your thinking/prayers/habits to fuel your heart's desire to gaze on God's beauty?

Prayer: Reflect on David's hunger for God and joy in Him. Give thanks for the glorious truths you've seen in this psalm and so far this week. Ask your Father in Heaven to grow your heart's desire to know Him better, not just intellectually, but so that you delight in Him and love His beauty.

WEEK 5: SONGS OF TRUST AND COMMIT-

DAY 5

Read Psalm 101

1. This psalm is a song/prayer of commitment. After the truths we've seen this week, why is it appropriate to say these words to God?
2. As we'll see next week, David does not claim to be sinless (Psalm 51). In fact, he rejoiced in God's forgiveness (Psalm 32). How could a sinner use this psalm to turn back to God in repentance?
 - a. Does this psalm express your commitment to God? Do any of the verses alert you to ways your commitment is lacking?
 - b. How could regularly putting our commitment to God into words like this help our hearts?
 - c. Is this part of your prayer life? Or are there songs that you sing with words like this?

For further reflection: Which statements apply more to King David than to us as regular members of God's people? How will Jesus the true King fulfill those verses? How could we express a similar commitment for the purity of God's people while allowing Jesus to be the ultimate judge?

Prayer: Drawing on the words of this psalm, commit yourself to God afresh. This might include confessing ways your commitment has been half-hearted, asking for forgiveness, and expressing your renewed commitment with His help.



PRAYER POINTS AND NOTES

WEEK 6: SONGS OF CONFESSION AND LONG-

“Where is the blessedness I knew when I first saw the Lord? ... they have left an aching void,” wrote William Cowper. Are we allowed to speak like that as Christians?

The raw honesty of this week’s psalms suggests that we are not only allowed but even encouraged. These prayers do not have a rosy Instagram filter, yet they are not irreverent. These prayers are honest, without ever forgetting that it is the Lord God we are being honest with.

Let these psalms stretch your prayer life this week as we see how our spiritual ancestors brought their deepest confessions and longings to God.

DAY 1

Read Psalm 32

1. What happened when David did not acknowledge his sin to God? And what happened when he did?
2. What benefits does God provide to people who admit their sins and trust Him? (See verses 1, 7, 8, 10, and 11)
3. Is David’s confession private, only between him and God, or is there an aspect that is public? (See verse 6 and consider the fact that this is a song.)
4. Our prayers and songs at church often mention our sins. Do you value these opportunities to own your sin before God among the people of God? What does it look like in your personal daily prayer life?

Prayer: Pause to search your heart and recent memory, and then confess your sins to God – both in general terms and with specifics if possible. Use verse 1 to thank Him for His forgiveness which we have found in Jesus, and praise Him with the joy of verse 11.

DAY 2

Read Psalm 42

BIBLE IN 2 YEARS

Habakkuk 1-3; Revelation 6-19:10

1. The book, *Spiritual Depression* (by Martin Lloyd-Jones) begins with a chapter on this psalm. Would '*Spiritual Depression*' be a good title for this psalm? What phrases in this psalm describe the writer's sadness?
2. What seems to be causing this turmoil, and where does the writer turn for help?
3. Compare verses 1-2 with this quote from Augustine:

"Humans, as part of your creation, desire to praise you. You stir us to delight in praising you; for you have formed us for yourself, and our hearts are restless till they find rest in you."

 - a. How aware are you of your soul's deep yearning for God? Does it emerge in your conscious longings?
 - b. Do you think to turn to God in your own inner turmoil? What can you learn from the way the Psalmist talks to himself in verse 5 and 11?

Prayer: "Pour out your soul" to God in prayer (as the writer does in verse 4). Mention to God the causes of your own inner turmoil. Ask that you might increasingly recognise your need for God in those moments. Pray that you will hope in God, and thank Him for His promise that we will again praise Him – especially for eternity.

WEEK 6: SONGS OF CONFESSION AND LONG-

DAY 3

Read Psalm 51

According to its title, David wrote this psalm after his adulterous affair with Bathsheba (see 2 Samuel 11-12).

1. What does David pray? What can we learn from his pleas, statements, requests, and promises?
2. What does David believe about God that enables him to pray like this? (e.g. verses 1, 7, 16-17)
3. We know more clearly than David how God can answer this prayer (1 John 1:7-9). How does the cleansing imagery in Psalm 51:7 make you feel?
4. Have you ever prayed this sort of prayer to God? Or are there sins you have not confessed to God or turned from?

Prayer: Pray Psalm 51 as your own prayer to God. You could end your prayer by thanking Him for answering this prayer through Jesus' death on the cross.

DAY 4

Read Psalm 63

1. What can we learn about David's circumstances from the title, and verses 1 and 9?
 - a. Is verse 6 more likely an image of comfort, or of sleeplessness/sickness?
2. Who or what does his soul long for in this situation?
3. How does the psalm show both satisfaction and longing? How might longing for God and satisfaction in life be connected?

Prayer: Today as you pray in response to this psalm, you might like to write your own psalm of confession of longing. You don't need to share it – although you could. But even if no-one except God sees it, you might find that writing your own prayer/poem/song helps you to learn from these psalms new ways to honestly express yourself to God.

Alternatively, you could adapt the words of Psalm 63 to your situation and pray it to God.

WEEK 6: SONGS OF CONFESSION AND LONG-

DAY 5

Read Psalm 84

1. This is a psalm of longing for “the house of my God”. What is it about the temple that causes this longing (verse 1)?
2. Verses 5-7 follow the loving traveler approaching Jerusalem to “appear before God”. What does the imagery of refreshing the landscape (verse 6) suggest about how our desire for God helps us and others on our heavenward pilgrimage?
3. How does this psalm explore the connection between longing and satisfaction that we saw yesterday?

The physical temple in Jerusalem was the place of God’s special presence in the Old Covenant. But since Jesus, God’s dwells by the Holy Spirit not in a building but in each Christian (1 Corinthians 6:19), and especially when we gather together (1 Corinthians 3:16-17 – in context, the ‘you’ is the church).

4. Does this psalm increase your appreciation for the blessing it is to be in God’s presence by his Spirit now, and also as we gather as a church? Does it increase your longing for heaven?

Prayer: Ask God to grow your satisfaction and joy in knowing you are always in His presence, so that you would even prefer to be a lowly doorkeeper in His house than anywhere else. Pray that this would grow your love for the gathered church and your hunger for heaven where we will see Him face to face.



PRAYER POINTS AND NOTES

WEEK 7: SONGS OF LAMENT AND CURSING

Do sad songs have a role in the prayers and praises of God's people?

If we look at the top 150 'worship songs' today, we would think the answer is no. Almost none are laments (songs that express distress or sorrow).

Until we open the book of Psalms. Roughly half the psalms are laments; some quite breathtaking in their bleakness. Can it be healthy to sing and pray like this?

Well, we are not yet home. Things are not yet right in our world. So, if we are to be honest to God while we wait, it seems we will not be healthy until we learn to sing and pray in this way.

DAY 1

Read Psalm 13

1. A typical lament structure might look something like this:
call to God/complaint/request/commitment (e.g. I will rejoice)/praise.
Can you identify these sections in this Psalm?
2. How does this journey through the different sections help a person bring their grief to God? What would be lost in the grieving process if we skipped the complaint step?
3. The title of the psalm tells us that this was sung, probably in the congregation. In what ways might it help both the sorrowful Christian and the cheerful Christian to sing a song like this together?
4. Who among the grieving or suffering in our own church might be praying like this today? Who among the persecuted church?

Prayer: Pray this psalm as a prayer with and for the sorrowful, sick, suffering, and persecuted people of God in our church and around the world.

DAY 2

Read Psalm 109

(or if time is short, verses 1-17)

This lament is called an 'imprecatory psalm' (it asks God to bring disaster or misfortune on enemies). Christians have often struggled to understand these psalms, especially since we are told to love our enemies.

1. If this was a legal claim filed in court, what does David claim his enemies have done? (e.g. verse 3-4, 16-17)
2. It seems earth's justice system has failed. So, the psalm brings the matter to heaven's court of appeal (verse 7). If the options are: (1) allow injustice to continue, (2) take vengeance into our own hands, or (3) cry out for God's justice – does this help us understand the role of imprecatory psalms? (See Romans 12:19)
3. How does the existence of psalms like this in the Bible:
 - a. Take seriously the genuine evil in our world?
 - b. Give a voice to the oppressed?
 - c. Grant legitimacy to their hurt, sense of injustice, and desire for things to be different?
 - d. Show God's willingness to hear and respond?
4. What questions do you still have that you'd like to take to your Growth Group?

BIBLE IN 2 YEARS

Zephaniah 1-3; Revelation 19:11-22:21

Prayer: Cry out like David against the injustices and evils of this world, for justice to be done. Thank God for Jesus who not only comes to judge reliably and end all evil, but who also bore the curses that His enemies deserved so that He could forgive them without simply overlooking their evil.

WEEK 7: SONGS OF LAMENT AND CURS-

DAY 3

Read Psalm 88

1. Yesterday's psalm complained about mistreatment by other humans. Who does this psalm accuse? (e.g. verse 14, 16)
2. Are we told many details about the writer's distress? How might this help others use this psalm as their own prayer?
3. Are you surprised God would inspire this kind of prayer to be written in his Word?
4. If we were only permitted to praise God and never allowed to voice anything upsetting, how would that diminish our relationship with God?

Prayer: Use the lament pattern (call to God/complaint/request/commitment (e.g. I will rejoice)/praise) to bring to God anything you are grieved by, voicing your anger, anguish, agony, weakness, desperation, exhaustion, loneliness, grief, sickness, discouragement, and/or frustration. Thank Him for His graciousness in taking us and our concerns seriously.

DAY 4

Read Psalm 79

1. What clues suggest this psalm laments the fall of Jerusalem in 587 BC?
2. This is a classic 'Book 3' psalm. It reflects the total disappointment with their hopes of a king in Jerusalem ruling the nations (remember Psalm 2?). From verses 8-9, who is to blame for this disaster?
3. The writer seems to really care about God's temple and people! On what basis does he think God might answer this prayer? (e.g. verses 8-10, 13)
4. "It is easy" for our prayers "to slip into using a language that is felt to be appropriate – polite, inoffensive, and dispassionate" but "God is the one who invites us to speak plainly". How could the vivid language of the lament psalms help you to pray more directly?

Prayer: Praise God (like verse 13 prophesied we would) for answering the prayer of Psalm 79 through Jesus, who restored the temple and rescued God's people. Spend time speaking plainly to God, bringing to Him your requests as directly as possible.

WEEK 7: SONGS OF LAMENT AND CURS-

DAY 5

Read Matthew 23:37-39

1. What does Jesus' lament here show about God's heart? Is it possible to think of God lamenting? (See Isaiah 1:2-9)

Read Matthew 27:45-46

2. Jesus is quoting Psalm 22, a lament. The laments were His prayers and pleas. How does it enrich your view of Jesus and your understanding of the lament psalms to realise that they were ultimately about Jesus and for Jesus?
3. Does this mean we should not use lament psalms now, because they were about Jesus, not us? Or, do we use them even more richly now, knowing that we pray them along with (and united to) our Saviour who prayed them first?
4. What would you like to change about your prayers in response to this week?

Prayer: Thank God for sending Jesus in answer to His people's prayers of lament. Thank Jesus for His heart for His people shown in His own laments over Jerusalem. Thank Jesus for His death on the cross where He bore our sin and suffering, and where he took our laments into His own mouth. Thank Him that now, when we lament, we do so not only together with all God's people but most of all with God's only son.



PRAYER POINTS AND NOTES

WEEK 8: SONGS OF THANKS AND DECLARA-

“Show me a church's songs and I'll show you their theology.” Songs catch in our minds and bind truths to our heart. So maybe it shouldn't be a surprise to find that the Psalms are jam-packed with theology – truths about God. In fact, Psalms is one of the most theologically rich parts of the Bible.

The Psalms don't just reach into every human circumstance and emotion, they orient us to see the wonderful riches in our God for that situation. This week's psalms will expand our view of God and fill our hearts with reasons to adore, thank and praise Him.

DAY 1

Read Psalm 92

1. What do the opening verses call us to do?
2. What qualities of God are celebrated in the following verses?
Verse 2

Verses 4-5

Verses 8-9

Verses 12-15
3. Psychological research has found that gratitude (giving thanks) is associated with greater happiness. Why do you think God has made us this way? Do you think you make enough use of the gift of giving thanks to God?

Prayer: Give thanks to God for His steadfast love and faithfulness that remain true through all of life's ups and downs. Thank Him for His works of creation, and works of salvation in Jesus, and for being an upright God. Thank Him for the gift of having someone to thank, and pray that you would be a person who remembers that “it is good to give thanks to the Lord”.

DAY 2

Read Psalm 103

BIBLE IN 2 YEARS

Haggai 1-2; John 1-12

1. Who is this psalm talking to (verse 1) and what is the danger it is trying to avoid (verse 2)?
2. Make a list of the benefits that come from the Lord. (You could bullet point them, highlight, or draw a quick picture for each)
3. Beyond just the benefits that come from God, what does the psalm tell us about God Himself?
4. Which of these truths have you been forgetting? Which are you particularly thankful for?

Prayer: "Praise" means to use words to say good things about someone or something. We might be used to singing songs of praise, but it's possible we are not used to praising God in our prayers. Turn this psalm into a prayer that praises God (e.g. verse 3 – "I praise you for forgiving all my sins").

For further reflection: Did you find that the practice of praising God in prayer rearranged anything in your heart?

WEEK 8: SONGS OF THANKS AND DECLARA-

DAY 3

Read Psalm 95

This psalm was said or sung every single morning of the year (except Easter) by all people in Anglican churches across England, who gathered each morning for morning prayer.

1. Why is God worth singing with joy about?

Verse 3

Verses 4-5

Verse 7

2. Why is verse 6 the right response to God? What's the other response that the psalm warns us against (especially verses 8-10)?
3. Verse 6 tells us to do things with our bodies. We know that no body position makes us closer to God. And ultimately the verse is about our lives and hearts not really our posture. But:
 - a. Could we use our posture to show respect to God? How?
 - b. Could our body be used to nurture helpful internal attitudes towards God? How?
4. We live in a very casual culture, which could help us avoid legalism. But could it bring any spiritual dangers?

Prayer: Praise God using this psalm, or, as verse 1 calls us to sing, you could pray by singing along to a praise song. Some songs from church which might suit this psalm include:

- He Is Our God (Sovereign Grace)
- How Great Thou Art (Ascend the Hill, among other artists)
- evchurch.info/sing has Spotify playlists of other songs we sing

DAY 4

Read Psalm 96

1. What marvelous works of God does this song declare?

Verse 2

Verse 5

Verse 13

2. "Ascribe" here means "to think or say that something belongs to someone". What do verses 7-8 tell us to do?
3. Psalm 95 yesterday called Israel to sing. Who does this psalm call to sing to the Lord, and what are they to sing? (verse 1)
4. They sang when the Lord saved Israel from Egypt (Exodus 15). They sang this new song when David brought the ark into Jerusalem (1 Chronicles 16:23–33). Why do God's new works of salvation call for new songs? Now, after God's new work of salvation in Jesus, should we sing only old testament psalms or should we write new songs?

Prayer: Praise God for His marvelous works of salvation: creating the world, acting as the righteous judge of the world, and ultimately coming in Jesus to die to rescue the world. Pray that all the earth will see the goodness of God in the gospel and turn to Him as worshippers.

WEEK 8: SONGS OF THANKS AND DECLARA-

DAY 5

Read Psalm 136

1. What is repeated, and what is woven through the repetitions?
2. What is it about us as humans that makes a psalm written like this helpful?

Many Christians have shared how certain psalms become their close companions and sweet friends in certain seasons of their life. They have benefited from reading and praying the same words every day, over and over. It's not always the new that grows us. Often it is learning to settle into, love, and walk by the same old, faithful, sweet truths.

3. Look back over the psalms we have read so far this term. Is there one that stands out to you as a particularly helpful friend in your current season?
4. Pick one psalm, and consider how could you bring that psalm close to you each day? (Perhaps write it out and put it somewhere you will see it, like the car dashboard, bathroom mirror, or above the stove? Could you read or pray the psalm each morning or each evening? Try to memorise it!)

Prayer: Pray the psalm you picked, giving thanks to the Lord because He is good and His steadfast love endures forever.



PRAYER POINTS AND NOTES

WEEK 9: SONGS OF THE WORD

What should we make of the fact that the longest song – Psalm 119 – is twice as long as any other psalm and focusses on the theme of God's word in almost every single line?

It's 22 stanzas (paragraphs), one for each letter of the Hebrew alphabet. Every line in the first stanza starts with the Hebrew letter A, every line in the second starts with B. Eight verses per stanza. Eight words to describe God's law.

What sort of person writes such a long song, so carefully constructed, about this topic? Could it be someone who believes Psalm 1? "Blessed is the one... whose delight is in the law of the Lord." Has God given us Psalm 119 to help us become that sort of people?

DAY 1

Read Psalm 119:1-16

1. What different words are used by the writer to refer to God's word? Search for a definition of words that we don't use often (e.g. precepts).
2. What benefits come from devoting ourselves to God's word, according to these verses?
3. What are some ways you could do verse 11, and store up God's word in your heart?
4. William Wilberforce, who led the movement to abolish the slave trade in Great Britain, memorised this psalm (!!) and sometimes said it to himself on his walk home from Parliament through Hyde Park. What effect do you think that would have on a person's heart? What is God trying to do to your heart through reading this psalm?

Prayer: Praise God for giving us His word so that we can seek Him and know Him and live well in His world. Pray that this week He would use this psalm to help you delight in His word.

DAY 2

Read Psalm 119:17-32

BIBLE IN 2 YEARS

Zechariah 1-14; John 13-17

1. What does the Psalmist ask God for in these verses?
2. What drives these requests?
 - a. Circumstances
 - b. Beliefs about God or His word
 - c. Feelings
3. In verse 18, what does he expect to find in God's word? Why do you think we need God to 'open my eyes'?
4. Do you pray prayers like these?

Prayer: Ask God to open your eyes to see wonderful things in His word. Turn the other requests in this psalm into your own requests to God.

WEEK 9: SONGS OF THE WORD

DAY 3

Read Psalm 119:33-48

1. The psalm is about God's word not just the laws in God's word (e.g. verses 42-43). But it's clear that this includes God's commands. How does the Psalmist feel about God's commands?

Verse 35

Verse 39

Verses 47-48

2. Are they restricting? (Verses 44-45)
3. Does this challenge the way that you feel about God's commands?
4. The writer knows he has not kept all of God's commands (verse 5-6). So, his confidence before God comes not from his performance but from God's gracious promise (verse 58). If we treat God's laws as the way to be right with God, they will crush us (Galatians 3:11). But what does it look like to use God's commands well now that we have already been saved by His grace?

Prayer: Praise God that He has not left us in the dark about His nature and the nature of the world He has made, but has taught us what it really does mean to live rightly in His world. Ask God to help us delight in learning His commands just as much as His promises.

DAY 4

Read Psalm 119:49-64

1. What word is repeated? (Verse 49, 52, 55 – it's clearer in the NIV translation than the ESV translation). How does this relate to verse 61? Is there a common theme in these stanzas?
2. When we ask God to 'remember' (verse 49), are we asking Him to do something with His thoughts or His actions?
3. How does remembering God's word provide us with stability?
Verse 50

Verse 51

Verse 54

Verse 56
4. What habits can you cultivate that will help you not to forget God's word?

Prayer: Thank God that He has not forgotten His word but will enact every promise through Jesus. Pray that remembering His promises and teachings will give you stability in the ups and downs of life. Ask for help to cultivate healthy habits of remembering.

WEEK 9: SONGS OF THE WORD

DAY 5

Read Psalm 119:65-80

1. Are you bored of this topic yet? We are almost halfway through the Psalm – is the writer bored of the topic yet? (Verse 72)
2. Reflect on these verses (e.g. verse 69) and this psalm as a whole. Is it possible as a Christian to be too focused on God's word?
3. John 1:1 calls Jesus the "Word". How does what we have seen this week in Psalm 119 enrich your understanding of Jesus as the Word?
4. How much is your life filled with God's word? Are there ways you could pursue God's word more? Here are some possible next steps. Tick or write down any you would like to implement.

With God's help I would like to...

- ☐ Ask a friend if they'd like to meet weekly to read the Bible with me for a term
- ☐ Commit to never missing church and Growth Group
- ☐ Memorise a verse each week
- ☐ Write Bible passages out and stick them where I will see them around the house
- ☐ Read a Christian book that will help me 'see wonderful things' in God's word
- ☐ Buy a children's Bible to read each night with the kids
- ☐ Ask my wife/husband/housemate/friend regularly "what has God been teaching you in His word?"
- ☐ Read a psalm each morning or each night before bed.

You might like to set aside half an hour to read through this whole psalm all at once.

Prayer: Pray that God continues to work in your heart to love His word and build your whole life on it. You could turn the verses we read today into your prayer.



PRAYER POINTS AND NOTES

WEEK 10: SONGS OF PRAISE

The Hebrew name for the book of Psalms is Tehillim, which means 'Praises'. That's an interesting name considering that it includes confessions and laments and wisdom poems, as we've seen (and perhaps that ought to expand our view of what it means to praise God).

And yet, as we approach the end of the book, we find the volume knob is turned up and psalms of direct praise become more frequent, louder and more energetic. We have brought every situation of life to God in Psalms. As we have longed and loved and learned and lamented, we have found in Him a friend for our every need. So – what is left but to bring Him praises?

DAY 1

Read Psalm 146

1. When and how will the Psalmist praise God?
2. What reasons does this psalm put forward to praise God?
3. What reasons do you have to praise God?
4. Psalms is a book of songs. Why do you think God has given us the gift of music and songs, and how can they help us praise Him?

Prayer: Spend some time praising God, using the reasons in this psalm as a starting point.

BIBLE IN 2 YEARS

Malachi 1-4; John 18-21

BONUS ARTICLE:

Taken from “A Word on Praise”, by C.S Lewis

“But the most obvious fact about praise – whether of God or anything – strangely escaped me. I thought of it in terms of compliment, approval, or the giving of honour. I had never noticed that all enjoyment spontaneously overflows into praise unless... shyness or the fear of boring others is deliberately brought in to check it.

The world rings with praise – lovers praising their mistresses [Romeo praising Juliet and vice versa], readers their favourite poet, walkers praising the countryside, players praising their favourite game – praise of weather, wines, dishes, actors, motors, horses, colleges, countries, historical personages, children, flowers, mountains, rare stamps, rare beetles, even sometimes politicians or scholars... Except where intolerably adverse circumstances interfere, praise almost seems to be inner health made audible.

I had not noticed either that just as men spontaneously praise whatever they value, so they spontaneously urge us to join them in praising it: 'Isn't she lovely? Wasn't it glorious? Don't you think that magnificent?' The Psalmists in telling everyone to praise God are doing what all men do when they speak of what they care about.

I think we delight to praise what we enjoy because the praise not merely expresses but completes the enjoyment; it is its appointed consummation. It is not out of compliment that lovers keep on telling one another how beautiful they are; the delight is incomplete till it is expressed. It is frustrating to have discovered a new author and not to be able to tell anyone how good he is; to come suddenly, at the turn of the road, upon some mountain valley of unexpected grandeur and then to have to keep silent because the people with you care for it no more than for a tin can in the ditch; to hear a good joke and find no one to share it with.

Fully to enjoy is to glorify. In commanding us to glorify Him, God is inviting us to enjoy Him.”

WEEK 10: SONGS OF PRAISE

DAY 2

Read Psalm 147

1. What does the Psalmist do to praise God? (e.g. what is he doing in verses 2-6?)
2. What does it feel like to praise God, according to verse 1?
Do you think this fits with the C.S. Lewis quote on the previous page?
3. What does it say about our relationship with God if we do not enjoy praising God?
4. What advice might you give someone who realised they do not enjoy praising God?

Prayer: Praise God, putting into words the great things He has done and the great things about who He is. As you do this, pray that God would help you to enjoy Him more and more.

DAY 3

Read Psalm 148

1. Who does this psalm call to praise God?
2. From verses 5-6 and verses 13-14, why is it wrong for people to fail to praise God (and to exalt something other than God)?
3. John Piper's book, *Let the Nations Be Glad*, starts with the observation that mission exists because worship doesn't. How is worship both the fuel and goal of our mission to reach the lost?
4. How should this motivate and shape:
 - a. Our evangelism?
 - b. The way we engage in singing at church?
 - c. The way we parent our kids and relate to other Christians?
 - d. The way we pray?

Prayer: Spend time praising God for the reasons that this psalm gives. Pray that God would move our church, our region, and our world to see His beauty and come to know and praise Him! Ask that God might use you today to point people to Him.

WEEK 10: SONGS OF PRAISE

DAY 4

Read Psalm 149

1. What should this song of praise look like, sound like, and feel like, according to verses 1-5?
2. Where in Australian culture do we see people celebrating like this? Is it common? Does it happen after a footy grand final? How could our culture affect the way we praise God?
3. Verses 6-9 reflect a belief that somehow the Messiah's people will accompany Him when He comes in judgment to put a stop to the evil deeds of those who remain rebels against Him. Recall Psalm 2 and the way these psalms are the songs of the Messiah. How does today's psalm depict the fulfilment of Psalm 2 – both in the establishment of Israel's king (149:2) and the consequences for rejecting him (149:6-9)?
4. Do you find it hard to praise God for His works of judgment? How much could this be influenced by our culture as well?

Croatian theologian Miroslav Volf says, imagine speaking in a war zone. Among your listeners are people whose cities and villages have been first plundered, then burned and leveled to the ground, whose daughters and sisters have been raped, whose fathers and brothers have had their throats slit. There you discover that only in a quiet suburban home can we imagine that it would be righteous for God to refuse to judge.

Prayer: Praise God for His comprehensive salvation – gathering a people to Himself, dying for His enemies, establishing His kingdom, and bringing justice to those who persist in doing evil. Pray that we will praise God rightly, not just follow our culture.

DAY 5

Read Psalm 150

1. How is this psalm a fitting finale to the book of Psalms?
2. What two categories can fuel our praises? (Verse 2)
3. How can musical instruments help us praise God?
4. As you think about the psalms we've read this week, is there anything you would like to change about the way you approach praising God?

Prayer:

Praise God for the lessons He has taught you through the book of Psalms.
Praise Him for His powerful acts.
Praise Him for His abundant greatness.
Praise Him for these songs of the Messiah.
Praise Him for these songs of trust and commitment.
Praise Him for these songs of confession and longing.
Praise Him for these songs of lament and cursing.
Praise Him for these songs of thanks and declaration.
Praise Him for these songs of the Word.
Praise Him for these songs of praise.
Pray that you will use your breath to bring Him praise!

