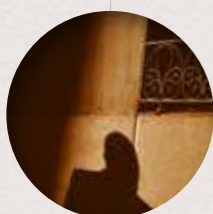
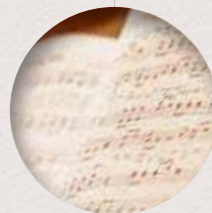


Leader Guide Psalms



EXPLORE THE BIBLE®

Adults • Summer 2025 • CSB

A MOMENT IN TIME

Photo albums are like time capsules. In a matter of moments, we can be transported back to a special moment or event, thanks to a single, still image in a book. We might spend hours flipping pages and reviving memories of days gone by. Through photographs, we can bring family vacations back to life and recall old friendships. We can laugh about how we used to dress or reflect on the influence of a family member who has since passed away.

In a sense, photo albums tell our stories as human beings. The good times and the bad are laid out in front of us. The mountains we climbed and the valleys we endured come back to life. Pictures serve as a microcosm of all our emotions and experiences. Single moments captured on film (or, these days, on a phone) represent hundreds of other snippets of where we've been and what we've done.

When you stop and think about it, photo albums remind us of who we are—and maybe who we long to become.

The book of Psalms provides that kind of window to the human soul. The psalms served as a hymnal of sorts for the ancient Israelites, but it really tells the story of every human. Across 150 chapters, Psalms hits on topics that still resonate with people today. It provides an honest look at what leads to our celebrations and our frustrations. Like the images in a photo album, each psalm paints a picture of who we were, who we are, and who we'd like to be.

Psalms addresses almost every human need imaginable. That includes the greatest need of every person who has ever lived: a personal relationship with God. While the birth of Jesus the Messiah was still in the future, the message of the Psalms is that God loves us and wants a relationship with us. He has the power to deliver us, to set us free from the sin that holds us captive.

Thankfully, God is still in the delivery business. He still redeems and rescues those who will come to Him in faith. If you're ready to turn the page and start a new chapter of your story with God, here's what you must do . . .

- **Admit** to God that you are a sinner. Repent, turning from your sin.
- **By faith receive** Jesus as God's Son and accept His gift of forgiveness from sin. He took the penalty for your sin by dying on the cross. Jesus also rose from the dead, making a new, eternal life possible for us.
- **Confess** your faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. You may pray a prayer similar to this as you call on God to save you: "Dear God, I know that You love me. I confess my sin and need of salvation. I turn away from my sin and place my faith in Jesus as my Savior and Lord. In the name of Jesus I pray, amen."

After you have received Jesus Christ into your life, tell a pastor or another Christian about your decision. Show others your faith in Christ by asking for baptism by immersion in your local church as a public expression of your faith.

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THE WEEK OF

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*Evangelistic Emphasis

MEET THE WRITERS

Argile Smith wrote the Leader Guide commentary for these studies on the book of Psalms. Dr. Smith is a retired minister who has served as a pastor, seminary professor, and a Baptist university administrator. He is a graduate of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary (M.Div., Ph.D). He and his wife, Connie, have three children and four grandchildren.

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WORD WISE

Terms listed here are identified in the Bible commentary with a dot (•).

Ephrathah [EF ruh thuh]—area near Bethlehem where David received the news about the ark (Ps. 132:6)

Happy—the state of joy and contentment one experiences when living in right relationship with God; also translated “blessed” or “joyful” (Ps. 1:1)

Hermon [HUHR muhn]—place name meaning “devoted mountain,” located in the extreme north of Israel (Ps. 42:6)

Iniquity—one of several Old Testament terms for sin (Hebrew, *awon*); denotes a deliberate overstepping of the limits of God’s law (Pss. 18:23; 32:2)

Jaar [JAY ahr]—also known as Kiriath-jearim (1 Sam. 6:21–7:2), place where the ark was recovered from the Philistines (Ps. 132:6)

Melchizedek [mel KIZ uh dek]—priest and king of ancient Jerusalem; the name means “king of righteousness”; the book of Hebrews draws parallels between Melchizedek and Jesus (Heb. 5:6; 7:1–28; see also Gen. 14:17–20; Ps. 110:4)

Mizar [MIGH zahr]—place name meaning “little hill” or “little mountain”; probably part of the same mountain range as Mount Hermon in the extreme north of Israel (Ps. 42:6)

Ordinances—God’s judgments; a binding law; a designation for God’s Word (Pss. 18:22; 119:30)

Precepts—God’s expectations of His people; refers to an order which is binding; a designation for God’s Word (Pss. 19:8; 119:15)

Sin—the most common term for sin in the Old Testament (Hebrew, *kata*); to miss the mark or to fall short of God’s standard of holiness (Ps. 32:1)

Statutes—from a word meaning “to bear witness”; laws or commandments; a designation for God’s Word (Pss. 18:22; 119:8,12,16)

Transgression—one of several related terms for sin in the Old Testament (Hebrew, *pesha*); a deliberate act of rebellion (Ps. 32:1)

Zion [ZIGH uhn]—a biblical term that sometimes refers to Jerusalem, to the temple built by Solomon, to the whole nation of Israel, or to the heavenly city of God in the new age (Ps. 132:13)

BIBLE READING PLAN

JUNE	JULY	AUGUST
<input type="checkbox"/> 1. Psalm 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 1. Psalms 52-53	<input type="checkbox"/> 1. Psalm 102
<input type="checkbox"/> 2. Psalm 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 2. Psalm 54	<input type="checkbox"/> 2. Psalm 103
<input type="checkbox"/> 3. Psalms 3-4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3. Psalm 55	<input type="checkbox"/> 3. Psalm 104
<input type="checkbox"/> 4. Psalm 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 4. Psalm 56	<input type="checkbox"/> 4. Psalm 105
<input type="checkbox"/> 5. Psalms 6-7	<input type="checkbox"/> 5. Psalms 57-58	<input type="checkbox"/> 5. Psalm 106
<input type="checkbox"/> 6. Psalms 8-9	<input type="checkbox"/> 6. Psalm 59	<input type="checkbox"/> 6. Psalm 107
<input type="checkbox"/> 7. Psalms 10-11	<input type="checkbox"/> 7. Psalms 60-61	<input type="checkbox"/> 7. Psalm 108
<input type="checkbox"/> 8. Psalms 12-14	<input type="checkbox"/> 8. Psalms 62-63	<input type="checkbox"/> 8. Psalm 109
<input type="checkbox"/> 9. Psalms 15-17	<input type="checkbox"/> 9. Psalms 64-65	<input type="checkbox"/> 9. Psalms 110-111
<input type="checkbox"/> 10. Psalm 18	<input type="checkbox"/> 10. Psalms 66-67	<input type="checkbox"/> 10. Psalms 112-114
<input type="checkbox"/> 11. Psalms 19-21	<input type="checkbox"/> 11. Psalm 68	<input type="checkbox"/> 11. Psalm 115
<input type="checkbox"/> 12. Psalm 22	<input type="checkbox"/> 12. Psalm 69	<input type="checkbox"/> 12. Psalms 116-117
<input type="checkbox"/> 13. Psalms 23-24	<input type="checkbox"/> 13. Psalms 70-71	<input type="checkbox"/> 13. Psalm 118
<input type="checkbox"/> 14. Psalms 25-26	<input type="checkbox"/> 14. Psalm 72	<input type="checkbox"/> 14. Psalm 119
<input type="checkbox"/> 15. Psalms 27-28	<input type="checkbox"/> 15. Psalm 73	<input type="checkbox"/> 15. Psalms 120-122
<input type="checkbox"/> 16. Psalms 29-30	<input type="checkbox"/> 16. Psalms 74-75	<input type="checkbox"/> 16. Psalms 123-125
<input type="checkbox"/> 17. Psalm 31	<input type="checkbox"/> 17. Psalms 76-77	<input type="checkbox"/> 17. Psalms 126-128
<input type="checkbox"/> 18. Psalms 32-33	<input type="checkbox"/> 18. Psalm 78	<input type="checkbox"/> 18. Psalms 129-131
<input type="checkbox"/> 19. Psalm 34	<input type="checkbox"/> 19. Psalm 79	<input type="checkbox"/> 19. Psalms 132-134
<input type="checkbox"/> 20. Psalms 35-36	<input type="checkbox"/> 20. Psalm 80	<input type="checkbox"/> 20. Psalm 135
<input type="checkbox"/> 21. Psalm 37	<input type="checkbox"/> 21. Psalms 81-82	<input type="checkbox"/> 21. Psalm 136
<input type="checkbox"/> 22. Psalms 38-39	<input type="checkbox"/> 22. Psalms 83-84	<input type="checkbox"/> 22. Psalms 137-138
<input type="checkbox"/> 23. Psalms 40-41	<input type="checkbox"/> 23. Psalms 85-86	<input type="checkbox"/> 23. Psalm 139
<input type="checkbox"/> 24. Psalms 42-43	<input type="checkbox"/> 24. Psalms 87-88	<input type="checkbox"/> 24. Psalms 140-141
<input type="checkbox"/> 25. Psalm 44	<input type="checkbox"/> 25. Psalm 89	<input type="checkbox"/> 25. Psalms 142-143
<input type="checkbox"/> 26. Psalm 45	<input type="checkbox"/> 26. Psalm 90	<input type="checkbox"/> 26. Psalm 144
<input type="checkbox"/> 27. Psalms 46-47	<input type="checkbox"/> 27. Psalms 91-92	<input type="checkbox"/> 27. Psalm 145
<input type="checkbox"/> 28. Psalms 48-49	<input type="checkbox"/> 28. Psalms 93-94	<input type="checkbox"/> 28. Psalm 146
<input type="checkbox"/> 29. Psalm 50	<input type="checkbox"/> 29. Psalms 95-96	<input type="checkbox"/> 29. Psalm 147
<input type="checkbox"/> 30. Psalm 51	<input type="checkbox"/> 30. Psalms 97-99	<input type="checkbox"/> 30. Psalm 148
	<input type="checkbox"/> 31. Psalms 100-101	<input type="checkbox"/> 31. Psalms 149-150

USING THIS GUIDE TO LEAD



BEFORE THE GROUP TIME

1. STUDY THE CORE PASSAGE.

Prepare early. Read the passage, listing key people, places, words, phrases, and actions. Use the commentary included in the *Explore the Bible Leader Guide* and the *Explore the Bible Adult Commentary* to dig deeper into the items you listed. If a QR code is available in a lesson, scan it to gain additional information on what's found in the passage. Write a summary of the session's main idea. Use the statement printed under each session title as a starting place.

2. CREATE A GROUP TIME PLAN.

Craft a group plan that helps adults discover and respond to the main idea. Consult the Group Plans in the *Explore the Bible Leader Guide*, which include ideas for integrating the *Explore the Bible Personal Study Guide*. Page numbers for related PSG content are provided in the Group Plans. These page numbers correspond to the regular print version of the PSG and may differ from large print versions. Identify ways to engage adults, explore the text, summarize the lesson, and challenge the group.

For additional ideas or questions, consult *Explore the Bible QuickSource* and *Explore the Bible Extra* (which identifies a current event to introduce and conclude the lesson and is found at goExploreTheBible.com/LeaderExtras).

Review the items available in the *Explore the Bible Leader Pack*. Look at the Lifeway Sunday School blog and Groups Ministry blog for additional helps on leading an ongoing Bible study group.

3. GATHER AND REVIEW.

Review the group plan and options again and collect any supplies you will need. Make sure you have additional copies of the *Explore the Bible Personal Study Guide* for guests.

DURING THE GROUP TIME

4. ARRIVE EARLY.

Make sure you are the first person to arrive. Pray as you set up the area. Greet adults as they arrive and focus their attention on the Bible study.

5. LEAD THE GROUP IN A TIME OF BIBLE STUDY.

Use the plan you created, recording notes of how the group responded. Remember, every group experience takes a few unexpected twists and turns, so be flexible.

AFTER THE GROUP TIME

6. EVALUATE AND RECORD.

Review and implement the After the Session idea to encourage the group to put the truths they discovered into practice. Record prayer requests and other insights you gained about the group and specific participants. Use these notes to help you grow as a leader.

7. START PREPARING TO LEAD THE NEXT GROUP TIME.

MEETING THE EXPLORE THE BIBLE FAMILY OF ADULT RESOURCES

CORE RESOURCES

Use the *Daily Discipleship Guide* or *Personal Study Guide* and *Leader Guide* as the core resource for your group.

Daily Discipleship Guide

Resource for both the group members and the group leader. An alternative to the *Personal Study Guide/Leader Guide* model. Includes key words, commentary and questions for the group, daily Bible readings for personal study after the group time, and ideas for smaller groups to discuss the study. Leader helps with targeted teaching plans included in the back.

Personal Study Guide

Resource for the group members to help them prepare for and study during the group time.

Leader Guide

Resource for leaders of groups using the *Personal Study Guide*. Includes commentary and group teaching plans.

ADDITIONAL LEADER HELPS

Commentary

Provides additional insight into the passages studied.

QuickSource

Resource for leaders, providing additional discussion questions, an object lesson, and dig deeper feature. Also provides ease of use for an individual called on to step in and lead the group on short notice.

Leader Pack

Resource filled with posters, masters for informative handouts, and access to a digital leader pack (includes DOC files of the *Leader Guide* commentary, group plans, the pack items in PDF format, and other helps for the leader).



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BIBLICAL BACKGROUND

The book of Psalms serves as the superlative worship resource for God's people. The worship experience could involve a gathering of people who meet with Him together at a specific time and place. It also could be a personal time in which individuals turn to the Lord to enjoy intimate fellowship with Him. Either way, the Psalms help believers embrace a lifestyle of worship and service.

The translation of the book of Psalms from Hebrew to Greek underscores its unique purpose. In the Hebrew title of this remarkable Bible book, the word *nebel* actually meant "harp." When it was translated from Hebrew into the Greek language, the word *psalterion* in the title meant "the plucking of strings." The psalms functioned to provide God's people with a tool that would enable them to come into His presence and sing praises to Him. No wonder God's people came to refer to the Bible book as "The Book of Praises."

Along with being a tool for worship in the days of the Old Testament, the Psalms have nourished New Testament believers spiritually in Christ. These ancient hymns strengthen contemporary Christ followers in their walk with Jesus so they can honor Him with their lives. Through the psalms, the Lord also shows us how to make Him the center of our attention.

Additionally, more than a few of the psalms hold a special place in believers' hearts because their words point us directly to Jesus. They provide us with dynamic expressions of worship that declared the reality of His messianic mission long before He arrived in Bethlehem.

COMPOSITION AND COLLECTION

The development of the book of Psalms reflects God's eternal power at work across the long time frame of Old Testament history, which included almost ten centuries. According to Bible scholars, Moses wrote the first psalm as he led the Israelites through forty

years of wandering in the wilderness. The difficulties and victories during those long years cultivated an intimate relationship between him and the Lord. Psalm 90 captured the depth of their relationship and the priority of living with fulfillment in His presence.

Most of the remaining psalms were composed during the days of David and Solomon, the most prominent kings in Israel's history. Along with their responsibilities as leaders, David and Solomon each had a passion for worship and a gift for songs and poetry. As a result, they produced many of the lyrics found in the book of Psalms.

Ezra the priest could have been the writer of Psalm 127. Considered to be the last psalm to be written, it was probably composed after God's people returned to Jerusalem from Babylonian exile.

At some point in the history of Israel, the Lord led individuals to bring the psalms together into one volume. The Holy Spirit inspired the writers to compose the psalms. Then, He guided one leader after another to follow His leadership so the psalms could be turned into songs for worship, first at the tabernacle and then at the temple. He also preserved the psalms so they would be used from one generation of God's people to another.

In addition, the Lord led countless people to play significant roles in producing, collecting, and incorporating the psalms into worship. For that reason, He deserves all of the credit for making the book of Psalms a reality. His active involvement in the composition and collection of the psalms underscores His sovereign power and the absolute reliability of Psalms as the Word of God.

ORGANIZATION

During the years in which the Lord orchestrated the composition of the psalms, He also guided the process for arranging them



to form the Bible book. The process rendered the arrangement of the 150 psalms into five separate “books.” This organization bears a striking resemblance to the arrangement of the first five books of the Bible that form the Pentateuch.

Book One includes Psalms 1–41. Of course, Psalm 1 introduces the entire Bible book and introduces the idea that God’s people need to live according to God’s ways. If they do, they will experience the blessings associated with being devoted to Him. In contrast, those who reject His ways will falter and fail. Other psalms in this section reflect the influence of David and Solomon. The final psalm ends with a doxology (41:13).

Book Two consists of Psalms 42–72. They were likely gathered approximately three centuries after the completion of the psalms in Book One. The collection has been attributed to King Hezekiah. He sought to call God’s people back to Him by recalling King David’s spiritual leadership (2 Chron. 29:30–31). This section of psalms also ends with a doxology in Psalm 72:18–20.

Book Three incorporates Psalms 73–89. The first eleven psalms in this section have been attributed to Asaph, a devoted Levite who led worship services and directed one of the choirs at the temple. He also wrote Psalm 50. The psalms in Book Three helped the people of Israel recognize the holiness of God’s name and His sanctuary. The doxology in Psalm 89:52 concludes this section.

Book Four encompasses Psalms 90–106. The psalms in this section appear to have been written after Israel’s return to Jerusalem following the nation’s exile in Babylon. Nehemiah and Ezra led God’s people through the challenging work of national and spiritual restoration. These psalms call to mind Israel’s spiritual struggles when Moses led them through the wilderness. The closing doxology is located in Psalm 106:48.

Book Five includes Psalms 107–150. These psalms were added to the collection approximately six hundred years after the psalms in Book One were compiled. Ezra’s ministry also provides the context of this section. The lyrics of these psalms draw attention to the power of God’s Word and the need to praise Him for His presence. Psalm 150:6 is the closing doxology for Book Five and, of course, the entire book of Psalms.

THEMES

Three major themes run through the book of Psalms. First, readers are confronted with the power of God as psalmists challenge His people to behold the miracle of His creation. They also lead worshipers in singing hymns that declare His greatness. Further, they proclaim His leadership in establishing His kingdom and preparing His people for the arrival of the Messiah.

The presence of God also takes center stage in a large number of the psalms. Not only does God awaken His people with His presence, but He also comforts them with the tender assurance that He will never leave them. At the same time, He instructs believers regarding His ways and how they can live according to the ordinances He has given. His determination to be faithful to us emanates from His faithful love for us.

Finally, the glory of God remains a constant theme throughout Psalms. In particular, the songs found in Book Five give specific attention to guiding God’s people to praise Him for who He is and to thank Him for what He does. This should lead contemporary Christ followers to do the same, acknowledging that what God does is a reflection of who He is—He is worthy of praise for both.

TYPES OF PSALMS

Many psalms are not neatly or easily categorized. However, identification of type helps readers gain insight into the psalm's use and original context. The religious feelings and expressions found in the psalms may overlap between classifications. A few psalms (25; 34; 119) are acrostically arranged according to the Hebrew alphabet, probably to aid memorization.

LAMENT

Laments are emotional cries to God for deliverance from distress. A lament can be expressed by the community or an individual. (Pss. 3–5; 7; 12–13; 17; 22; 25–27; 35; 39–44; 54–60; 62; 64; 69–71; 74; 77; 79–80; 83; 85–86; 88; 90; 94; 120; 123; 126; 134; 137; 140–142; 144)

THANKSGIVING

Thanksgiving psalms are also spoken by the community and the individual. They are expressions of gratitude to God for His abundant blessings. (Pss. 9–11; 16; 23; 30–31; 34; 48; 62; 66–68; 75; 91–92; 106–109; 115–116; 118; 121; 124–125; 129; 131; 138–139)

HYMN

The hymn is closest in form to a song of praise as sung in modern forms of worship. Hymns normally include a call to praise and describe the reasons for praising God. (Pss. 8; 15; 19; 24; 29; 33; 46; 52; 65; 81–82; 87; 100; 103–105; 111; 113–114; 117; 122; 135–136; 145–150)

ROYAL

These psalms celebrated the rule of Israel's earthly king. They may have included an oracle for the king. In some cases, prayers were made to intercede on behalf of the king. Some royal psalms have messianic implications/fulfillments. (Pss. 2; 18; 20–21; 45; 50; 61; 63; 72; 84; 89; 101; 110; 132)

ENTHRONEMENT

Enthronement psalms celebrate Yahweh's rule and reign as King. These are closely related to the hymns; the main difference is a celebration of Yahweh as king over all creation. (Pss. 47; 93–99)

PENITENTIAL

Penitential psalms are expressions of contrition and repentance. (Pss. 6; 28; 32; 38; 51; 102; 130; 143)

WISDOM/DIDACTIC

This type of psalm presents practical guidelines for godly living. (Pss. 1; 14; 36–37; 49; 53; 73; 76; 78; 112; 119; 127–128; 133)

God's Wisdom

SESSION 1

Psalm 1:1-6

Memory Verse: Psalm 1:1-2

Pursuing godly wisdom leads to a fruitful life.

We live in a world full of choices. Sometimes we have so many choices that we can't make up our minds. Other times, we complain that we don't have enough choices. That's when we try to create more choices for ourselves. Throughout our lives, we learn that we have to live with the consequences that accompany them.

When it comes to making the most important decisions in life, we need God's wisdom. Left to ourselves, we run the risk of making foolish choices. His wisdom enables us to see things His way so we can do things His way. As you study this first session from the Psalms, consider how you make choices—and how you can allow God to be the primary Guide in that equation. And reflect on how you can best help the adults in your Bible study learn to pursue God's wisdom so they can lead fruitful lives.



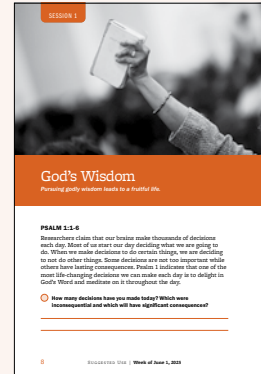
Weekly Podcast: Group Leader Training

Scan here to gain insights about this week's study on Apple podcasts, Spotify, Google Podcasts, or at goExploreTheBible.com/adults-training.



Researchers claim that our brains make thousands of decisions each day. Most of us start our day deciding what we are going to do. When we make decisions to do certain things, we are deciding to not do other things. Some decisions are not too important while others have lasting consequences. Psalm 1 indicates that one of the most life-changing decisions we can make each day is to delight in God's Word and meditate on it throughout the day. (PSG, p. 8)

How many decisions have you made today? Which were inconsequential and which will have significant consequences?



Understand the Context (Psalm 1:1-6)

When studying the book of Psalms, scholars often classify each psalm into one of seven categories. Each category reflects the unique traits of the psalms within it. For example, Psalm 1 falls into the “wisdom” category—and for a good reason. It expresses the spiritual happiness of God’s people who make the wise choice of devoting themselves to Him exclusively. In the psalm, their wise choice stands in distinct contrast to the foolish decision to ignore Him and to refuse to take Him seriously.

Because Psalm 1 points to the difference between wise and foolish choices about living for God, it has a connection with other Old Testament books. For instance, Moses gave similar instruction to God’s people as they made their way into the promised land (Deut. 30:11-20). He couched his instruction about making the wise choice to walk with God in terms of blessing and cursing. Likewise, the same encouragement offered in Psalm 1 can also be seen in passages like Proverbs 2:12-22 and Jeremiah 17:5-8.

Incidentally, the writer of Psalm 1 had in mind the need for individuals to determine that they would live for God. The writer of Psalm 2 urged kings to make the same choice for the sake of their kingdoms (Ps. 2:10-12). The wisdom of absolute surrender is a common theme throughout the Psalms.

The New Testament also reflects the importance and priority of living for God that are offered in Psalm 1. For example, Paul warned believers about the positive and negative influences of relationships on a believer’s character (1 Cor. 15:33). Jesus concluded the Sermon on the Mount with instructions about making wise choices as His disciples. He punctuated the need to choose wisely when He mentioned the options people had between two gates, two trees, and two foundations (Matt. 7:13-27).

In a way, Psalm 1 serves as the introduction to the entire collection of psalms. It opens the door to understanding how believers are called to live as God’s people in the world. At the heart of such a lifestyle lies a decision. We can choose to embrace Him and His ways, or we can decide to take a path that doesn’t include Him. Our choice about God will have a lasting effect on our spiritual happiness. It will also determine the outcome of our lives, both on earth and in eternity.

Nobody knows the identity of the person who wrote this psalm. However, we can rest assured in the reality that God guided the writer. As a result, we have been given an opportunity to live out God’s wisdom by choosing to devote ourselves to Him. And we have been warned if we decide to take a different path.

Read Psalm 1. Take note of how it compares those who prioritize God’s Word in their lives with those who do not. According to the psalm, what does a blessed life look like?



PREPARE: On a focal wall, display **Pack Item 2** (Poster: *Types of Psalms*), **Pack Item 4** (Poster: *God in the Psalms*). Make enough copies of **Pack Item 8** (Handout: *Praying Scriptures in Psalms*) for each person in the group.

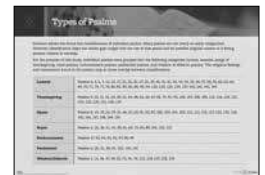
INTRODUCE: Begin the session by directing adults to reflect on the decisions they have made since starting their day. Talk briefly about which ones that make each day and which were unique and why.

READ: Enlist a volunteer to read the opening paragraph on page 8 of the PSG.

ASK: **How many decisions have you made today? Which were inconsequential and which will have significant consequences?** (PSG, p. 8)

EXPLAIN: Affirm that some of the decisions may seem minor (such as hitting the snooze button a couple of times), while others set a trajectory for our lives (such as choice of job or spouse). Share that Psalm 1, the first passage we will study in this series from the book of Psalms, reveals that we are faced with a choice about God and His Word.

TRANSITION: *Today's study in Psalm 1 provides a picture of the way of the righteous person and the way of the wicked. And the path we choose has eternal consequences.*



NOTES

Group Activity Option

Music

Distribute hymnals or copies of the lyrics to “I Have Decided to Follow Jesus” (*Baptist Hymnal*, 2008, No. 434). Lead the group to sing or read the lyrics in unison. As a group, briefly discuss the cost of following Jesus. Ask: **What are the implications of phrases like “though none go with me” and “my cross I’ll carry”?**

The Righteous Person (Ps. 1:1-2)

1 How happy is the one who does not walk in the advice of the wicked or stand in the pathway with sinners or sit in the company of mockers! **2** Instead, his delight is in the LORD's instruction, and he meditates on it day and night.

(v. 1) How happy: This expression has also been translated as “blessed” (ESV, NIV, KJV) or “Oh, the joys” (NLT). It conveys the **happy** result of choosing to nourish a fruitful relationship with God. Even though the English translations may be different, all of them underscore the same fulfilling result of making such a wise choice.

When Jesus began His instruction in the Sermon on the Mount, He used a similar expression. With the Beatitudes, He affirmed the spiritual blessing of true happiness that accompanies a believer's decision to follow Him (Matt. 5:3-12).

(v. 1) The one: Choosing to follow God reflects the consistent devotion His people. Whether they **walk, stand, or sit**, they never lose sight of their responsibility to live according to God's ways. Moses incorporated similar postures into his instruction to parents about teaching their children to follow God (Deut. 6:6-7).

In the context of this verse, the image of walking implied seeking someone's advice, while standing meant fostering a lifestyle that's influenced by others on the same path. Similarly, sitting in one's company signaled a willingness to embrace their perspectives and values.

(v. 1) Wicked . . . sinners . . . mockers: The psalmist refined the devotion of God's people by pointing out who they should avoid as they followed Him. They would not seek the advice of a **wicked** person who had a reputation for wrongdoing. Neither would they allow themselves to be influenced by **sinners** who perpetually missed the spiritual mark and consistently offended God with their thoughts, words, and actions. Furthermore, they would not give any consideration to the impure notions promoted by **mockers** who ridiculed God's ways, laughed at His people, or poked fun at their loyalty to Him.

(v. 2) Delight: The Hebrew word (*chephets*) called to mind the complete satisfaction of a person's deepest longings. Accordingly, anyone who **delight** in the Lord long for nothing more than

an intimate relationship with Him. The writer of Psalm 107 used the same word as he described the glee that filled the heart of a seafarer who had been caught in a storm. To his delight, God graciously led him to the harbor that he had been longing to see (Ps. 107:30).

(v. 2) The LORD's instruction: For God's people in the Old Testament era, the **LORD's instruction** came by way of the Scriptures available to them. His directions enabled them to embrace His ways and to live them out every day. Of course, believers today enjoy the benefit of the Old and New Testaments as we seek His instruction. We treasure of God's Word because of it brings delight to us as we grow spiritually in Him.

(v. 2) Meditates: The Hebrew word (*hagah*) brought into view the picture of God's people muttering the words of a Bible passage to themselves. They whispered the words in an effort to ponder them, grasp them, interpret them, and absorb them so they could put them to work as they served Him. They made meditating on God's Word a lifelong priority. As a result, His Word would get into them. Their thoughts, words, and actions would be influenced by Scripture.

After Moses died, the Lord called Joshua to lead His people across the Jordan River to the promised land. He instructed Joshua to devote himself to practice the spiritual discipline of meditating on His Word (Josh. 1:8). He went on to assure Joshua that embracing such an important spiritual discipline would enable Him to lead the Israelites effectively. Learning to meditate on His Word still holds benefits for us today.

Key Doctrine

The Scriptures

The Holy Bible is a perfect treasure of divine instruction. (See Psalm 119:140; 2 Peter 1:19-21.)

EXPLORE Psalm 1:1-2

1



APPLICATION POINT: Believers should pursue godly wisdom by prioritizing the study of God's Word.

OVERVIEW:

Encourage adults to share what they know about the Psalms. Direct attention to **Pack Item 2** (Poster: *Types of Psalms*). Explain that some psalms are difficult to categorize, but the categories can offer a measure of organization and identify themes within the groups. Note that Psalm 1 is a wisdom psalm and sets the tone for the entire book.



READ:

Invite a volunteer to read aloud Psalm 1:1-2, as the group considers how God's Word leads to happiness.

RECORD:

Draw two columns on the board. Label one column with a plus sign and the other with a negative sign. Guide the group to examine the verses and identify three actions that a righteous person should avoid, and two actions that should be embraced. Write responses as the group shares.

ASK:

How are you feeling the tension between “the advice of the wicked” and “the Lord’s instruction”? (PSG p. 11)

RECAP:

Summarize by sharing the following content from page 11 of the PSG: “God’s Word is one of the most important ways God makes Himself known to us and instructs us how we are to live (2 Tim. 3:15-16). Therefore, the person who delights to know God will delight in His Word and meditate on it **day and night**, meaning throughout the entirety of every day.”

NOTES

Group Activity Option

Object Lesson: Dominoes

Prior to the session gather several dominoes and place them on a small table. Align the dominoes so that when the first one is pushed the others will fall. Direct the group's attention to the dominoes, pushing the first one so that the others fall. Explain that this might be called, “the domino effect.” In a similar fashion, the decisions we make affect other aspects of our lives. Ask: **How has the “domino effect” impacted your life?**

Benefits of Righteousness (Ps. 1:3-4)

3 He is like a tree planted beside flowing streams that bears its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers. **4** The wicked are not like this; instead, they are like chaff that the wind blows away.

(v. 3) Tree: The picture a **tree** provided clarity to the outcome for those who make God their priority. Notice that the tree did not sprout on its own. Someone planted it. Similarly, God took the initiative to place a devoted believer in a setting that would nourish authentic spiritual happiness. Jeremiah used the same image to assure God's people that He would nourish them (Jer. 17:5-8).

(v. 3) Flowing streams: In an arid climate, the image of **flowing streams** would bring confidence to God's people. The consistent supply of life-enriching water would nourish the roots of the tree and guarantee a bountiful harvest. Further, the tree's leaves would never waste away or **wither**. Instead, it would exhibit all of the traits of strength and growth. The same assurance could be applied to God's people who follow Him.

(v. 3) Prospers: The Hebrew word for **prosper** (*tsalach*) refers to a successful endeavor. God's people could count on Him to help them be productive (2 Chron. 26:5; Prov. 28:13). Joseph was successful in Egypt because He walked with God (Gen. 39:2-3). Joshua also followed the Lord and led Israel to the promised land (Josh. 1:8).

(v. 4) Wicked: The Hebrew term (*rasha*) portrayed a person who made wrongdoing a way of life. Without any regret or shame, a **wicked** person's behavior may have been attractive to others, but God's people should view it as repugnant.

Proverbs 4:14-15 and 13:20 serve as a warning to those tempted to embrace wickedness. Likewise, Peter reminded New Testament believers that they had turned from wicked behavior and given their lives to Christ (1 Pet. 4:13).

(v. 4) Chaff: In ancient Israel, farmers went to their fields and gathered the grain at harvest time. After the harvest, they had to separate the kernels of grain from husks and other debris that known as **chaff**. The husks served as something like shells that protected the grain kernels during the growing season.

However, chaff was useless after the harvest. As it dried, it fell away from the grain. The picture provided a sobering description of what happened to people who devote themselves to wickedness.

(v. 4) Wind: The outcome of uselessness for the wicked became even more pronounced with the picture of winnowing. Farmers would use a tool similar to a pitchfork to throw grain in the air. The heavy kernels would fall back on the threshing floor, while the **wind** would blow the chaff away. Later, the farmers burned the empty shells because they served no purpose. For that reason, chaff often illustrated spiritual worthlessness (Ps. 35:5; Isa. 17:13; Hos. 13:3; Matt. 3:12).

Praying Scripture

Psalm 1:3-4

Spend time praying Scripture using Psalm 1:3-4. Read the verse, then respond to these questions:

- How does God reveal Himself in this verse?
- How should I respond to what He reveals?

Example: Talk with God about the distinction between the righteous and the wicked. Ask Him to empower you to be a tree that flourishes rather than chaff that disappears.

During the session, invite adults to pray this Scripture, as well. You and the adults in your group can also take advantage of the Explore the Bible Prayer Guide. This QR code also appears on page 15 of the Personal Study Guide.



Explore the Bible Prayer Guide

Scan here for a weekly prayer guide based on this quarter's Bible passages.

EXPLORE Psalm 1:3-4



APPLICATION POINT: Knowing and obeying God’s Word leads to spiritual growth and a life that pleases God.

READ: Direct the group to read silently Psalm 1:3-4, focusing on the contrast between the righteous person and the wicked person.

RECORD: Lead the group to read the content for verses 3-4 (PSG, p. 12). Draw attention to the positive/negative columns and encourage adults to highlight key words that describe each lifestyle. Add those words to the chart.

ASK: How would you describe the long- term impacts for each lifestyle?

EXAMINE: Enlist three volunteers to read aloud Jeremiah 17:7-8; Proverbs 10:28; and Psalm 127:1 while the group listens for similarities with Psalm 1:3-4. Pause after each passage is read and note similarities between the passages.

ASK: How are you experiencing the blessings of walking in God’s wisdom? (PSG, p. 12)

PRAY: Distribute copies of **Pack Item 8** (*Handout: Praying Scriptures in Psalms*). Direct adults to read Psalm 1:3-4 silently. Guide them to pray this Scripture using the “Praying Scripture” prompts on page 18 of the Leader Guide. After a few minutes, add a sentence prayer asking God to help each person in the group to thrive like a tree beside water.



NOTES

Group Activity Option

Art

Distribute paper and pencils to teams of two to four people. Direct each team to fold their paper in half and to sketch a visual of verse 3 on one side and a visual of verse 4 on the other side. Provide colored pencils, markers, and poster paper if preferred. Allow time for teams to share. Ask: **How does each side vary in the actions and results it portrays? Why is this important to understand as believers?**

Day of Judgment (Ps. 1:5-6)

5 Therefore the wicked will not stand up in the judgment, nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous. **6** For the LORD watches over the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked leads to ruin.

(v. 5) *Therefore:* This word provided a critical transition. It tied to what the psalmist had already said about being devoted to God, while also pointing to the only fitting conclusion that could be drawn from what he had said. God's people who walked with Him could look forward to their future with confidence. The same assurance could not be given to everyone who refused to make Him their highest priority. Their future looked fearfully bleak.

(v. 5) *Stand up:* Once more, the psalmist incorporated a person's posture as he wrote about what the future held for anyone who rejected God and chose a life of wicked behavior. The picture of someone standing up implied a sense of accomplishment and pride. Accordingly, wicked people could parade their so-called prosperity and **stand** arrogantly in their selfish pride as they embraced evil. However, the day would come when they would not be able to stand so tall. In fact, they would not be able to stand at all (see Isa. 2:11).

(v. 5) *Judgment:* The knees of wicked people buckle when they find themselves in the presence of God. He will always have the last word over sinful behavior. The Hebrew word for **judgment** (*mispāt*) brought to mind a courtroom scene in which a person would appear before a judge.

The scene served as a fitting way to describe God's role as sovereign Judge. He could render His judgment to wicked people in their lifetime, or His judgment could be delayed until they faced Him after they died. In one way or the other, those committed to wickedness can count on being judged the presence of God (Mal. 2:17-3:5).

(v. 5) *Assembly of the righteous:* Individuals who gave themselves to sinful behavior could count on being excluded from the fellowship of God's people who devoted themselves to Him. The psalmist identified such people as sinners. They came to be identified that way because they missed the mark spiritually. However, they refused to turn to God.

Like Abraham, they could have placed their faith in God and been made righteous (Gen. 15:6). They could have begun their spiritual journey with Him and enjoyed the company of others who shared their faith. Instead, they rejected Him and remained in their sin. According to the New Testament, their awful fate included eternal death and separation from God in hell (Rev. 20:15).

Key Cross Reference

Way of the righteous

The psalmist concluded with a simple, but profound, explanation of what happens when His people follow Him seriously. He asserted that they could count on God to watch over them. They would never have to wonder if He would care for them, guide them, strengthen them, protect them, and nourish them along the way.

Many Scriptures echo the psalmist's assertion. They offer bedrock assurance about God's care of those who make serving Him their priority. Read the following verses and record how they demonstrate God's work on behalf of His people:

- Psalm 37:18-19
- Nahum 1:7
- John 10:14

(v. 6) *The way of the wicked:* The outcome of wicked people is incredibly sad. The Hebrew word (*abad*) conveyed the dreadful thought of perishing, being lost, failing, and disappearing. Because wicked people ignore God, they set themselves on a path toward destruction. Bible passages like Psalm 112:10; Proverbs 14:12; Matthew 7:13; and 2 Peter 3:12 underscore the painful truth about their tragic outcome. The wicked will lose everything they tried to gain.

EXPLORE Psalm 1:5-6

3



APPLICATION POINT: Each person is faced with a choice—the path that leads to blessing or the path that leads to destruction.

READ: Invite a volunteer to read **Psalm 1:5-6** as the group listens for the future of both the righteous and the wicked.

IDENTIFY: Encourage adults to scan the content for verses 5-6 (PSG, pp. 13-14) and to identify key words in the verses that contrast each other. After a few minutes, discuss responses and add the key words under the appropriate column of the chart.

DISCUSS: Review the chart and lead a brief discussion on how seeking to know God through His Word is essential for lifelong happiness. Encourage adults to consider how daily decisions to follow or ignore God can affect a lifetime.

DISCUSS: **What evidence is there in your life to indicate you are walking in the path of the righteous? What steps can you take to walk more closely with God?** (PSG, p. 14)

REFLECT: Direct attention to **Pack Item 4** (Poster: *God in the Psalms*) and challenge the group to consider what characteristics of God are revealed in Psalm 1. Encourage them to reflect on how those qualities are demonstrated in their lives and how they can do a better job of imitating God's character to those around them.

OUR GOD IS OUR...	
Shield	Psalms 3:3; 28:7; 119:114
Rock	Psalms 18:2; 42:9; 95:1
King	Psalms 5:2; 44:4; 78:12
Shepherd	Psalms 23:1; 80:1
Judge	Psalms 7:11
Refuge	Psalms 46:1; 62:7
Fortress	Psalms 31:3; 71:3
Avenger	Psalms 26:1
Creator	Psalms 8:1-6
Deliverer	Psalms 17:39-40
Healer	Psalms 103:2
Protector	Psalms 5:11
Provider	Psalms 78:23-29
Redeemer	Psalms 107:3

NOTES

Group Activity Option

Bible Skill

Direct adults to complete the Bible Skill on page 14 of the PSG. Note that the psalmist wasn't the only one to emphasize the importance of life choices. Encourage adults to compare Psalm 1 with Deuteronomy 30:19-20 and Matthew 7:24-27. **How are these passages similar? What common themes are found in all three passages?** As a group, create a statement that summarizes the teaching found in all three passages.

CHALLENGE

- SUMMARIZE:** Review these points from Apply the Text on page 15 of the Personal Study Guide:
- *Believers should pursue godly wisdom by prioritizing the study of God's Word.*
 - *Knowing and obeying God's Word leads to spiritual growth and a life that pleases God.*
 - *Each person is faced with a choice-the path that leads to blessing or the path that leads to destruction.*
- READ:** Lead the group to read Psalm 1:1-2 chorally, encouraging the group to memorize these verses and to reflect on how they should influence their lives.
- DISTRIBUTE:** Direct attention back to **Pack Item 8** (*Handout: Praying Scriptures in Psalms*). Encourage adults to continue praying through Psalm 1:3-4 during the week ahead.
- DISCUSS:** Lead a brief discussion on the first set of questions on page 15 of the PSG. Encourage adults to suggest ways the group can make Bible study a priority during the week.
- PRAY:** Call on a volunteer to close in prayer, thanking God for the wisdom found in his Word that allows believers to lead fruitful lives.

After the Session

Reinforce the session by texting or emailing the group and encouraging them to utilize **Pack Item 8** (*Handout: Praying Scriptures in Psalms*) for praying Scripture. Let them know that you are praying for them and suggest they share any prayer requests they might have with you. Urge them to reflect regularly on the contrast between the life and final end of the righteous and that of the wicked. Add a prayer that God's Word will be prioritized in the life of each person in the group.

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God's Truth

SESSION 2

Psalm 119:1-16

Memory Verse: Psalm 119:11

God reveals Himself and His will in Scripture.

Wise people take advantage of instruction manuals. They come in handy when we're trying to learn how to work a new vehicle, a new appliance, or a new building project. Likewise, we run the risk of being foolish when we ignore it even though it's within reach.

As we try to navigate our lives, we're wise when we give serious attention to God's Word, the instruction manual for life in Him. When we get into Scripture, we're getting His instruction for walking with Him in a way that leads to spiritual fulfillment. Through His Word, He reveals Himself and His direction for us.

As you dig into this session for the longest chapter in the Bible, reflect on what God's Word means to you. Acknowledge ways you embrace it and ways you tend to ignore it—and ask God to help you make the appropriate adjustments. Be ready to share what you've learned with the adults in your Bible study this week.



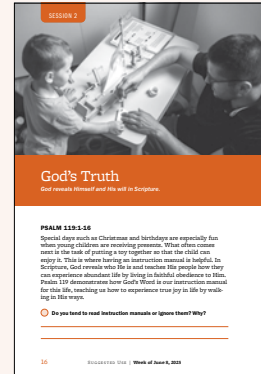
Weekly Podcast: Group Leader Training

Scan here to gain insights about this week's study on Apple podcasts, Spotify, Google Podcasts, or at goExploreTheBible.com/adults-training.



Special days such as Christmas and birthdays are especially fun when young children are receiving presents. What often comes next is the task of putting a toy together so that the child can enjoy it. This is where having an instruction manual is helpful. In Scripture, God reveals who He is and teaches His people how they can experience abundant life by living in faithful obedience to Him. Psalm 119 demonstrates how God's Word is our instruction manual for this life, teaching us how to experience true joy in life by walking in His ways. (PSG, p. 16)

Do you tend to read instruction manuals or ignore them? Why?



Understand the Context (Psalm 119)

The content of Psalm 119 places it in the wisdom category of psalms. It's written to applaud God's Word as the source of His wisdom for His people. Scripture serves as an essential guide for believers who long to nourish a mature walk with the Lord. Growing believers learn from the psalm the distinct connection between keeping His Word consistently and loving Him completely.

This complex psalm happens to be anonymous. Even though the identity of the writer remains a mystery, the circumstances that swirl around the composition of Psalm 119 stand out as evident. The psalm underscores the bedrock conviction that God's Word speaks to the circumstances of life.

Reading through the lengthy psalm bears a striking resemblance to taking a journey through the life of a person who longs to be devoted to God. On the journey, the Scriptures shed light on God's wisdom regarding the ups and downs, joys and sorrows, victories and disappointments that accompany everyday life. The light takes the form of laments, observations, testimonies, and prayers that resonate with anyone who walks with the Lord according to His Word. Throughout the psalm, the resounding call to trust God and to keep His Word remains clear and compelling.

The structure of Psalm 119 reflects some noticeable distinctions. It's composed of twenty-two sections, and each section contains eight verses. Each letter of the Hebrew alphabet is

assigned to one of the sections. For instance, the first letter in the Hebrew alphabet is *aleph*, and each verse in the first section (Ps. 1:1-8) begins with that letter in the original Hebrew. This literary feature is known as an "acrostic" and serves as a pattern for the other eight-verse divisions of the psalm.

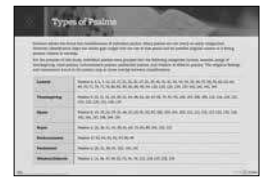
The acrostic structure serves an important purpose. It makes memorizing the lengthy psalm easier. The structure also helps in another way. It enables us to think of the psalm as something like a hymn. Each section of the hymn can be compared to a stanza. Thinking about the psalm in that way helps us understand that it's like a lengthy poem that reflects the psalmist's yearning for God through His Word.

The focus of Psalm 119:1-16 in this session includes the first two sections of the chapter. They are marked by the first two letters in the Hebrew alphabet: *aleph* and *beth*. The first section emphasizes the truth that true spiritual happiness can be found only in walking with God by obeying His Word. The second section helps readers understand how God's people can embrace His Word in a way that produces a settled contentment in Him.

As you read Psalm 119:1-16, identify the characteristics of someone who treasures God's Word. (PSG, p. 17)



PREPARE: On a focal wall, display **Pack Item 2** (Poster: *Types of Psalms*). Make enough copies of **Pack Item 9** (Handout: *Organizing the Psalms*) and **Pack Item 11** (Handout: *A Hymn to God's Law*) for each person in the group. Create a digital version of **Pack Item 8** (Handout: *Praying Scripture in Psalms*) for "After the Session" on page 32 of the Leader Guide.



INTRODUCE: Write the following list on the board: *assembly directions, blueprints, recipes, YouTube videos, Bibles, how-to books, and maps*. Direct the group to discuss with a neighbor what these things have in common. After a few minutes, allow the pairs to share their thoughts. Note that each item on the list offers advice or directions for doing something.



ASK: **Do you tend to read instruction manuals or ignore them? Why?** (PSG, p. 16)

GUIDE: Enlist a volunteer to read the opening paragraph on page 16 of the PSG. Explain that today's session is drawn from Psalm 119 and emphasizes how God's Word serves as our instruction manual for life.



ASK: **How is God's Word a manual for believers?**

TRANSITION: *As we study these first sixteen verses of Psalm 119, think about how much God's Word means to you. Also, consider areas where you've struggled to submit to God's Word and how you can do a better job aligning your life to what He says.*



NOTES

Group Activity Option

Music

Encourage adults to sing the children's song, "The B-I-B-L-E." Review the lyrics again and direct the group to answer the following questions: ***Are you standing alone on the Word of God? How do others know that the Bible is the book for you?*** Share that Psalm 119 highlights the qualities of God's Word that should make an impact on our lives each day.

God's Instruction Given (Ps. 119:1-4)

1 How happy are those whose way is blameless, who walk according to the LORD's instruction! **2** Happy are those who keep his decrees and seek him with all their heart. **3** They do nothing wrong; they walk in his ways. **4** You have commanded that your precepts be diligently kept.

(v. 1) How happy: The psalm begins with a resounding exclamation about the depth and reach of true spiritual happiness. The writer was prepared to prove that such joy and contentment don't show up merely as a gift that God lavishes on His people by surprise. Rather, it results from walking with Him and obeying His instructions.

(v. 1) Blameless: The Hebrew word (*tamim*) described a person of integrity who demonstrated moral soundness and wholesome character (Prov. 11:20). Such a person would avoid sinful behavior and remain **blameless** before God. In Israel's sacrificial system, the word brought to mind an unblemished animal (Lev. 22:18-21).

(v. 1) The LORD's instruction: God initially gave his **instruction** to the ancient Israelites through the *Torah*, what we now know as the first five books of the Bible. God's people came to recognize these books as His Word. Emphasizing His words as instruction underscored the importance of the life-long commitment to learn and obey God's Word. It also highlights our responsibility to teach His inspired Word to others so they can grow spiritually and obey Him consistently.

Key Word

Decrees

In the Hebrew language, the word *edut* also implied statutes or testimonies. The Hebrew word referred to the Ten Commandments (Ex. 16:34; 25:16). The extent to which God's people kept the Ten Commandments served as a clear testimony about the depth of their relationship with Him.

Anyone who had a sincere walk with the Lord devoted themselves wholeheartedly to keeping His **decrees** as the means of pursuing a more intimate relationship with Him. As they gave their attention to learning, honoring, and living out His Word, their relationship with Him would grow deeper.

(v. 3) Do nothing wrong: God's people who experience happiness through His Word consistently put it into practice. They do not engage in what's **wrong**. In contrast, wrongdoers ignore the Lord's instruction and give in to temptation. They come to be recognized as evil people (Ps. 1:1).

God's people take their walk with Him seriously and never lose sight of His instruction as they live for Him each day. Their wholehearted devotion to Him prompts them to make obedience to His Word a daily priority.

(v. 4) Commanded: With **commanded** the psalmist identified another critical factor in learning God's Word and living it out each day. The Lord did not provide His Word with the mere suggestion that His people should embrace what He said. Instead, He expected His people to obey Him by letting His Word sink into their minds and hearts.

As in Psalm 1, the practice of meditating on the Word is key to practicing the Word. The Hebrew wording used here paints the picture of a leader giving an order to subordinates. The expectation is obedience without hesitation.

(v. 4) Precepts: The Hebrew (*piqud*) suggests that God's authority is grounded in the covenant He initiated with Israel. The **precepts** that formed the covenant were provided for the nation at Sinai (Ex. 24:4-7; Deut. 31:24-26). Within that covenant, God instructed His people to embrace a lifestyle of obedience based on His Word.

They would grow stronger as they devoted themselves to loving Him wholeheartedly (Deut. 4:6). In addition, their loyalty could be seen in the way they made His Word their primary concern.



The Acrostic Psalms

Multiple psalmists penned their thoughts as acrostic poems. Discover more about these creative psalms.

EXPLORE Psalm 119:1-4



APPLICATION POINT: We will find God in His Word when we seek Him there.

OVERVIEW: Use Understand the Context (PSG, p. 17) to overview Psalm 119, focusing on both its content and structure. Distribute copies of **Pack Item 9** (*Handout: Organizing the Psalms*) and encourage adults to find which category Psalm 119 falls into. Direct attention to **Pack Item 2** (*Poster: Types of Psalms*) and explain that while Psalm 119 includes elements of several different types, it is considered a wisdom psalm. Note that both Psalm 1 and 119 begin with the word “happy.”

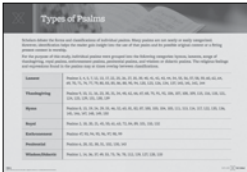
READ: Invite a volunteer to read **Psalm 119:1-4** as the group listens for the characteristics of someone who treasures God’s Word.

ASK: What characterizes the “happy” person?

EXPLAIN: It is critical that believers understand that “happy” is more than a temporary emotion. Genuine happiness is found in an ongoing devotion to God’s Word rooted in a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

DISCUSS: What are some things that influence our actions, decisions, and behavior? (PSG, p. 19)

TRANSITION: As believers, God’s Word should be our guide to living the Christian life. The way we walk and interact with God’s Word sets us on the path to actively obeying God’s Word.



NOTES

Group Activity Option

Object Lesson: Thesaurus

Display a thesaurus and explain that it provides synonyms for words with similar meanings. Examine Psalm 119:1-4, noting words that are similar in nature. (Examples: *instruction, decrees, precepts*) Explain that each of these words provide a picture of what happens when we continually love the Lord and obey His Word.

Obedience to God's Word (Ps. 119:5-8)

5 If only my ways were committed to keeping your statutes! **6** Then I would not be ashamed when I think about all your commands. **7** I will praise you with an upright heart when I learn your righteous judgments. **8** I will keep your statutes; never abandon me.

(v. 5) If only my ways: With this transitional phrase, the psalmist shifted from the ideal to the actual. In the first four verses, the psalmist wrote about God's people who lived out the exemplary model of a life-long commitment to Him. In verse 5, he turned to the real-time reality that he himself had not been able to live up to this standard. He confessed that his **ways**, his lifestyle, did not always match the expectations of the Lord that he wanted to embrace.

(v. 5) Committed: The psalmist longed to walk with the Lord in ways that demonstrated an enduring commitment to Him all the time. But he acknowledged that such a **committed** heart often had eluded him. Perhaps personal circumstances had made obedience a difficult challenge. Or maybe he may have struggled with an adversary who served as an obstacle in his devotion to God. Just as frustrating, he may have been struggling with the temptation to choose a lifestyle that favored convenience over commitment. Whatever the case, the psalmist confessed his humanity and his tendency to fall short of God's perfect plans and purposes as revealed in His **statutes**.

(v. 6) Not be ashamed: In the ancient world, the desire for honor and the dread of shame served as motivating factors for action. The psalmist had admitted that his lifestyle did not always match God's standard for spiritual maturity. He yearned for a deeper, more consistent commitment to God. When he lived up to the pattern set by God's Word, he knew that his behavior gave him no reason to be **ashamed**. Rather, the honor that accompanied walking with complete devotion toward God would be a choice blessing.

(v. 7) Upright heart: After testifying about his hope for spiritual devotion, he turned his attention to praising God. He underscored the distinct connection between praising God with sincere joy and being right with Him.

The writer's greatest joy came from the assurance that his **heart** belonged to the Lord. His eagerness to reach such an ideal did not suggest that he could somehow reach spiritual perfection. He simply longed to reflect a heartfelt desire to please God by being morally **upright**.

(v. 7) Righteous judgments: The psalmist testified that as he grew toward spiritual maturity, he learned more about God's **judgments**. These insights had a wholesome effect on his determination to know God better. He came to see that the Lord never made incorrect, poor, or questionable judgments. His judgments always affirmed obedience to Him and called out rebellion against Him. The psalmist testified that agreeing with His laws filled His heart with praise.

(v. 8) Never abandon me: Based on what the psalmist had learned, he made a heartfelt promise to make living out God's instruction his highest priority. He would embrace God's Word and honor Him by holding fast to it. He also would focus on applying it to every aspect of his life.

In order to keep his promise, however, he would need God's help. Left alone, he could never nurture such a sincere spirit. So, he prayed for God to never **abandon** him. God's abiding presence would enable him to keep his promise.

Key Doctrine

The Scriptures

Scripture reveals the principles by which God judges us, and therefore is, and will remain to the end of the world, the true center of Christian union, and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds, and religious opinions should be tried. (See 2 Timothy 3:15-17; Hebrews 4:12.)

EXPLORE Psalm 119:5-8

2



APPLICATION POINT: God's Word is meant to be obeyed.

READ: Call for the group to read Psalm 119:5-8 silently, looking for words that indicate a shift to a more personal focus.

EXPLAIN: Note that verse 5 reveals a shift from third person to first person. Share that the psalmist was reflecting on what he had said and was now applying it to his own actions and behaviors.

DISCUSS: Place adults in teams of two to four. Direct them to discuss how God's statutes support obedience. After a few minutes, allow volunteers to share. Emphasize that we can't obey what we don't know, so God has revealed His desires in His Word.

READ: Invite one volunteer to read Deuteronomy 30:16 and another to read John 14:15,21. Encourage the group to identify similarities to Psalm 119:5-8.

RECAP: Share the following content from page 20 of the PSG: *No one can rightly obey God's Word without knowing God's Word. Knowing what the Bible says does not necessarily mean one will know God, but it is impossible to truly know God apart from knowing His Word.*

ASK: **What obstacles hinder you from knowing and obeying God's Word?** (PSG, p. 21)

TRANSITION: *As we move to the second stanza of Psalm 119, we confront an age-old question: How can individuals keep their ways pure?*

NOTES

Group Activity Option

Paraphrase/Reflection

Distribute pencils and paper to each person and direct them to write a brief paraphrase or summary of Psalm 119:5-8. As the group completes their work, allow time for sharing with the group. Note similarities in the paraphrases. Guide the group to select one "I" statement from the verses and reflect on how it applies to their lives.

The Goal of God's Words (Ps. 119:9-16)

9 How can a young man keep his way pure? By keeping your word. **10** I have sought you with all my heart; don't let me wander from your commands. **11** I have treasured your word in my heart so that I may not sin against you. **12** LORD, may you be blessed; teach me your statutes. **13** With my lips I proclaim all the judgments from your mouth. **14** I rejoice in the way revealed by your decrees as much as in all riches. **15** I will meditate on your precepts and think about your ways. **16** I will delight in your statutes; I will not forget your word.

(v. 9) *Young man:* The psalmist turned from testifying to teaching. He assumed the role of an instructor who asked students an important question about spiritual and moral purity. Their world would offer an assortment of paths toward impurity (Prov. 7:1-3; 9:13-18). The answer to the question about remaining spiritually clean centered on paying attention to God's Word and obeying Him.

(v. 10) *I have sought you:* Once more, the psalmist spoke directly to God. He acknowledged that his surrendered heart **sought** Him. At the same time, the temptation to take intentional steps away from God remained a source of anxiety. For that reason, he pleaded with God to help him so he would never give in to the temptation to wander away.

(v. 11) *I have treasured your word:* The inspired writer came to appreciate the infinite value of God's **word** as a precious treasure that he needed to safeguard. That's why he kept it in his **heart** and protected it there (see also Jer. 31:33). This precious treasure made a huge difference in his life because it kept him from wandering into a sinful lifestyle.

(v. 12) *May you be blessed:* As he considered the impact of God's Word, the psalmist's joyful heart responded with praise. He gave himself to worshiping the Lord and blessing Him (Ps. 103:1). After all, God alone had provided His instructions for His people (Deut. 6:4-9). Nothing satisfied him more than learning God's ways through His Word.

(v. 13) *I proclaim:* As he continued to worship, the writer affirmed that the joy in his heart produced a proclamation of God's Word to everyone who would listen. Through his voice, words passed through his lips. However, the words that he declared were rooted in God's Word. In particular, he proclaimed God's **judgments**.

Altogether remarkable, God's judgments reflect His unique character. He alone judges with perfect wisdom and unequaled holiness. At the same time, His judgments exhibit His unfailing love.

Key Cross Reference

Rejoicing in God

When God's people worshiped Him throughout Scripture, they rejoiced. The psalmist called his readers to **rejoice** in the way God has shown Himself to His people through His Word. Study the verses below and note what each reveals about rejoicing in worship:

- Psalm 33:1
 - Habakkuk 3:18
 - Joel 2:23
 - 1 Corinthians 13:6
 - Philippians 3:1
 - 1 Peter 4:13
-

(v. 15) *Meditate:* Worship that prompted joy involved the spiritual discipline of meditation. In the Hebrew language, **meditate** came from the word for "muttering." So, meditating on God's instruction meant whispering or muttering the words to memorize them, grapple with them, and be held by them. Through the process, God revealed Himself and His ways in a way that took hold of the hearts and minds of His people.

(v. 16) *Delight:* The psalmist knew that intimacy with God through His Word would satisfy his greatest yearning. Consequently, he focused on his walk with God. As he gave attention to Scripture, he would encounter God. Those precious experiences would lead to unsurpassed **delight**.

EXPLORE Psalm 119:9-16



APPLICATION POINT: Believers are to treasure, study, and live by God’s Word.

- READ:

Read Psalm 119:9-16, inviting adults to identify how believers can keep their lives pure.
- DISCUSS:

Distribute **Pack Item 11** (*Handout: A Hymn to God’s Law*). In teams of two to three, encourage adults to read the handout and to briefly discuss its key points. After a few minutes, allow volunteers to share what stuck out to them.
- HIGHLIGHT:

Guide the group to examine the actions found in these verses. Record them on the board as they are mentioned. (Examples: *keeping, seeking, treasuring, teaching, proclaiming, rejoicing, meditating*).
- DISCUSS:

Refer back to the application point for these verses: *Believers are to treasure, study, and live by God’s Word*. Lead a brief discussion on how the actions listed on the board can help individuals study and apply God’s Word on a daily basis.
- ASK:

How has God’s Word helped you to make godly choices? (PSG, p. 23)
- TRANSITION:

God’s Word is foundational for our spiritual growth. Knowing this requires practical application of God’s Word. We have to study it and look for ways to live it out each day.



NOTES

Group Activity Option

Bible Skill

Encourage adults to complete the Bible Skill activity on page 23 of the PSG. Direct attention to Psalm 119:11, noting this is one of the most familiar verses in Psalm 119 and the memory verse for this session. Lead the group to read the verse aloud together, emphasizing “treasured.” Repeat the activity two more times, emphasizing “my heart” the first time and “may not sin” the second time. Encourage adults to repeat this practice during the week ahead as they commit the verse to memory.

CHALLENGE

SUMMARIZE:

Review these points from Apply the Text on page 24 of the *Personal Study Guide*:

- *We will find God in His Word when we seek Him there.*
- *God's Word is meant to be obeyed.*
- *Believers are to treasure, study, and live by God's Word.*

AGREE/DISAGREE:

Read the following statements. Guide adults to signal a thumbs up if they agree or a thumbs down if they disagree with each statement:

- *Partial obedience is better than no obedience.*
- *People can meditate on Scripture while multitasking.*
- *Studying God's Word is always a delight.*

DISCUSS:

Allow time for people to share why they agree or disagree with a specific statement. Discuss ways believers can encourage one another to study and obey God's Word. (PSG, p. 24)

ASK:

How does treasuring God's Word in your heart help you as you seek to keep from sinning against Him? (PSG, p. 24)

PRAY:

Encourage adults to meditate on one of the verses from today's session. Close in prayer, allowing adults to voice sentence prayers reflecting the treasure of God's Word in their lives.

After the Session

During the week, send an email or text to the group. Emphasize the importance of reading and meditating on God's Word. Attach a digital copy of **Pack Item 8** (*Handout: Praying Scripture in Psalms*). Remind them that this handout provides a tool for studying and meditating on God's Word. Encourage them to use it during their time with God this week.

ADULT COMMENTARY



Want to go deeper in your study?
Explore the Bible Adult Commentary
offers additional information and biblical
insights related to the key passages.
(Available for purchase at **Lifeway.com**.)

EXPLORE  THE BIBLE.

God's Glory

SESSION 3

Psalm 19:1-11

Memory Verse: Psalm 19:14

God teaches us about Himself through His creation and His Word.

Anyone who notices a meadow of wildflowers gushing with color will be struck by the breathtaking beauty of God's creation. The same opportunity awaits anyone holding a newborn baby. Or what about a landscape etched by mountains or a beach washed clean by ocean waves? Natural wonders leave an indelible impression about God's grace at work. Thankfully, God refused to stop there. He's also provided His Word so we can know Him in ways that exceed what we see in creation.

Psalm 19 prompts us to thank Him for His grace. As you study this session, look for evidence of God in creation each day and encourage the adults in your Bible study to do the same. At the same time, commit to spending time in God's Word so you can get the most accurate picture of who God is and what He expects from you.



Weekly Podcast: Group Leader Training

Scan here to gain insights about this week's study on Apple podcasts, Spotify, Google Podcasts, or at goExploreTheBible.com/adults-training.



There are a number of ways we can get to know people. They include paying attention to what they say about themselves, what they've done, and what they communicate about their plans for the future. In the Bible, God has revealed Himself to us in these ways. One might think that the first thing the Bible communicates about God is that He is the Creator. However, the fact we have Genesis 1:1 and the rest of the Bible reveals more than that. It reveals that God wants us to know Him through both His creation and His Word. (PSG, p. 25)

Of all the people you know, who do you know best?

How did you get to know that person?



Understand the Context (Psalm 19)

Reading Psalm 19 leads God's people to focus attention on His majesty and His rule over all creation. Beholding everything that He has created leads to glorifying Him in wholehearted worship.

King David wrote Psalm 19 as he beheld God's creation and studied God's Word. Because David submitted his life to the Lord's leadership, he ruled over the kingdom of Israel well. God also gave him a gift for writing psalms. With his psalm, David put spiritual impressions into the everyday words of Hebrew poetry. Accordingly, Psalm 19 captured what he experienced when he found himself worshiping the Lord who both created the sky and provided His instruction for His people.

David's gaze into the heavens opened his eyes to the wonders of God's world. What he beheld as he looked upward rewarded him with a refreshing vision of God's glory manifested in the heavens. For instance, as he gazed into the sky, he noticed the grandeur of God in the rising and setting of the sun (Ps. 19:1-6).

After writing about God's creation, David turned his attention to sharing his impressions about the wonder of God's Word. As he wrote, he referred to the Scripture as God's instruction, as well as the testimony of what He has said to His people. Also, he identified Scripture as precepts that the Lord expects His people to embrace, commands that He intends for them to obey, and ordinances that are rooted in His judgments.

Believers who want to nourish an intimate, fulfilling, and enduring relationship with God value His Word more than any other so-called treasure this life has to offer (19:7-11).

David's long look into the sky and Scripture gave way to praise and adoration. As he worshiped, he acknowledged that the Lord knew him completely. David could account for his deliberate, sinful behavior, but he noted that only the Lord knew about his unintentional sin. For that reason, he asked the Lord to forgive him for his deliberate sins. At the same time, he sought the Lord's guidance so unintentional sinful behavior would not take control of him. David wanted nothing less than to be liberated from the grip of sin altogether.

Confession led David to pray with resolve. As the king prayed, he committed himself to the Lord in two important ways. He sought to please the Lord with every word that he uttered. Just as important, he yearned to please the Lord with his thoughts. He affirmed that the thoughts nourished in his heart would determine the words that came from his mouth (19:12-14).

As you read Psalm 19, consider what creation reveals about God. Highlight all the ways God's Word is described. (PSG, p. 26)



DIRECT: As adults arrive provide name tags. Direct them to introduce themselves to each other as if they have never met and want to get acquainted. Encourage each person to share something the other person might not know about them.

SHARE: *In 1951 Richard Rogers and Oscar Hammerstein composed a song for The King and I called “Getting to Know You.” The song begins with the words, “Getting to know you, getting to know all about you.” It ends with the words, “Because of all the bright and beautiful things I’m learning about you day by day.”*

DISCUSS: Lead a brief discussion about how people get to know others. Talk about some of the interesting facts they learned as they shared with one another earlier.

HIGHLIGHT: Direct a volunteer to read the opening paragraph on page 25 of the PSG aloud.

ASK: **Of all the people you know, who do you know best? How did you get to know that person?** (PSG, p. 25)

TRANSITION: *In today’s session we’ll look at how Psalm 19 offers a hymn of praise to God for His creation and His Word. Both the beauty of creation and the instruction of His Word can draw us into a closer relationship with Him.*

NOTES

Group Activity Option

Music

Search online for a recording of “Every Promise of Your Word” by Keith and Kristyn Getty. Use the song as background music as the group arrives. Direct the group to say, “I will stand on every promise of Your Word.” Share a copy of the song’s lyrics. Guide them to say the words when directed as a previously enlisted volunteer reads the lyrics. Encourage adults to use this session as a chance to evaluate how well they are standing on God’s Word today.

Creation (Ps. 19:1-6)

1 The heavens declare the glory of God, and the expanse proclaims the work of his hands. **2** Day after day they pour out speech; night after night they communicate knowledge. **3** There is no speech; there are no words; their voice is not heard. **4** Their message has gone out to the whole earth, and their words to the ends of the world. In the heavens he has pitched a tent for the sun. **5** It is like a bridegroom coming from his home; it rejoices like an athlete running a course. **6** It rises from one end of the heavens and circles to their other end; nothing is hidden from its heat.

(v. 1) The heavens: The Hebrew word (*samayim*) could refer to the sky, but it also reminded God's people of His dwelling place (Deut 10:14). Likewise, **the heavens** served as His storehouse of rain and snow (Deut. 28:12; Job 38:29) and the home of the sun, moon, and stars (Gen. 1:14). David testified that these and other wonders in the Lord's **expanse** glorify Him and reveal His remarkable work of creation.

Key Doctrine

God

God is an intelligent, spiritual, and personal Being, the Creator, Redeemer, Preserver, and Ruler of the universe. (See Genesis 1:1; Romans 1:20.)

(v. 2) They pour out speech: David used figurative language to describe his impressions as he gazed into the sky. In his day, pagans would worship what God created instead of Him (Deut. 4:19). In contrast, David noted that the sky consistently testified only about God Himself. **Day after day**, nature passed along the same clear message of God's presence. **Night after night**, David recognized the same evidence about the Lord.

(v. 3) No speech: Figurative language helped David to describe his worship experience as he looked into the sky. Returning to literal terms, he wrote that he could not hear the sky actually talking to him with human words. Neither could he hear the actual voice of a real person as he gazed into the sky.

The message was still powerful. Creation's testimony about the glory of God reached wherever any **speech** was articulated and any **words** spoken. As David would make clear in upcoming verses, no culture or nation can escape the reality of God as revealed in nature.

(v. 4) The whole earth: The word "Yet" has been included in some translations (NLT, CEV) to underscore David's insistence that he saw the Lord in the heavens. Even though he could not hear an actual voice, he learned about God's existence and power as he observed the sky. In fact, every creature that inhabited the earth got the same message about God's presence.

(v. 4) A tent for the sun: As David's words continued to express the essence of God's glory in the heavens, he called attention to the sunrise. Using figurative language once more, he compared the night sky to a **tent** that the Lord provided for the setting **sun**. This word picture helped him describe the sun before dawn. In Genesis 1:14-18, a more literal description of the sun's place in God's creation has been provided.

(v. 5) Like a bridegroom . . . an athlete: Figurative language continued to help David depict the rising sun. He compared the sunrise to a bridegroom on the day of his wedding. In Matthew 25:1-13, Jesus offered some details about ancient Israelite weddings. The bridegroom led his friends in something like a parade through the streets as he made his way to the bride's home. Similarly, a star **athlete** would also be the center of everyone's attention as he ran triumphantly and joyfully toward the finish line.

(v. 6) Rises: In Ecclesiastes 1:5, Solomon wrote that the sun rose and set every day before rushing back into place so it could rise again the next morning. David's description took in the lengthy **circles** of the sun as he saw it pass across the sky each day. Of course, as it moves across the sky, **nothing is hidden from** its light and heat. All of God's creation experiences the sun's intensity in one way or another.

EXPLORE Psalm 19:1-6



APPLICATION POINT: Believers can learn about God’s glory by examining His creation.

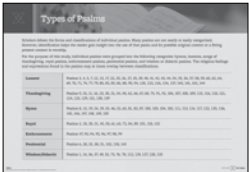
OVERVIEW: Direct attention to **Pack Item 2** (Poster: Types of Psalms), sharing that Psalm 19 is a hymn psalm. Distribute copies of **Pack Item 10** (Handout: Authors of the Psalms) and note that David, the author of Psalm 19, wrote more psalms than anyone. Using **Pack Item 1** (Map: Kingdom of David and Solomon), illustrate the reach of David and his kingdom.

RECAP: Share this from “Understanding the Context” (PSG, p. 26) to explain the psalm’s structure: *Psalm 19 has three sections. First, David contemplated how God proclaims His glory in all of creation. . . . Second, David considered how God proclaims His glory in His Word. . . . David concluded the psalm asking God to cleanse him of sin and to keep him from sinning so that he would live his life in faithful obedience to God (vv. 12-14).*

READ: Invite a volunteer to read **Psalm 19:1-6** as the group listens for what creation reveals about God.

IDENTIFY: Lead adults to examine Psalm 19:1-6 in pairs, noting words that paint a picture of God’s creation. Emphasize that while creation points people to God, we still need His written Word to understand His offer of salvation.

DISCUSS: What misconceptions about God might people draw if they only depend on what they see in creation—apart from His written Word? (PSG, p. 30)



NOTES

Group Activity Option

Object Lesson: Seeds

Display a package of seeds. Invite volunteers to share their experiences with gardens. Talk about how it feels to see plants sprout and to enjoy the fruit of their work. Explain that each day we see God’s creation at work, from sunrise to sunset, from seed to fruit. Read Romans 1:20, affirming that God’s invisible attributes are evident daily.

God's Word (Ps. 19:7-11)

7 The instruction of the LORD is perfect, renewing one's life; the testimony of the LORD is trustworthy, making the inexperienced wise. **8** The precepts of the LORD are right, making the heart glad; the command of the LORD is radiant, making the eyes light up. **9** The fear of the LORD is pure, enduring forever; the ordinances of the LORD are reliable and altogether righteous. **10** They are more desirable than gold—than an abundance of pure gold; and sweeter than honey dripping from a honeycomb. **11** In addition, your servant is warned by them, and in keeping them there is an abundant reward.

(v. 7) Perfect . . . trustworthy: David turned his attention from God's glory to His wisdom. His creation reflected His majesty, and His instruction demonstrated His **perfect** wisdom. David rested in the assurance that God's Word can bring heartfelt renewal to a believer. It also is absolutely **trustworthy**, which also leads individuals toward spiritual maturity. In the New Testament, Paul and Peter each affirmed the trustworthiness of Scripture (2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Pet. 1:20-21).

(v. 8) Making the heart glad . . . eyes light up: God's **precepts** (instructions) nourish spiritual health. David noted that a maturing believer can depend on them to be absolutely dependable. They always would give the right answers to life's toughest questions. The awareness of this reliability fosters a sincere **heart** overflowing with gladness. Of course, the Lord expected His commands to be obeyed, and consistent obedience opens one's **eyes** to new spiritual insights.

Key Phrase

Fear of the LORD

Fearing God doesn't mean being terrorized by Him. Rather, it refers to a healthy respect for the Lord that had been nurtured by love (1 Sam. 12:24; Prov. 9:10). That loving respect for the Lord would prevent His people from being defiled. They would be **pure** as God and His Word are. When they took His instruction seriously, they would affirm the reliability of His **ordinances**.

(v. 10) More desirable: The longer God's people align themselves with the wisdom of His Word, the more they come to love Him. In fact, they crave His instruction because they would consider it to be **more desirable than gold**. David testified that the longing of God's people for His Word would be more compelling than their eagerness to secure the physical treasures this world has to offer.

(v. 10) Sweeter than honey: In David's day, the sweet flavor of **honey** set it apart as a most delightful delicacy (Prov. 24:13-14). The delicious flavor and the syrupy consistency of honey provided David with the perfect image to underscore the pleasure God's Word brings into the lives of His people who savor it. Fresh honey dripping from a **honeycomb** gave them an unforgettable image of superb culinary satisfaction. Similarly, God's wisdom dripping from His Word would provide the same kind of spiritual satisfaction, an experience that would be just as delectable.

(v. 11) Your servant is warned: Anyone who takes God's Word seriously will find themselves serving Him wholeheartedly. Placed on the path of faithful service that emanated from spiritual growth in Him, His servants count on His Word to help them along the way (Prov. 6:22-23). His instruction prevents them from making wrong turns by warning them about danger ahead of them.

Such danger may emerge from our circumstances or their relationships, but we will never regret heeding His warnings. Avoiding the foolishness of wrong turns and walking in the wisdom that sheds His light on our path proves to be most rewarding for us.

EXPLORE Psalm 19:7-11

2



APPLICATION POINT: Believers can learn about God's glory by studying His Word.

READ:

Read aloud Psalm 19:7-11 as the group listens for descriptions of God's Word.

RELATE:

Lead the group to review the content on pages 30-31 of the PSG to identify at least five ways David described God's Word in these verses. After a few minutes, allow volunteers to share and record their responses on the board. (Examples: *perfect, trustworthy, right, pure, radiant, reliable, desirable*)

ASK:

What do these terms suggest to you about the function of the Bible? (PSG, p. 31) Use information from page 38 of the Leader Guide to supplement the discussion. Encourage adults to share something they have learned recently from their personal Bible reading.

HIGHLIGHT:

Direct attention to **Pack Item 3** (Poster: Key Verse: Psalm 19:14). Read the verse as a group. Discuss how words serve as an outward expression, while meditation reflects the inside. Encourage the group to memorize the verse before the next session.



TRANSITION:

God's Word reveals the way to a relationship with Jesus Christ, an awareness of our sin, and a pathway for righteous living.

NOTES

Group Activity Option

Bible Skill

Guide the group in teams of two to four people to complete the Bible Skill activity for this session (PSG, p. 30). Encourage the teams to compare Psalm 19 to Romans 1:18-32 using these questions: ***How are they similar and how are they different? What can humanity know about God from nature? How has humanity generally responded to the truths about God revealed in nature? How does and will God respond to humanity's idolatry and suppression of the truth?***

CHALLENGE

- SUMMARIZE:** Review these points from Apply the Text on page 32 of the *Personal Study Guide*:
- *Believers can learn about God's glory by examining His creation.*
 - *Believers can learn about God's glory by studying His Word.*
- DISCUSS:** Refer to the first set of questions on page 32 of the PSG. As a group, identify ways that studying the Bible together can make a difference in the lives of individuals and the group.
- REFLECT:** Direct each person to rate themselves on the following statements with one being seldom and five being often:
- *I praise God for His beautiful creation.*
 - *I spend time reading and studying God's Word on a regular basis.*
 - *I apply what I learn from God's Word in my life.*
 - *I regularly memorize God's Word.*
- REVIEW:** Direct attention again to **Pack Item 3** (Poster: Key Verse: *Psalm 19:14*). Read the verse again together. Guide the group to discuss how this verse reflects a strong relationship with the Lord.
- PRAY:** Lead the group to use the memory verse as a closing prayer.

After the Session

Send a text or email that encourages the group to be faithful in studying God's Word throughout the week. Remind them that while corporate Bible study is important, spending time alone with God allows Him to speak to them in a new and fresh way. Encourage them to review the truths of Psalm 19 and to prepare for the next session by reading and reflecting on Psalm 96.

LEADER BLOG



Discover helpful tips for using and getting the most from your Adult Explore the Bible resources at goExploreTheBible.com/blog.

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God's Reign

SESSION 4

Psalm 96:1-13

Memory Verse: Psalm 96:10

As Creator and King, God alone deserves our worship and praise.

When students complete their programs of study, they deserve to be honored with a graduation ceremony. Whether they're finishing up their work in kindergarten or graduate school, their accomplishments should be recognized by the significant people in their lives. Family members and friends usually are eager to applaud their achievements.

As we serve the Lord, we do well to give Him the praise that He alone deserves. He created the heavens and the earth, and He rules everything in creation with complete authority. Because of His reign, He deserves our worship, but not just periodically or on special occasions. He deserves our praise every day.

As you dig into this session from Psalm 96, ask God to help you evaluate your worship and to identify things that need to change. Be ready to share what He reveals with the adults in your Bible study and encourage them to do the same.



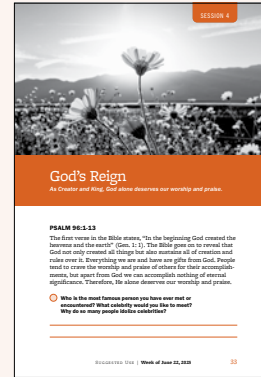
Weekly Podcast: Group Leader Training

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The first verse in the Bible states, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” (Gen. 1: 1). The Bible goes on to reveal that God not only created all things but sustains all of creation and rules over it. Everything we are and have are gifts from God. People tend to crave the worship and praise of others for their accomplishments, but apart from God we can accomplish nothing of eternal significance. Therefore, He alone deserves our worship and praise. (PSG, p. 33)

Who is the most famous person you have ever met? What celebrity would you like to meet? Why do so many people idolize celebrities?



Understand the Context (Psalms 96–97)

Psalms 93–99 lead believers to rejoice over the Lord’s royal authority as King over His creation. For that reason, they fall into the category of enthronement psalms. Psalms 96–97 serve as excellent examples of this category because they urge God’s people to applaud His reign. They bear a striking resemblance to hymns that believers sing as they praise the Lord. Affirming His reign and declaring His sovereignty as King are the resounding themes of each psalm.

Psalm 96 played a unique role in the history of God’s people during the days of King David. According to 1 Chronicles 13–15, David directed the Levites to bring the ark of the covenant from Kiriath-jearim to Jerusalem. The Israelites considered the ark a tangible and significant symbol of God’s presence among His people. As they brought the ark into the city, David ordered Asaph, the music director, to lead the people in singing praises to the Lord. The song of praise they sang that day included Psalm 96 (1 Chron. 16:8-36).

A close examination of the psalm itself verifies that it was an excellent choice for the celebration of the Lord as King over His creation. Psalm 96 guided God’s people to move through three phases of worship. First, they were called to sing a new song about the Lord (Ps. 96:1-6). Next, they were urged to worship Him as they beheld His royal splendor (96:7-9). Finally, they were directed to declare His royal reign and authority to the whole world (96:10-13).

Psalm 97 continued to draw attention to the same worship themes. This psalm prompted God’s people to sing about Him and to Him with joy and gladness. Of course, the reason for their exuberance had to do with His sovereign reign over heaven and earth.

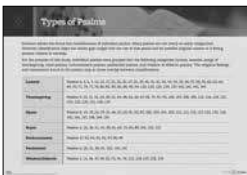
Like Psalm 96, this psalm also included three sections. Contemporary readers can think of it like a hymn with three verses. First, the psalmist called on God’s people to honor Him as King because justice surrounded His throne (97:1-6). God’s glory always followed on the heels of His judgment, and His creation had been called to celebrate. Second, worshipers of lifeless idols were warned that they would be ashamed of their misguided devotion (97:7-9). At the same time, God’s people would be glad that they worshiped the Lord alone. Third, the psalmist directed God’s people to love Him exclusively and to detest evil (97:10-12). If they obeyed Him, they could count on walking in the light of His presence and rejoicing with gladness.

Taken together, Psalms 96–97 guide maturing believers to declare to the world that God is Ruler of everything and reigns as King in heaven.

As you read Psalm 96:1-13, identify the things God’s people are to include in their worship of the Lord. (PSG, p. 34)



PRIOR TO THE SESSION: Hang **Pack Item 2** (Poster: *Types of Psalms*), and **Pack Item 4** (Poster: *God in the Psalms*) on a focal wall. Make copies of **Pack Item 8** (Handout: *Praying Scripture in Psalms*). Draw a horizontal line with an arrow on each end on the board. Above the left arrow write *beginning* and above the right arrow, write *future*.



INTRODUCE: As adults arrive, point to the line on the board and ask them to consider what “beginning” and “future” could entail. Share that individuals have many firsts and lasts in our lives, from birth to death. Affirm that sometimes the future may be hard for us to discern, but God’s Word provides a clear picture of both the beginning and the future in His kingdom.

READ: Direct a volunteer to read the opening paragraph on page 33 of the PSG as the rest of the group considers how people seek honor and praise in this life.

ASK: **Who is the most famous person you have ever met? What celebrity would you like to meet? Why do so many people idolize celebrities?** (PSG, p. 33)



DRAW: Connect the arrows by drawing a crown between the two ends of the line. Explain that just as God created everything in the beginning, He holds the future in His hand as King.

TRANSITION: *Today’s study in Psalm 96 calls us to praise and worship Him because He reigns over heaven and earth now and always.*

NOTES

Group Activity Option

Music

Distribute hymnals or copies of the lyrics to “All Creatures of Our God and King” (*Baptist Hymnal*, 2008, No. 11). Lead the group to sing or read aloud the lyrics. Ask: *How should we feel when we lift our voices in praise to our God and King? How do we worship Him in humility?* Allow adults to spend a moment in silent prayer praising God.

God's Reign (Ps. 96:1-6)

1 Sing a new song to the LORD; let the whole earth sing to the LORD. **2** Sing to the LORD, bless his name; proclaim his salvation from day to day. **3** Declare his glory among the nations, his wondrous works among all peoples. **4** For the LORD is great and is highly praised; he is feared above all gods. **5** For all the gods of the peoples are worthless idols, but the LORD made the heavens. **6** Splendor and majesty are before him; strength and beauty are in his sanctuary.

(v. 1) A new song: The psalmist encouraged worshipers to sing to the Lord. The song had been declared as **new**, but not because of new words or melodies. Rather, it pointed to something new that God was doing (Isa. 42:10; Rev. 14:3). For that reason, **the whole earth** was called to sing it.

(vv. 1-2) The LORD: As the worshipers sang, the psalmist instructed them to direct their praise to the **LORD** alone. Instead of singing *about* Him, they were urged to sing *to* Him, honoring Him consistently with words that extolled His character and commended His work (1 Chron. 29:20; Ps. 72:17; Eph. 1:3).

A central theme in blessing Him involved His initiative to save. In the Hebrew language, **salvation** (*yeshuah*) meant being delivered from trouble or rescued from danger. The message of salvation disclosed God's wisdom, power, and compassion (Isa. 40:9; 49:6; 52:7; Acts 13:26).

Key Doctrine

Evangelism and Missions

It is the duty and privilege of every follower of Christ and of every church of the Lord Jesus Christ to endeavor to make disciples of all nations. (See Matthew 28:18-20; Romans 10:13-15.)

(v. 3) Declare: Going public with the message of God's salvation had no boundaries. As a result, His people are challenged to **declare** His good news to anyone who will hear it. The Israelites responded to the message by devoting themselves to Him, but they were disobedient when they remained silent. The nations needed to know about God's salvation so they could encounter His glory, as well (Mic. 4:2; Zech. 9:10). His awesome **works** would prompt anyone who knew about them to worship Him. (See also Dan. 4:1-3; Luke 24:47; Rev. 14:6.)

(v. 4) He is feared: The Lord set Himself apart through everything that He had done for His people (Ex. 18:10). Therefore, He deserved their praises. Along with praise, His work among them rendered a healthy fear (respect) of Him. His involvement in their lives prompted their reverent adoration (Jer. 5:22; Luke 12:5; Rev. 15:4).

(v. 5) Worthless idols: Comparing the Lord to the **worthless idols** of other **peoples** would lead Israel to worship Him with grateful reverence. Since false gods had no power, anyone who worshiped them would struggle with frustration and futility (1 Kings 18:27; Isa. 57:13; Jer. 10:3-5).

In contrast, the Lord created everything (Gen. 1:1). Life and death, as well as healing and freedom, came exclusively from His hand (Deut. 32:39). Deities of wood, metal, or stone would be discarded in time, while the Lord would live eternally (Jer. 10:11).

(v. 6) Splendor and majesty: The psalmist continued to use the language of royalty to portray the Lord. Like a king wearing flowing robes and a crown with precious jewels, the Lord's presence reflected the wonder of His magnificent glory. Anyone who came before Him would be taken aback by the sheer radiance of His grandeur (Heb. 1:3; 2 Pet. 1:16-17). His presence marked a contrast with idols made of wood and stone.

(v. 6) His sanctuary: The Hebrew word for **sanctuary** (*miqdas*) has also been translated "holy temple" (CEV). According to 1 Chronicles 28:6, the Lord directed Solomon to build the temple in Jerusalem. He referred to the temple as His dwelling place. The temple as sanctuary brought to mind where God's people met Him. As they encountered Him there, they bowed before Him. Consequently, His sanctuary became a setting in which they admired His strength and beheld His beauty as they worshiped Him.

EXPLORE Psalm 96:1-6



APPLICATION POINT: All people are to recognize God as sovereign over all creation.

MINI-LECTURE: Utilizing Understand the Context (PSG, p. 34), **Pack Item 2** (Poster: Types of Psalms), and **Pack Item 4** (Poster: God in the Psalms), set the background for Psalm 96. Point out that while it doesn't specifically say that David wrote this psalm, it seems reasonable within the context of Psalms 93–99.

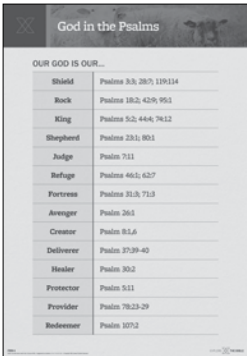
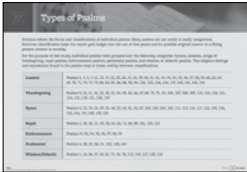
READ: Invite a volunteer to read **Psalm 96:1-6** as the group listens for words repeated in the verses. Lead a brief discussion on the word “sing” and the message our words should declare.

GUIDE: Divide adults into an even number of groups. Each group should have two or three people. Instruct half the groups to review the content on pages 35-36 of the PSG and to identify a major theme from verses 1-3. Direct the other groups to review the content on pages 36-37 of the PSG and to identify a major theme from verses 4-6.

REPORT: After a few minutes, allow volunteers to share their results. Highlight believers' responsibility to proclaim God's greatness in verses 1-3, as well as His superiority to any false god from verses 4-6.

ASK: How can we know that God is sovereign over all? (PSG, p. 37)

TRANSITION: Recognizing God as our sovereign Creator and King leads to overflowing worship and praise.



NOTES

Group Activity Option

Testimony/Nature

Prior to the session, enlist a few volunteers to share about a place that has moved them to worship God for His beautiful creation. If possible, ask each volunteer to bring a picture of their special place to share with the group. Allow others to spontaneously share about similar places that are special to them.

God's Majesty (Ps. 96:7-9)

7 Ascribe to the LORD, you families of the peoples, ascribe to the LORD glory and strength. **8** Ascribe to the LORD the glory of his name; bring an offering and enter his courts. **9** Worship the LORD in the splendor of his holiness; let the whole earth tremble before him.

(vv. 7-8) Ascribe: After leading everyone to worship through praise, the psalmist directed them to **ascribe** (or give) to God the credit that He alone deserves. In the context of worship, the Hebrew word *hahab* implied recognizing the attributes of the Lord that set Him apart. The psalmist's reference to **families** echoed God's promise to Abraham generations earlier. He told Abraham that through his family, all the **peoples** of the world would be blessed (Gen. 12:3).

(v. 7) Glory and strength: Worshipers were instructed to give the Lord the credit He deserved for His intimate, yet majestic, presence among them. When they came before Him in worship, they would be wise to acknowledge His character traits related to His **glory**—and lead people to glorify Him further (1 Chron. 29:11-13; 1 Pet. 5:11).

The psalmist also highlighted the Lord's limitless **strength**. Mature believers would recognize Him for His absolute power. He deserved to be worshiped because He revealed Himself to them as an enduring stronghold of faithfulness who never failed (Ex. 34:5-6).

(v. 8) Bring an offering: When the Israelites worshiped God, they presented various offerings to Him. In the wilderness, He gave them specific instructions regarding the offerings that He expected (Lev. 1-7). Those expectations carried over to the promised land.

Centuries later, Jesus offered Himself as the ultimate sacrifice once and for all (Heb. 10:11-14). Paul also challenged believers to offer themselves to God as a "living sacrifice" (Rom. 12:1).

(v. 8) Enter his courts: Entering the temple meant going through one of its gates (Isa. 26:2). After worshipers made their way through the gate, they entered one of the courtyard areas. Each of the **courts** was a designated gathering place for specific groups of worshipers. For instance, women gathered at the court appointed for them, and men gathered at the court assigned to them. God called His people to worship Him as

they came into the courts (Ps. 100:1; Joel 2:15-17). Entering properly meant giving serious attention to the priority of worshiping the Creator and King (Isa. 1:12).

(v. 9) Worship: The Hebrew word for **worship** indicates bowing down in awe and sober reverence. Falling down in His presence exhibited an overwhelming awareness of His sovereign authority. Worshipers would be moved by the **splendor** (beauty) of God's **holiness**.

Being holy (*qodesh*) meant being set apart. For God's people at worship, recognizing His holiness would compel them to go from joyful praise to sincere humility (Ps. 95:1-7). In His presence, they worshiped Him as altogether perfect. They acknowledged that He was completely set apart from all other realities and clothed in the royal splendor of His perfect holiness.

(v. 9) Tremble: The call to respond with humility did not include only God's people. The psalmist directed all creation—the **whole earth**—to **tremble** before Him. The Hebrew word used here suggests writhing in pain, like a woman about to give birth. In this context, the psalmist could have been calling individuals to express contrition and humility in His presence.

Praying Scripture

Psalm 96:9

Spend time praying Scripture using Psalm 96:9. Read the verse, then respond to these questions:

- How does God reveal Himself in this verse?
- How should I respond to what He reveals?

Example: Spend a few moments acknowledging God's beautiful attributes. Thank Him for being who He is and for how that defines what He does.

EXPLORE Psalm 96:7-9



APPLICATION POINT: All people are to praise God because He is holy.

READ: Read aloud Psalm 96:7-9 as the group listens for words repeated in these verses.

RECAP: Point out that ascribe indicates acknowledgment. Share this sentence from page 38 of the PSG: *This exhortation is a call to all peoples of every nation to not only recognize the Lord’s glory and strength but also to honor Him and declare their unyielding allegiance to Him, which He alone rightly deserves.*

IDENTIFY: Direct adults to scan the content for verses 7-9 (PSG, pp. 37-38) and to circle words that describe God’s attributes.

ASK: What makes God worthy of your worship? (PSG, p. 38) Record the group’s responses on the board.

ASK: What are some additional characteristics that make God worthy of worship? Record the additional responses. Distribute copies of **Pack Item 8** (*Handout: Praying Scripture in Psalms*). Guide adults to take a few minutes to follow the “Praying Scripture” prompts on page 46 of the Leader Guide.

TRANSITION: We worship a holy God, who consistently reveals His “glory and strength.” Our response is reflected in sharing His message of love and salvation with the world.



NOTES

Group Activity Option

Object Lesson: Offering Plate

Display an offering plate or whatever your church uses to collect offerings. Highlight the call to bring God offerings in verse 8. Lead a brief discussion about both tangible and intangible offerings we can bring to the Lord. Encourage adults to share how bringing the offering of our hearts, service, and finances is part of honoring and praising God as King over all creation.

God's Judgment (Ps. 96:10-13)

10 Say among the nations, “The Lord reigns. The world is firmly established; it cannot be shaken. He judges the peoples fairly.” **11** Let the heavens be glad and the earth rejoice; let the sea and all that fills it resound. **12** Let the fields and everything in them celebrate. Then all the trees of the forest will shout for joy **13** before the Lord, for he is coming—for he is coming to judge the earth. He will judge the world with righteousness and the peoples with his faithfulness.

(v. 10) Firmly established: God's people had been called to speak up about His presence in the world. Every nation on earth needed to hear the message about God's everlasting reign over all creation (Dan. 2:44). Because He is King, the entire world is secure and **firmly established**. Of course, circumstances in the lives of His people would make them wonder about the stability of their world, but they could rest assured that it would never fall apart under God's care.

Key Word

Fairly

God's judgments demonstrated His superiority to pagan judges and the so-called gods they worshiped. Their judgments exhibited unfair prejudices, ungodly agendas, and even crooked schemes. In stark contrast, the Lord always responded **fairly**. The Hebrew word (*mesarim*) emphasizes how the Lord judges impartially and with divine wisdom.

(v. 11) Let: The psalmist used the word **let** twice in this verse. It reminded God's people, who proclaimed His royal reign as eternal King, that other voices joined them in declaring His sovereignty. The voices came from His creation, and they would provide something like a choral response to what His people declared about Him.

Isaiah echoed the call to hear the voices of God's creation as they glorify Him (Isa. 44:23; 49:13). Of course, creation did not actually speak in words that anyone could understand (see Ps. 19:3). Yet, the joyful message of gladness etched in the sky and on the earth could be heard just the same. For example, a thundering storm would punctuate the affirmation expressed by the waves of the sea (98:7).

(v. 12) Fields . . . trees: Using the parallelism of Hebrew poetry, the psalmist pointed out that other voices in God's creation could be heard as well. His people would be wise to pay close attention to the message about Him that came from the **fields** around them. The flocks of sheep that thrived in the pastures saluted the Lord's work among them. So did the abundance of grain that had been harvested (65:13).

The **trees** also testified to the power and authority of the Creator God. Figuratively speaking, they clapped their hands joyfully in the Lord's presence (Isa. 55:12-13).

(v. 13) He is coming: The proclamation of God's people and the accolades of His creation had been nourished by their anticipation of His **coming**. While God dwelt among His people for a season through the temple, angels announced His physical arrival to shepherds (Luke 2:8-14). After Jesus arrived, He taught His disciples to look forward to His second coming (Mark 13:24-27). His apostles believed that He would return one day (1 Thess. 4:16-18; 2 Pet. 3:10-12). Over the years, God's people and His creation have awaited the coming of the Lord with eagerness and anticipation (Titus 2:13; 2 Pet. 3:12-14).

(v. 13) Judge: The psalmist elaborated on his declaration that the Lord's judgments exhibited fairness (v. 10). When the Lord came personally into the world, He created, and He sustained what He created. But His reign as King will include His work as **judge**.

Two characteristics of His judgments would be evident. First, they would be marked by **righteousness**. The Hebrew word (*sedeq*) for “righteousness” implied that He would act according to His perfect character. Second, His judgments would demonstrate that His people could trust Him to be faithful (see also Isa. 11:1-5).

EXPLORE Psalm 96:10-13

3



APPLICATION POINT: Believers are expected to tell all nations about God's glory and anticipate the day Jesus returns.

READ: Direct the group to read **Psalm 96:10-13** silently, noting the message believers are to deliver.

DISCUSS: Guide the group to find a partner and to discuss the message God had for the nations.

STATE: *Psalm 96:10 says "the LORD reigns."*

REVIEW: Refer to the crown drawn in the Engage activity and remind the group that God reigns as King over all creation and all nations.

ENHANCE: Distribute copies of **Pack Item 12** (*Handout: God as King*). Allow time for adults to scan the handout. Briefly discuss things that stick out in the article.

READ: Read verse 13 aloud. Emphasize that Jesus will serve as Judge when He returns.

ASK: **How should God's majesty and impending judgment affect my decisions and actions each day?** (PSG, p. 40)

TRANSITION: *As believers we have the responsibility to tell others about God's glory and anticipate the day Jesus returns. We should honor Him as King and warn others about the judgment that awaits those who reject Him.*



NOTES

Group Activity Option

Bible Skill

Be prepared with extra Bibles, paper, and pencils. Encourage the group to complete the Bible Skill activity (PSG, p. 40). Divide the adults into four teams, directing each team to dig deeper into one key word. Allow time for each team to share their insights.

CHALLENGE

- SUMMARIZE:** Review these points from Apply the Text on page 41 of the *Personal Study Guide*:
- All people are to recognize God as sovereign over all creation.
 - All people are to praise God because He is holy.
 - Believers are expected to tell all nations about God's glory and anticipate the day Jesus returns.
- ASK:** **What does it mean to say the people of God are to be holy? Practically speaking, what does holiness look like in daily life?** (PSG, p. 41)
- WRITE:** List the following words on the board: *Sing, Ascribe, Nation, Judge.*
- REFLECT:** Guide the group to reflect on the impact each word should have on their lives. Ask: **How do others see you as a witness of God's glory? How should you respond to Psalm 96?**
- PRAY:** Lead the group to voice sentence prayers of praise in response to God as Creator and King. Encourage them to continue using **Pack Item 8** (*Handout: Praying Scripture in Psalms*) to reflect on the truths of Psalm 96:9 and other verses in the chapter.

After the Session

Send each adult who attended the Bible study a text or email during the week. Remind them that God deserves praise and worship because He is King over all creation. Challenge them to examine their lives for areas where they are not allowing Him to be King and to surrender those areas to Him. Make a list of adults on your roll that have not been attending regularly and call them. Invite them to join the ongoing study of Psalms.

LEADER EXTRAS



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EXPLORE  THE BIBLE.

God's Promise

SESSION 5

Psalm 132:1-14,17-18

Memory Verse: Psalm 132:11-12

God faithfully fulfilled His promise to send a Messiah, the Lord's anointed Deliverer.

Uncertainties often trouble us. While they can make us wonder how the future will be shaped, they also can cause us to waste valuable time worrying about the here and now. As we face uncertainties, though, we nourish a greater appreciation for the certainties that we can embrace.

The Israelites faced a mountain of uncertainties as they grew from a family into a nation. Still, they could enjoy the sense of certainty that stemmed from God's promise to send His Messiah. Of course, He fulfilled that promise in Jesus.

As you prepare to lead this Bible study from Psalm 132, spend some time thanking God for helping you navigate the uncertainties of life and for the peace the Messiah provides. Pray that the adults in your group will find rest in the Messiah as they face uncertain times in their lives.



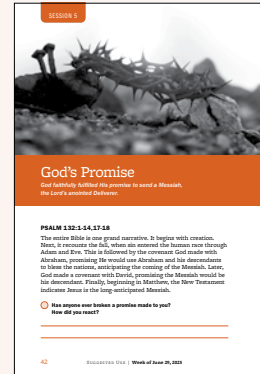
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The entire Bible is one grand narrative. It begins with creation. Next, it recounts the fall, when sin entered the human race through Adam and Eve. This is followed by the covenant God made with Abraham, promising He would use Abraham and his descendants to bless the nations, anticipating the coming of the Messiah. Later, God made a covenant with David, promising the Messiah would be his descendant. Finally, beginning in Matthew, the New Testament indicates Jesus is the long-anticipated Messiah. (PSG, p. 42)

Has anyone ever broken a promise to you? How did you react?



Understand the Context (Psalm 132)

Psalm 132 belongs in the category of royal psalms. As the name of the category suggests, royal psalms point to the kings of Israel. These psalms helped God's people to celebrate the leadership of their kings and pray for their success. Some of the royal psalms included important decrees or testimonies that the kings made during their reigns. A royal psalm also could include a prophetic message of messianic hope. Ultimately, the prophecy came to be fulfilled in the arrival, life, death, and resurrection of Christ.

The leadership of King David took center stage in Psalm 132. The details included in the psalm gave clues about the episode in which he led wisely and sincerely. During David's reign, he led the Israelites to recover the ark of the covenant from Kiriath-jearim and bring it to Jerusalem (2 Sam. 6). The return of the ark served as a critical feature in David's dream of building a temple that would honor the Lord (2 Sam. 7).

In the Lord's response to David's dream, He brought up Zion, a place that had become precious for everyone who devoted themselves to Him. Literally, it called attention to Jerusalem. Spiritually, however, it identified the kingdom over which the Lord, the ultimate King, reigned.

Psalm 132 appeared to be a treasure to God's people for another reason. It had been designated as a song of ascents. Psalms 120–134 all share this same distinction. As God's people worshiped Him in the temple, they treated these psalms like

hymns that they sang together at the festivals that took place each year. In terms of gathering for worship, the "ascent" could have signified the long walk up the hill leading to Jerusalem.

It also could have highlighted the walk up the series of steps inside the temple itself. Worshipers would climb the steps as they moved from one court to another. As they did, they would sing a psalm of ascents.

Just as reasonable, the designation as a song of ascents may have also come from the way these psalms enabled the worshipers to express their joy. As they sang, the joy in their hearts ascended toward God. Consequently, their joy could be heard in the crescendo of their voices as they sang together. The longer they sang, the louder they sang.

The idea of ascending with joy resonates in Psalm 132. It begins with the worshipers asking the Lord not to forget King David. They knew about the hardships that he suffered on behalf of the kingdom. His heart ached over the need to construct a dwelling that reflected the honor that the Lord deserved. In response, the Lord assured David that He would bless Israel's kings and send His Messiah.

As you read Psalm 132, identify the oath God made to David. (PSG, p. 43)



INTRODUCE: Direct the group to signal with a thumbs up or a thumbs down if they have ever made a promise or had a promise made to them.

STATE: *Promises may come in many forms: “pinkie promises,” handshakes, rings, vows. They can be verbal, written, or inferred. But they all involve trust in the one making the promise.*

READ: Invite a volunteer to read the introductory paragraph on page 42 of the PSG.

ASK: **Has anyone ever broken a promise to you? How did you react?** (PSG, p. 42)

DRAW: Give each adult a paper plate and a marker. Encourage them to draw a face on the plate that illustrates how they feel when a promise is broken. Allow them to show their “faces” and to explain why they drew the face they did. Affirm that broken promises lead to negative emotions, like anger or sadness.

TRANSITION: *In today’s study of Psalm 132, we find God making a promise in the historical context and a promise for the future. We can be encouraged that He can be trusted because He never fails to keep His promises.*

NOTES

Group Activity Option

Music

Secure a copy of the lyrics of “From the Breaking of the Dawn (Every Promise)” by Keith Getty and Stuart Townend. Enlist two to four volunteers to read the verses of the song. Discuss words or phrases that stick out and emphasize God’s faithfulness to His promises. Lead the group to sing the chorus of “Standing on the Promises” (*Baptist Hymnal*, 2008, No. 339). Ask: **What does it look like to stand on the promises of God?**

God's Dwelling Place (Ps. 132:1-10)

1 LORD, remember David and all the hardships he endured, **2** and how he swore an oath to the LORD, making a vow to the Mighty One of Jacob: **3** “I will not enter my house or get into my bed, **4** I will not allow my eyes to sleep or my eyelids to slumber **5** until I find a place for the LORD, a dwelling for the Mighty One of Jacob.” **6** We heard of the ark in Ephrathah; we found it in the fields of Jaar. **7** Let's go to his dwelling place; let's worship at his footstool. **8** Rise up, LORD, come to your resting place, you and your powerful ark. **9** May your priests be clothed with righteousness, and may your faithful people shout for joy. **10** For the sake of your servant David, do not reject your anointed one.

(v. 1) Remember David: David earned a reputation for courageous and sincere faith in the Lord. Such a sterling reputation came at a high price. He had to contend with a series of difficulties as he ran from Saul's wrath (1 Sam. 21-31). Once he became king, his hardships multiplied and he sought to follow the Lord's leadership. For example, he had to endure the torment associated with the attempt of Absalom, his son, to take the throne of Israel away from him (2 Sam. 15-19). Therefore, asking the Lord not to **remember** David's sufferings would have been in order.

(vv. 2-5) Swore an oath: One challenge drew the worshipers' attention as they reflected on David's difficulties. David was passionate about building a temple in Jerusalem (2 Sam. 7:10-16; 1 Chron. 22:2-16). His **oath** to initiate the project (vv. 3-5) reflected his deep devotion to the Lord. Metaphorically, he would not **sleep** until he had done all he could to provide for the temple's construction. He underscored his devotion by referring to the Lord as the **Mighty One of Jacob**.

(v. 5) Dwelling: David wanted to honor the Lord with his life and throughout the kingdom. His burden prompted him to testify that he could not tolerate the reality that he lived in a beautiful palace while the ark of the covenant sat under a tent (2 Sam. 7:2; 1 Chron. 29:1-5). Consequently, he would not allow himself to rest until he provided an appropriate **dwelling** for God's presence among His people.

In the wilderness, the tabernacle had served as God's dwelling place. Since then, the ark of the covenant had served Israel well as a visible testimony of the Lord's enduring relationship with His people (Ex. 25:10-22; Deut. 10:1-5). Now that the kingdom was established in Jerusalem, David sought a more permanent reminder.

Key Place

Fields of Jaar

The ark of the covenant's migration from Ebenezer to Kiriath-jearim can be traced in 1 Samuel 4:1-7:2. The Israelites made a foolish mistake by taking it into a fierce battle against the Philistines. They lost the battle that claimed the lives of 30,000 Israelite soldiers.

Initially, the Philistines took the ark to a pagan temple in Ashdod, then to Gath, Goliath's hometown (1 Sam. 5). Because of God's judgment, they moved it to an Israelite settlement called Bethshemesh. From there, it came to Kiriath-jearim, where it remained for twenty years. •**Jaar** is a shortened form of Kiriath-jearim. Incidentally, •**Ephrathah** is also connected to David's hometown, Bethlehem (Gen. 35:19; 1 Sam. 17:12).

(v. 8) Rise up: The psalmist's appeal did not imply that the Lord had fallen asleep or lost sight of His people. Rather, the expression represented an Israelite a prayer request that dated back to Moses (Num. 10:35-36). He asked the Lord to **rise up** and scatter Israel's enemies. Then he urged God to return to them when the time came for rest. David's son, King Solomon, used this same appeal when he sought the Lord's favor at the dedication of the temple (2 Chron. 6:41-42).

(v. 10) Anointed one: David sent 30,000 soldiers to bring the ark back to Jerusalem. Upon its arrival, he led Israel in a celebration that included an appeal from the king (2 Sam. 6:1-7:2). The Lord had rejected Saul (1 Sam. 15:10-11,26). They did not want David or the kings who followed him to suffer the same fate. Their request for God's **anointed one** also resonated with messianic hope.

EXPLORE Psalm 132:1-10



APPLICATION POINT: Believers should be intentional in their worship of God.

BACKGROUND: Use Understand the Context (PSG, p. 43), **Pack Item 2** (Poster: *Types of Psalms*), and **Pack Item 7** (Handout: *Psalms Time Line*) to set the context for Psalm 132.

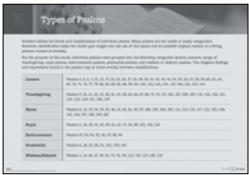
READ: Invite a volunteer to read **Psalm 132:1-5** as the group listens for the psalmist’s request.

ASK: What does it mean to make an oath or a vow?

RECAP: Share the following from page 45 of the PSG: Verse 3 states *that David bound himself to this oath. He was more committed to the building of the Lord’s house than to enjoying the comfort of his own house and even his bed. He could not be comfortable in his own house while the Lord had no house. What’s more, verse 4 indicates David was more concerned about fulfilling this vow to God than he was about his own physical needs.*

READ: Read aloud **Psalm 132:6-10** as the group listens for how David demonstrated his devotion to the Lord. Use **Pack Item 1** (Map: *Kingdom of David and Solomon*) to note the places the ark traveled on its way to Jerusalem.

ASK: How do you worship God—beyond what you do at church on Sundays? (PSG, p. 47)



NOTES

Group Activity Option

Bible Skill

Complete the Bible Skill activity on page 46 the PSG. Encourage adults to scan 1 Samuel 4:1-7:1 and to reflect on how those chapters deepen our understanding of Psalm 132. After a few minutes, allow volunteers to share their insights. Use information from “Key Place” on page 54 of the Leader Guide to supplement the discussion.

God's Commitment (Ps. 132:11-14)

11 The LORD swore an oath to David, a promise he will not abandon: “I will set one of your offspring on your throne. **12** If your sons keep my covenant and my decrees that I will teach them, their sons will also sit on your throne forever.” **13** For the LORD has chosen Zion; he has desired it for his home: **14** “This is my resting place forever; I will make my home here because I have desired it.”



The Gospel in Psalms

Learn more about what the psalms teach us about Christ and the gospel.

(v. 11) Will not abandon: Along with David's anointing, God made a steadfast promise about the future of Israel. Under the Lord's direction, David would be a successful king. Also, He would see to it that David's **offspring** would occupy the throne in generations to come (2 Sam. 7:12). Previously, David made an oath about the temple that he worked diligently to fulfill (Ps. 132:2). Now, the Lord pledged an oath to him. And because the Lord keeps His promises, David could be sure that He would not **abandon** His word.

(v. 12) If: While God is always faithful, His promise to David came with conditions, as indicated by **if**. He would bless David's line as long as his **sons** honored their covenant with Him (1 Kings 8:25; 2 Chron. 6:16). The Lord also expected future kings to obey His Word.

(v. 12) Forever: A kingdom that lasted throughout a king's lifetime was expected. Many kingdoms even endured through several generations of a monarch's family. However, a kingdom that would live on into eternity was virtually impossible for people to imagine. Yet the Lord promised David that his kingdom would be eternal. His sons would sit on the throne God established through him **forever**, from one generation to another.

Not only did David hear the Lord's promise about his eternal kingdom, but the prophets Isaiah and Daniel also proclaimed its certainty (Isa. 9:7; Dan. 7:27). An angel declared the same assurance to Jesus's mother, Mary (Luke 1:32-33).

(vv. 13-14) His home: The Lord alone chose to make Zion His **home**. In His sovereignty, He anointed David to serve Him as king. In the same way, He determined that He would dwell among the people in David's reign. In the years that followed, Solomon built a beautiful temple in Jerusalem to honor Him (1 Kings 8:13). In response, the Lord declared that the temple would be the home of His glorious name (2 Chron. 6:6).

(v. 14) My resting place: This Hebrew expression carried the idea of being on a journey, reaching the desired destination, and staying there. The Lord declared that He had been with His people as they traveled from Egypt to the promised land. He did not allow a temple to be built until the Israelites settled in Jerusalem under David's reign (2 Chron. 6:4-11). Only then would the Lord make Zion His **resting place**. (See also Isa. 11:10.)

However, He warned His people not to think that His presence would be limited to the temple. The reach of His absolute reign stretched throughout heaven and earth (Isa. 66:1).

Key Place

Zion

The Hebrew name (*Zi'on*) referred to the hill on which Jerusalem stood. The first reference to **•Zion** appears in 2 Samuel 5, when David defeated the Jebusites and took control of the “stronghold of Zion” (2 Sam. 5:7). Zion may have been a part of the city that had been protected heavily.

Over time, the name came to be used in connection with the temple (Ps. 2:6), Jerusalem itself (Amos 6:1), and the kingdom of Israel (Isa. 1:27). In the New Testament, it referred to the “heavenly Jerusalem” (Heb. 12:22).

EXPLORE Psalm 132:11-14



APPLICATION POINT: Believers can be encouraged because God is faithful to keep His promises.

READ:

Invite a volunteer to read Psalm 132:11-14 as the group listens for God's commitment to David.

ASK:

What did God promise David? Were there any stipulations placed on the promise?

RECAP:

Summarize the following content from page 48 of the PSG: "God's promise was sure. However, in order for David's offspring to remain on the throne, they needed to faithfully obey the statutes God gave in His covenant with Israel. The history books in the Bible from 1 Kings to Nehemiah, along with several of the prophets, indicate many of the kings disobeyed God's Word, and their rule came to a terrible end (see Ps. 89). However, the psalmist knew there was still hope."

EXPLAIN:

Emphasize that God always keeps His promises, but He expects His people to honor Him. The Lord made that clear to David and to us in these verses.

ASK:

How have you experienced God's faithfulness to His Word? (PSG, p. 48)

TRANSITION:

David's descendants failed the faithfulness test, but God kept His promise that David's throne would be established forever.

NOTES

Group Activity Option

Object Lesson: Driver's License

Display a driver's license and ask the group to identify the purpose and value of a driver's license. Explain that it grants the privilege of legally driving on public roads. Note that this privilege can be revoked if a person breaks certain laws or statutes. Share that in the same way, God's promise to David came with a stipulation. Read aloud Psalm 132:12 to identify the condition God made. Highlight that God kept His promise to David with the coming of Jesus.

The Coming Messiah (Ps. 132:17-18)

17 “There I will make a horn grow for David; I have prepared a lamp for my anointed one.
18 I will clothe his enemies with shame, but the crown he wears will be glorious.”

Key Context

Messianic images

God continued to declare His intentions for His people, assuring them that He would provide them with ample physical and spiritual resources so they could grow strong as a nation (Ps. 132:15-16).

The ultimate blessing would come in the arrival of the Messiah. In verses 17-18, the psalmist used four metaphors to predict the coming Messiah: an animal horn, a lamp, clothing, and a crown. Three of these metaphors apply directly to the Messiah Himself. The other image, the clothing, relates to those who would oppose Him.

(v. 17) Make a horn: In Hebrew, making a **horn** for someone meant enabling them to be more powerful (Ps. 89:24; Ezek. 29:21; Dan. 7:7-8). Horns on animals represented strength. Likewise, human leaders used horns as trumpets to call citizens to action. Priests also used horns to carry oil for anointing the people God called to leadership and authority. With the Lord’s declaration, He looked ahead to the Messiah (Luke 1:69).

(v. 17) Prepared a lamp: In 2 Samuel 21:15-17, David’s troops told him that he should never go into battle again after a close call against the Philistines. They emphasized that he was the light of Israel (2 Sam. 21:17), and the nation could not afford to lose him in battle. The Lord declared that He would make the Messiah His **lamp**. His light would keep on burning, shining brightly for God’s people.

(v. 17) My anointed one: Anointing people involved pouring oil on them. For leaders of God’s people, it indicated that they had been consecrated for a particular purpose. Anointing kings and priests verified that they had been placed into significant positions of leadership (1 Sam. 16:12; 1 Kings 19:16). The Lord anointed David and the kings that followed Him to emphasize their work as rulers over the kingdom of Israel.

The Hebrew word for **anointed** (*masiah*) also can be rendered “Messiah.” In Acts 10:38, Peter declared that God anointed Jesus as Messiah. He set His Son apart for a particular purpose. Jesus perfectly fulfilled those plans by living a perfect life, dying on the cross for our sin, and conquering death by rising from the grave.

Key Doctrine

God the Son

Christ is the eternal Son of God. (See John 1:1,14; Romans 1:3-4.)

(v. 18) Clothe his enemies with shame: The Lord warned that anyone who attempted to stand against anointed kings would be humiliated. Their **shame** would not be hidden. Instead, they would wear it like clothing for everyone to see.

The prophets proclaimed His warning to both neighboring nations and to Israelites who rebelled against God. For instance, Isaiah warned that His people would be ashamed of their idolatry (Isa. 1:27-31). Jeremiah alerted them to the painful reality that disgrace would follow disobedience (Jer. 3:24-25). For the enemies of His Messiah, their disgrace would be the result of their futile efforts to defeat Him (Rev. 17:15-16).

(v. 18) Glorious: In contrast to the shame that would clothe the enemies of Israel and the Messiah, God would bestow a **crown** on His faithful leaders that would be **glorious**. In particular, this promise applied to His Messiah. The Messiah’s crown would be matchless in its glory because the Messiah is matchless in His power and authority (Luke 1:31-33).

In the Hebrew language, being glorious (*tsoots*) carried the idea of blossoming, as well as sparkling. The Lord would make sure that His Messiah would flourish with His authority.

EXPLORE Psalm 132:17-18



APPLICATION POINT: Believers can know that Jesus is the Messiah who delivers us from sin.

READ: Read aloud **Psalm 132:17-18**, directing the group to note the “I” statements.

ASK: How do the “I” statements in these verses reveal God’s plan for the Messiah? Lead a brief discussion, emphasizing God’s promise and work on behalf of His people through the Messiah.

EXAMINE: Write *HOPE* on the board in large letters. Under *HOPE*, write *horn, lamp, crown*. Encourage adults to read the content for verses 17-18 (PSG, pp. 48-49) and to identify how each of the metaphors would provide hope rooted in the Messiah. After a few minutes, allow a few volunteers to share their insights. Use information from “Key Context” on page 58 of the Leader Guide to supplement the discussion.

ASK: Why is it significant that all of Jesus’s enemies will be defeated? (PSG, p. 49)

TRANSITION: While the psalmist and the people of Israel had faith that God would send the Messiah one day, they had to accept that promise by faith. What they hoped for would not be fulfilled for hundreds of years. Thankfully, believers today understand that God has kept His word and provides hope for the present and the future through a relationship with Jesus Christ.

NOTES

Group Activity Option

Sketch/Write

Distribute paper and pencils to each person. Direct adults to fold their paper into fourths and to sketch a horn of an animal in the first section. In another section, direct them to sketch a lamp. In a third section, direct them to sketch a crown. For the fourth section, encourage them to write a brief summary of how the items they sketched relate to the coming Messiah. Allow volunteers to share as time permits.

CHALLENGE

- SUMMARIZE:** Review these points from Apply the Text on page 50 of the *Personal Study Guide*:
- *Believers should be intentional in their worship of God.*
 - *Believers can be encouraged because God is faithful to keep His promises.*
 - *Believers can know that Jesus is the Messiah who delivers us from sin.*
- DISCUSS:** Place adults in teams of two to four to discuss the first set of questions on page 50 of the PSG. After a few minutes, allow volunteers to share ways that believers can be more intentional in their worship of God and how the Bible study group could incorporate worship.
- REFLECT:** Direct the group to reflect the second set of questions on page 50 of the PSG. Allow time for adults to pray about promises they are trusting God to fulfill.
- PRAY:** Close the session by reading the verses and the chorus of “Standing on the Promises” (*Baptist Hymnal*, 2008, No. 339). Encourage adults to lean into their faith in Jesus as they trust God’s promises.

After the Session

Reinforce the session by texting or emailing the group during the week. Remind them that God is faithful to keep His promises. Encourage them to share any answers to prayers they may have experienced during the week.

ADULT COMMENTARY



Want to go deeper in your study?
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offers additional information and biblical
insights related to the key passages.
(Available for purchase at **Lifeway.com.**)

EXPLORE  THE BIBLE.

God's Messiah

SESSION 6

Psalm 110:1-7

Memory Verse: Hebrews 4:14-15

The Messiah will reign forever.

When Jesus came to Bethlehem, His arrival gave birth to fresh hope for God's people who had been waiting for the day when the Messiah would arrive. Messianic hope that sprouted at His birth grew stronger as He passed through the agony of the cross to the glory of the empty tomb.

Jesus lives on, and so does our hope. We affirm Jesus as Messiah. We believe that all authority has been given to Him. And we look forward to His return. In keeping with His messianic promise, He will come back one day; but He will come as a conquering King and Judge rather than a baby in a manger. He will defeat the enemies of His kingdom once and for all. His victory will be absolutely certain, and His reign will never end.

As you study this session, consider the impact His return has—or should have—on your life. And prepare ways to challenge the adults in your Bible study to do the same.



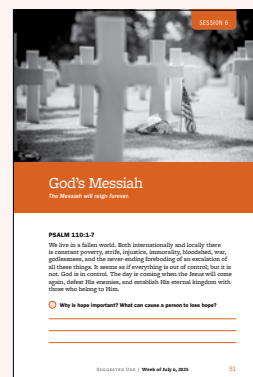
Weekly Podcast: Group Leader Training

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We live in a fallen world. Both internationally and locally there is constant poverty, strife, injustice, immorality, bloodshed, war, godlessness, and the never-ending foreboding of an escalation of all these things. It seems as if everything is out of control; but it is not. God is in control. The day is coming when the Jesus will come again, defeat His enemies, and establish His eternal kingdom with those who belong to Him. (PSG, p. 51)

Why is hope important? What can cause a person to lose hope?



Understand the Context (Psalm 110)

Psalm 110 fits easily into the category of royal psalms. This psalm provided God's people with a superlative resource for celebrating the kings of Israel in David's dynasty. It even may have been used at the coronation services for the kings in David's line, perhaps beginning with Solomon.

Ultimately, Psalm 110 pointed God's people toward the eternal reign of the Messiah, the King in David's line whom he referred to as his Lord (Ps. 110:1). Not only did the Messiah reign as King, but He also served as Priest. However, He did not follow in the line of the Levites who served for generations as priests in Israel (110:4). A perpetual King and Priest, He led an army into battle against His enemies.

The troops in His army followed Him willingly into warfare, and the battle ended in triumph for Him as He carried out His messianic mission. Therefore, God's people could look forward to the day when they would enjoy ultimate victory over their adversaries. That's when they would be able to abide in the perfect peace that only the Messiah could provide for them.

Because of the obvious messianic nuances in the psalm, quotes from it appeared often in the New Testament. The most well-known example involved the ministry of Jesus. As He debated the Jewish leaders regarding the identity of the Messiah, He brought up David's statement about the one he called "Lord" in Psalm 110:1. The Jewish leaders used the statement only to identify the

Messiah as David's son. However, in Matthew 22:45, Jesus told them that David's statement verified that he referred to the Messiah as his Lord.

Also, Peter made a reference to the first verse of this psalm as he preached the good news about Jesus at Pentecost. He referred to it as he declared to his audience of Jews from around the world that God had raised Jesus from the dead. Furthermore, Jesus the Messiah had been "exalted to the right hand of God" (Acts 2:33).

The anonymous writer of Hebrews made extensive use of this psalm, as well. At the outset of this epistle, he noted that Jesus sits at God's right hand, the place of greatest eternal prominence. In addition, God assured Jesus that His enemies would be placed under His feet in utter defeat and subjugation (Heb. 1:13).

The writer of Hebrews referred to the psalm once more when he declared that as Priest, Jesus followed in the line of Melchizedek (Heb. 5:6). In Hebrews 7:11-28, he elaborated on his declaration of Jesus as Priest in keeping with Psalm 110:4. As Jesus followed the pattern of Melchizedek as the ultimate High Priest for His people, He confirmed His eternal existence as the Messiah. Accordingly, Jesus served as the centerpiece of a new covenant between God and His people.

Read Psalm 110 in your Bible, noting words or phrases that describe Jesus. (PSG, p. 52)



INTRODUCE: Write the following terms on the board: *tornado, rioting, sliding car, power outage, slippery slope, poverty, death*. As adults arrive, encourage them to discuss what these terms have in common.

EXPLAIN: *All of these scenarios affect us emotionally. In each of these situations, we have little or no control. Whether our circumstances are caused by the weather, other people, or something unknown, we can do little to change the situation. Emotions run high when our world seems out of control, and we may be tempted to lose hope.*

ASK: **Why is hope important? What can cause a person to lose hope?** (PSG, p. 51)

DISCUSS: Read aloud the introductory paragraph on page 51 of the PSG. Highlight the sentence, “God is in control.” Lead a brief discussion on how knowing God is in control of every situation can produce hope in our lives.

TRANSITION: *In today’s session from Psalm 110, we find hope in the salvation Jesus offers and in the promise of His return and eternal reign. The psalmist, David, was confident that God would send His Messiah one day. And that encouraged Him to trust God in the most difficult of situations.*

NOTES

Group Activity Option

Music

Secure a recording of “He Will Hold Me Fast” and play it as adults arrive. Note that the original version of the song was written in 1906 by Ada Habershon. Share that additional words were added and adapted by Matt Merker in 2013, and the song was popularized by Keith and Kristyn Getty. To supplement the introduction, ask: ***What does “He Will Hold Me Fast” mean to you?***

Jesus as King (Ps. 110:1-3)

1 This is the declaration of the LORD to my Lord: “Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool.” **2** The LORD will extend your mighty scepter from Zion. Rule over your surrounding enemies. **3** Your people will volunteer on your day of battle. In holy splendor, from the womb of the dawn, the dew of your youth belongs to you.

(v. 1) Declaration of the LORD: The psalmist David wrote about a resounding **declaration** made by God. He used the Hebrew title *Yahweh* (**the LORD**) to identify God’s ultimate authority over everything and everyone (Gen. 2:4; Ex. 3:14). Next, David chose *Adonai* (**my Lord**) to represent his own family line that would rule over Israel. Centuries later, Jesus would apply the divine title to Himself as He shed light on His identity as the Messiah (Matt. 22:43-45; Mark 12:36-37; Luke 20:42-44).

Key Phrase

My right hand

David went on to record the actual words God shared as He directed His King to the place of extreme honor and authority at His **right hand** (1 Chron. 29:23; Isa. 51:23). In the New Testament, such an honored place belonged only to Jesus as Messiah (Matt. 26:64; Mark 16:19; Luke 22:69; Rom. 8:34; Heb. 1:3). Equally significant, New Testament writers affirmed that God’s pledge to defeat His Messiah’s enemies also pointed to Jesus (Acts 2:33-34; 1 Cor. 15:25; Heb. 1:13).

(v. 2) The LORD will extend: The Messiah’s enemies would not be able to stand against Him because God would strengthen Him. The word picture of an extended **scepter** portrayed the reach of God’s absolute power. His Messiah would establish His reign over all people.

The New Testament underscored God’s declaration by calling attention to the imminent return and unending reign of Jesus (Mark 13:24-27; Acts 3:19-21; Rev. 19:11-16). His royal scepter would be extended **from Zion**, where God vowed He would live among His people (Ps. 132:8,13).

(v. 2) Surrounding enemies: As David reigned over Israel, he had to defend his kingdom against **enemies** who lived nearby. The neighboring

nations often attempted to conquer Israel, but they did not succeed during the reigns of David or his son, Solomon (see 2 Sam. 8:1-14).

However, neighboring nations continued to trouble Israel, especially when God’s people rejected Him and followed false gods. After God’s people were exiled to Babylon, Daniel wrote about a vision of the Messiah and the establishment of His perpetual reign over everyone everywhere (Dan. 7:13-14). Centuries later, John wrote about a vision of Jesus returning, establishing His kingdom, and defeating His enemies (Rev. 19:19-21).

(v. 3) Your day of battle: The Lord assured David that the kings who followed him would come from his family line. He also promised that his dynasty would never end (2 Sam. 7:1-16). Of course, He fulfilled His promise when His Messiah came. The Messiah had a distinct connection with the ancestral line of David (Matt. 1:6-17).

Just as David fought against enemies of the kingdom of Israel, the Messiah would go to war with the enemies of His eternal kingdom. And like David, the Messiah would not face the **day of battle** alone. His people would join Him in the fight and follow His leadership (Rev. 19:11-14). They would **volunteer** for the task.

(v. 3) In holy splendor: The faithful believers who joined the Messiah would not be portrayed as weak, weary soldiers who had lost interest in battle (Rev. 19:19). Instead, they would step into the conflict in **holy splendor**.

However, their attire would not necessarily include literal crowns or robes. Instead, their personal glory would be reflected in their imitation of the Messiah and His holiness. The details in the word pictures about the **dawn** and **dew** may have been elusive, but they pointed to a clear message. The Messiah’s followers would be as plentiful as dew drops at dawn. Also, they would be marked by youthful traits of energy and eagerness.

EXPLORE Psalm 110:1-3

1



APPLICATION POINT: Because Jesus holds all authority, we're to worship and honor Him.

MINI-LECTURE: Use Understand the Context (PSG, p. 52) and **Pack Item 2** (Poster: *Types of Psalms*) to explain why Psalm 110 is considered a royal psalm. Emphasize that David was acting as a prophet as he focused on the coming Messiah. Point out that Psalm 110 is one of the most quoted Psalms in the New Testament. Encourage adults to note words or phrases that describe Jesus throughout this study.



READ: Invite a volunteer to read **Psalm 110:1-3** as the group considers the difference between “LORD” and “Lord” in verse 1.

VISUAL: On a whiteboard or poster paper draw three vertical columns. Above the first column write *King*.

ASK: **What words describe Jesus as a King in these verses?**
Record the responses in the first column.

EXPLAIN: Use information from page 64 of the Leader Guide to share the significance of God’s right hand. Highlight the Messiah’s majesty, as well as His role as conquering Judge. Emphasize that Jesus fulfills the imagery of the psalmist in these verses.

DISCUSS: Divide the group into teams of two to four, leading them to discuss this question: **How does God’s authority shape the way we approach Him?** (PSG, p. 55) After a few minutes, allow adults to share their responses to the questions.

NOTES

Group Activity Option

Compare/Contrast

Read Psalm 110:1-3 and Acts 2:33-36. Explain that the context in Acts is Peter’s sermon at Pentecost. Guide the group to notice how Peter quoted Psalm 110 and to note differences in the two passages. Ask: **How does Acts 2:33-36 clarify that Psalm 110 is speaking of Jesus? What should we know with certainty?**

Jesus as Priest (Ps. 110:4)

4 The Lord has sworn an oath and will not take it back: “You are a priest forever according to the pattern of Melchizedek.”

(v. 4) Sworn an oath: In ancient Israel, God’s people made promises to each other before Him, and they punctuated those promises with a **sworn** vow. Such an **oath** verified that the individuals would keep their word (see Gen. 50:25; 2 Sam. 3:35; Heb. 6:16). In God’s relationship with His people, He also swore oaths to them (Ezek. 20:5). According to Psalm 89:34-36, God made an oath to David regarding the perpetuation of his dynasty. Here in Psalm 110, He made an oath related to the coming Messiah.

(v. 4) Will not take it back: Regarding the oath God made, He would not **take it back**. His promise was irrevocable because God cannot fail to keep His word. His promise had been given to His people in keeping with His character. Therefore, He would never make a promise and then fail to keep it (Num. 23:19).

Furthermore, God does not make oaths casually or lightly. Quite the opposite, His oath must be made in accordance with the redemptive plan that He had established in eternity. Of course, His eternal plan of salvation centered on the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus (Acts 2:23).

Key Doctrine

God the Son

Christ ascended into heaven and is now exalted at the right hand of God where He is the One Mediator, fully God, fully man, in whose Person is effected the reconciliation between God and man. (See Hebrews 4:14-15; 7:14-28.)

(v. 4) A priest: Previously the Lord declared that the Messiah would reign as King (Ps. 110:1-2). Here, He confirmed that the Messiah would also serve as Priest. In the Old Testament, God’s people considered the roles of king and priests to be separate. While kings performed the duties of priests on occasion, this was the exception rather than the rule (2 Sam. 6:14-18; 1 Kings 8:14-64). Like the psalmist, the prophet, Zechariah proclaimed

that the Messiah would assume both roles (Zech. 6:12-13). The writer of Hebrews also stated that Jesus served as High Priest for believers in keeping with His messianic mission (Heb. 5:5-10).

(v. 4) Forever: When the Lord led His people out of Egypt and into the wilderness, He commanded Moses to appoint Aaron as the nation’s first high priest. He added that Aaron’s priesthood would pass to his sons (Ex. 28:1; Num. 3:1-3). So, when Aaron died, Moses anointed Aaron’s son, Eleazar, as the new high priest (Deut. 10:6). The succession of high priests through Aaron’s family line continued throughout the Old Testament.

But only Jesus could play the role of our ultimate and eternal High Priest (Heb. 7:22-24). He would make the sacrifice that would provide salvation once and for all. And, since God raised Him from the dead, He would live on **forever** and never need to be replaced like Aaron’s sons.

(v. 4) The pattern: Across Israel’s history, priests provided an absolutely invaluable service. They went to the Lord on behalf of His people, and they went to His people on His behalf. The high priests in Aaron’s family line took responsibility for carrying out those critical duties. Their succession set up a pattern that the Israelites understood and affirmed. Now the Lord declared that the Messiah would establish a unique **pattern** order as High Priest (Heb. 7:25).

(v. 4) Melchizedek: A king as well as a priest, **•Melchizedek** appeared during the days of Abraham. His name meant “king of righteousness,” and he ruled over Salem, which can be translated “city of peace.”

When he appeared, he blessed Abraham. In turn, Abraham presented a tithe to him (Gen. 14:17-20). Scripture does not mention a predecessor or a successor to Melchizedek as king and priest. However, God declared that he provided the perfect pattern for the Messiah as the eternal King-Priest for believers (Heb. 4:14-16).

EXPLORE Psalm 110:4



APPLICATION POINT: Since Jesus is also our priest, we can come to Him with our needs.

READ:

Read aloud Psalm 110:4, directing the group to listen for anything that might be confusing to them in the verse.

RECAP:

Summarize the following content from page 56 of the PSG: “Jesus’s priesthood will not be handed down to Him through the levitical priesthood established in the Sinai Covenant. This old covenant would be replaced with a new covenant established by the blood of Christ (Jer. 31:31-34; Matt. 26:28; 1 Cor. 11:25). Hebrews 10:1-18 explains how Jesus was our sacrificial substitute, obtaining for believers an eternal redemption. At the same time, Jesus is the sinless High Priest who offered Himself as the sacrifice for our sins (Heb. 2:9-18; 4:14-15; 9:11-14).”

DISCUSS:

Write *Priest* at the top of the second column. Write *Melchizedek* under that label. Direct adults to scan the content about Melchizedek on page 56 of the PSG. Encourage adults to share facts about Melchizedek and record their responses under his name. Use information from page 66 of the Leader Guide to supplement the discussion. Talk about how Jesus follows the pattern of Melchizedek as priest and king.

ASK:

What makes Jesus uniquely qualified to be our priest?
(PSG, p. 56)

TRANSITION:

Jesus changed the priesthood forever. He is both our Ruler and the Mediator of our relationship with God.

NOTES

Group Activity Option

Bible Skill Activity

Direct adults to work in pairs to complete the session’s Bible Skill activity (PSG, p. 58.) Encourage them to read the Scriptures as listed and discuss the questions. After a few minutes, allow volunteers to share things that stuck out to them about Melchizedek. Briefly share connections between Jesus and Melchizedek as priests and kings.

Jesus as Victor (Ps. 110:5-7)

5 The Lord is at your right hand; he will crush kings on the day of his anger. **6** He will judge the nations, heaping up corpses; he will crush leaders over the entire world. **7** He will drink from the brook by the road; therefore, he will lift up his head.

(v. 5) At your right hand: A reference to **right hand** appeared earlier in the psalm (Ps. 110:1). There, God placed the Messiah in a position of highest honor. Now, God used this expression to assure the Messiah that His mission would be successful. God had crowned Him as King. Then, He vowed that the Messiah would also serve as a Priest (110:4).

The combination of those roles underscored God's faithful devotion to the Messiah's mission. Centuries later, Stephen provided convincing evidence of God's faithfulness. Just before his death as a martyr, he testified that he actually saw Jesus standing at God's right hand (Acts 7:55-56).

(v. 5) The day of his anger: God looked ahead to the time when the Messiah would take His stand and **crush** His enemies. On that day, He would defeat them once and for all. The Old Testament prophets declared that the **day of his anger** was a certainty (Isa. 13:5-9; Zeph. 2:1-3; Ezek. 38:18-20). Of course, that day will be fulfilled when Jesus returns. It would be marked by fierce warfare that would end with the absolute obliteration of the Messiah's enemies.

(v. 6) Judge the nations: Accountability would not end with utter defeat. It would also include judgment. The Messiah would not return only to crush His enemies, but also to **judge** their hostile actions and willful rebellion against Him. Nations full of people who turned away from God would not escape His judgments.

Jesus spoke to His disciples about the day of judgment when He taught about the separation of sheep and goats (Matt. 25:31-46). Paul also declared a solemn warning about the day of the Lord's judgment that would come (Rom. 2:5).

(v. 6) Heaping up corpses: The psalmist's description of the scene on the field of battle left nothing to the imagination. The image of **corpses** piled up after the battle spoke volumes about the

extent of the destruction. The Messiah's enemies would come from every nation in the world; but, He would **crush** their leaders. This image carries the idea of shattering their bodies.

By the time that the battle ends, not even one opponent will be left to stand against the victorious Messiah. John presented a similar description of Jesus's complete victory when He returns (Rev. 19:11-21). While the imagery might seem violent, readers must remember that God is not being gratuitous. Jesus, the Messiah, will judge in righteousness, but He will judge those who reject Him.

(v. 7) He will drink: Throughout the Old Testament, drinking water from a **brook** or stream carries the idea of being refreshed and renewed. For example, in the account of Gideon, the Lord instructed him to choose troops based on the way they drank water from a spring (Judg. 7:1-8). In 1 Kings 17:1-6, the Lord sent Elijah to hide himself at Wadi Cherith, near the Jordan River. He instructed Elijah to drink water from the wadi. After the battle with His enemies, the Messiah would be refreshed by taking a drink from nearby streams.

(v. 7) Lift up his head: The monumental difference between the Messiah and His enemies became most evident in the aftermath of the battle. While the heads of his enemies will be crushed completely, He can **lift up his head** in triumph. Lifting up one's head signified victory, power, and resolve.

The Messiah will not leave any loose ends. Nothing will go undone and no promise will be broken. Just as Jesus accomplished the Father's plan perfectly on the cross, He will fulfill the Father's purposes when He comes back to judge the unrighteous.

EXPLORE Psalm 110:5-7



APPLICATION POINT: Believers can trust God's promise that Jesus will return and restore righteousness.

- READ:** Invite a volunteer to read **Psalm 110:5-7** as the group reflects on the verses with the second coming of Christ in mind.
- WRITE:** Above the third column, write *Victor*. Guide the group to identify the evidences of the Lord's final victory in verses 5-7. State that Jesus will return and defeat his enemies. He will judge the nations and defeat those who have rebelled against Him.
- DISCUSS:** Read the first lines of the hymn "What If it Were Today" (*Baptist Hymnal*, 2008, No. 290). Lead a brief discussion of how adults would feel if Jesus really did return today. Acknowledge that many people may have mixed emotions: excited for Jesus's return but sorry to miss out on some things in life.
- ASK:** **How should believers live today in light of Jesus's anticipated return?** (PSG, p. 58)
- RECAP:** Read the following from page 58 of the PSG: *The psalm concludes with a picture of the victorious Messiah refreshing Himself by drinking water once He has defeated His enemies. After having crushed their heads he will lift up His head. This description anticipates the completed work of reconciliation and redemption climaxed by the glorious exaltation of the Lord Jesus Christ.*
- CONCLUDE:** Emphasize that Jesus is the Messiah and that He is coming back some day. Challenge adults to consider how God is calling them to adjust their lives to this truth.

NOTES

Group Activity Option

Object Lesson: Ice Water

Display a glass of ice water. Share that water refreshes and is necessary for life. Read John 4:10-14, where Jesus described Himself as "living water." Point to the returning Messiah drinking from the brook when all the enemies have been defeated (v. 7). Highlight that believers can trust God's promise that Jesus will return and restore righteousness to the world.

CHALLENGE

- SUMMARIZE:** Review these points from Apply the Text on page 59 of the *Personal Study Guide*:
- *Because Jesus holds all authority, we're to worship and honor Him.*
 - *Since Jesus is also our priest, we can come to Him with our needs.*
 - *Believers can trust God's promise that Jesus will return and restore righteousness.*
- REVIEW:** Distribute copies of **Pack Item 13** (*Handout: Christ in the Psalms*). Allow time for the group to scan the handout. Ask: **From what you read, what stands out to you?**
- READ:** Direct attention to Hebrews 4:14-15 and read the verses together.
- DISCUSS:** **Why is it essential we have in Jesus a great high priest who sympathizes with our weaknesses and is yet without sin? What does Jesus do as our priest? Why do we need Jesus to be our priest?** (PSG, p, 59)
- PRAY:** Close in prayer thanking God for sending Jesus and asking Him to help each person be prepared for His to return.

After the Session

Send each adult in the group a text or email this week. If an individual has not been in Bible study for a while, consider calling them. Encourage the group to stay in touch with each other throughout the week. As a leader, reflect on each member of the group and pray that they will continue pursuing the Messiah and preparing for His return.

LEADER BLOG



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EXPLORE  THE BIBLE.

God's Deliverance

SESSION 7

Psalm 18:16-29

Memory Verse: Psalm 18:3

God protects and defends those who belong to Him.

Looking back can be a beneficial exercise for believers. We're wise when we take some time to reflect on the successes, as well as the failures, in our past. Even more important, we do well to ask the Lord to help us so we can see clearly what He has done in our lives to shield and uphold us.

God can use our long look into the past to strengthen us as we take a look ahead toward the challenges that are coming into view. We can be confident that the Lord who helped us in the past will continue to protect and defend us as we step into the future.

As you study this session, reflect on how God has met your needs and brought you through hard times in the past. Thank Him for those times and ask Him to help you apply those experiences to struggles you are having now. Consider how you can challenge the adults in your Bible study in this area.



Weekly Podcast: Group Leader Training

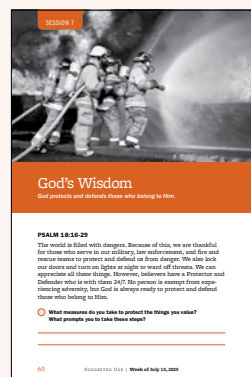
Scan here to gain insights about this week's study on Apple podcasts, Spotify, Google Podcasts, or at goExploreTheBible.com/adults-training.



The world is filled with dangers. Because of this, we are thankful for those who serve in our military, law enforcement, and fire and rescue to protect and defend us from danger. We also lock our doors and turn on lights at night to ward off threats. We can appreciate all of these things. However, believers have a Protector and Defender who is with them 24/7. No person is exempt from experiencing adversity, but God is always ready to protect and defend those who belong to Him. (PSG, p. 60)

What measures do you take to protect the things you value?

What prompts you to take these steps?



Understand the Context (Psalm 18)

Psalm 18 has some overlap between the categories of “hymns” and “royal psalms.” Either way, this psalm focuses on praise. It contains sections similar to verses in a hymn that can be sung in personal or congregational worship, including a call to praise. In addition, it offers insights that prompt worshipers to praise the Lord.

The details provided in the prelude of Psalm 18 established the setting for this hymn. Just as helpful, the entire psalm can be found in 2 Samuel 22, as David reflected on the number of ways the Lord had taken care of him. Long before he became the king of Israel, he had survived Saul’s repeated attempts to kill him (1 Sam. 17–31). During his reign as king, he had to overcome an assortment of challenges. In particular, he defended himself against his enemies who tried to remove him from the throne (2 Sam. 1–21). Looking back on all of his victories, he gave the Lord the credit for each of them.

Psalm 18 begins with a call to praise. David expressed his love for the Lord who had been faithful to rescue him from his enemies (18:1-3). He went on to describe the anguish he faced as he found himself at death’s door. He turned to the Lord and pleaded for help. The Lord heard his cry and reached into his desperate predicament. He took hold of His creation and used it as His weapon to deliver David from the deep water of death (18:4-19).

As David continued to craft his hymn of praise, he gave attention to his walk with the Lord. He testified that he had been faithful to the Lord and blameless before Him. His testimony didn’t imply that he had reached a level of sinless perfection. Rather, it underscored one of his primary convictions: living with integrity before the Lord. Consequently, God blessed him with tremendous courage, which equipped him to defeat his enemies (18:20-29).

The Lord’s gracious ways with David served as the primary theme for the remainder of the psalm. He celebrated what the Lord had done to strengthen him for battle and secure his victories. David compared Him to a rock that never moved or cracked. God had always been there for David, strengthening him, protecting him, fighting battles for him, and making him triumphant.

Because of the Lord’s leadership, David reigned over pagan nations as well as the kingdom of Israel. He subdued each of the nations so David could lead them. In response, David pledged that he would declare his devotion to the Lord to all people everywhere (18:30-50). This was yet another indication that God’s salvation was available to all who would believe in Him, not just the Israelites.

As you read Psalm 18:16-29, identify all the things the Lord had done for David. (PSG, p. 61)



VISUALIZE: Guide the group to picture these scenarios:

- Warning signs that say, “No swimming beyond this point”
- Highway workers wearing neon vests and hard hats
- People fastening their seat belt in a car or plane

ASK:

What’s the overall theme of these scenarios? Why is it important to protect ourselves and others?

RELATE:

Each day we take steps to protect ourselves from harm’s way. Each day, there are people who stand in the gap to offer protection to others.

READ:

Direct a volunteer to read the opening paragraph on page 60 of the PSG.

REFLECT:

What measures do you take to protect the things you value? What prompts you to take these steps? (PSG, p 60)

TRANSITION:

In today’s session we will examine Psalm 18. As we do, think about how David praised God for deliverance. Identify areas of our life where you can demonstrate gratitude to our mighty God for protecting and defending you in times of adversity.

NOTES

Group Activity Option

Music

Secure copies of the lyrics for “Love Lifted Me” (*Baptist Hymnal*, 2008, No. 107). Enlist three volunteers to read each verse with the group singing the chorus between each verse. Ask: ***Are there times when you know that “love lifted you”?*** Guide the group to pray silently, praising God for His protection in times of adversity.

The God Who Rescues (Ps. 18:16-19)

16 He reached down from on high and took hold of me; he pulled me out of deep water. **17** He rescued me from my powerful enemy and from those who hated me, for they were too strong for me. **18** They confronted me in the day of my calamity, but the LORD was my support. **19** He brought me out to a spacious place; he rescued me because he delighted in me.

(v. 16) He reached down: Earlier in Psalm 18, David testified that the Lord came down and helped him in his time of deep distress (18:9). Therefore, he lived in the confidence that he could ask the Lord to help him once more (Ps. 57:3; 144:7). The Lord responded to David's plea when He **reached down** from heaven. The Hebrew for **took hold** (*laqach*) suggests placing something in one's hand and carrying it. The Lord grabbed David and held him with a firm grip.

(v. 16) Deep water: The Lord also removed David from a dangerous crisis that could have taken his life. David used vivid imagery to describe what the Lord had done. Like someone drowning in **deep water**, David realized that he could never save himself. Only the Lord could save him.

Jonah expressed the same realization as he languished in the stomach of a gigantic fish (Jonah 2:5-6). Likewise, the Lord led Pharaoh's daughter to draw Moses out of the water (Ex. 2:10).

Key Doctrine

God the Father

God is all powerful, all knowing, all loving, and all wise. (See Psalm 147:3-5; Jeremiah 32:17.)

(v. 17) He rescued me: The imagery of drowning also provided David with a fitting description of his enemies. Like deep water, his foes had the power to take his life. Their hatred of him fueled their actions and made them a powerful force. David understood that they were **too strong** for him, so he leaned into the Lord's strength to rescue him from disaster. The writer of Hebrews also instructed struggling disciples about the Lord's power to rescue them (Heb. 2:14).

(v. 18) My support: David elaborated on the cruelty of his enemy. He noted that a devastating personal **calamity** had taken a toll on his strength and left him defenseless.

In that moment of extreme weakness, his enemy attacked. This violent aggression would have destroyed David, but the Lord sustained him. David's testimony of the Lord's **support** in his weakness resonated with the declaration of Moses that God's people could count on Him to stand against their enemy (Deut. 32:35-37).

(v. 19) A spacious place: The Hebrew word for **spacious place** (*merhab*) implies more than a generous amount of square footage. It suggests a safe place that would offer comfort. Such a place stood in stark contrast to the severe constrictions that crowded David and left him feeling like a prisoner to his difficulties.

David's testimony about the Lord's provision of a safe, secure place resembled the crisis that Moses and the Israelites faced as they found themselves at the Red Sea. The oncoming Egyptian army created a dangerous dilemma that the Lord addressed by parting the waters and giving His people a path for crossing over to safety (Ex. 14:1-22).

(v. 19) Delighted: The Lord rescued David and provided him with a place of comforting safety for an important reason. He **delighted** in David. He took pleasure in David as His servant and His child. In other words, He loved David. While the king was far from perfect, the Lord knew that He had David's heart.

Centuries earlier, the Lord demonstrated a similar love for Israel when He rescued His people from Egyptian bondage and established a covenant relationship with them (Ex. 19:4). During Solomon's reign, the Queen of Sheba affirmed that the Lord demonstrated His unending love for the kingdom of Israel. She recognized that God had verified His delight with Solomon by blessing him lavishly with both wisdom and material possessions (1 Kings 10:9).

EXPLORE Psalm 18:16-19

1



APPLICATION POINT: Believers can call upon God in times of adversity.

CONTEXTUALIZE: Using Understand the Context (PSG, p. 61) set the context for Psalm 18. Point to **Pack Item 1** (Map: Kingdom of David and Solomon) and note that David wrote Psalm 18. Direct adults to scan Psalm 18:1-15 to identify the characteristics of God. Display **Pack Item 4** (Poster: God in Psalms), noting how many of these characteristics are found in Psalm 18.

READ: Invite a volunteer to read **Psalm 18:16-19** as the group listens for God's actions to protect David.

ASK: What do these verses reveal about God? (PSG, p. 64)

RECAP: Share that the powerful enemy David mentioned may have been King Saul. Share the following from page 63 of the PSG to explain David's connection with Saul: *When God gave David tremendous military successes, Saul became jealous and wanted to permanently eliminate David either by his own hand or that of Israel's enemies, the Philistines. Saul watched David's military successes pile up. He witnessed the dancing and heard the songs praising David. Even Jonathan, Saul's own son and heir to the throne, loved David.*

TRANSITION: It is comforting to know that believers faced with difficult times do not need to face them alone. Like David, God still provides a spacious place for the ones in whom He finds delight.



OUR GOD IS OUR...	
Shield	Psalms 3:3, 28:7, 119:114
Rock	Psalms 18:2, 42:9, 95:1
King	Psalms 5:2, 44:4, 76:12
Shepherd	Psalms 23:1, 80:1
Judge	Psalms 7:11
Refuge	Psalms 46:1, 62:7
Fortress	Psalms 31:3, 71:3
Avenger	Psalms 26:1
Creator	Psalms 8:1, 6
Deliverer	Psalms 37:39-40
Helper	Psalms 30:2
Protector	Psalms 5:11
Provider	Psalms 78:23-29
Redeemer	Psalms 107:2

NOTES

Group Activity Option

Case Study

Share the following case study and discuss the final question: *Jim had a well-paying, satisfying job until a recession caused his company to lay off employees and ultimately close. He was confident that he would find a new job quickly, but he was still looking six months later. Meanwhile, his savings dwindled and he wondered how he would take care of his family. Based on Psalm 18:16-19, how can the Bible study group support Jim?*

Faithfulness Rewarded (Ps. 18:20-24)

20 The LORD rewarded me according to my righteousness; he repaid me according to the cleanness of my hands. **21** For I have kept the ways of the LORD and have not turned from my God to wickedness. **22** Indeed, I let all his ordinances guide me and have not disregarded his statutes. **23** I was blameless toward him and kept myself from my iniquity. **24** So the LORD repaid me according to my righteousness, according to the cleanness of my hands in his sight.

(v. 20) According to my righteousness: When David said he was **rewarded** on the basis of his **righteousness**, he did not mean that he had earned God's favor through his own actions or good works. Being righteous meant being made right with God, and it resulted from faith in Him (Gen. 15:6). That has always been God's standard, and He honored David's faith and dependence on Him.

In the New Testament, Paul echoed the same message about righteousness. He wrote that people only could be made right with God by placing their faith in the risen Christ (Rom. 10:9-10; Eph. 2:9-10). It is not something any of us can earn.

(v. 20) Cleanness of my hands: Although being righteous started on the inside, David demonstrated his commitment to God through his actions. Along with a clean heart, he also lived with clean **hands**. What he said and what he did validated his relationship with the Lord.

Key Cross Reference

David and Saul

The subscript at the beginning of Psalm 18 mentions David's flight from King Saul. Many scholars believe Saul's unjust vendetta accounted from some of the fear and anxiety David expressed in the psalm. Yet, as he was running for his life from Saul, David maintained a righteous heart and clean hands. For example, twice he had a chance to kill Saul, but he refused. Read the passages below and reflect on David's words and actions. Ask God to help you consider how you can follow his example when you are treated unfairly.

- 1 Samuel 24
- 1 Samuel 26

(v. 21) Ways of the LORD: David demonstrated his devotion to the Lord by living according to His **ways**. As he sought to please the Lord, he gave himself to taking God's Word to heart and applying it in his life. Of course, pleasing the Lord meant keeping His commands (Deut. 8:6). Obviously, David knew about the temptation to turn away from the Lord and the outcome of such a foolish decision.

(v. 22) His ordinances . . . statutes: In the wilderness, the Lord commanded His people to obey His **ordinances** and **statutes** (Lev. 18:4-5). David took the Lord's commands seriously (Ps. 19:9-10). The terms used here represent distinct, but complementary, aspects of God's instructions. Taking His Word to heart would help His people grow in their walk with Him.

(v. 23) Blameless: David believed that no one could find fault with him. The Lord had protected him because he was a man of integrity. He didn't wear a mask of faithfulness to the Lord in order to shroud a sinful lifestyle. Despite the stress created by his enemies, David avoided **iniquity** to the best of his ability. Again, he was not perfect, but he placed his unwavering trust in God.

(v. 24) In his sight: David repeated his testimony about his **righteousness** and **cleanness** of hands (see v. 20). He also added an important phrase. He noted that he was blameless in the **sight** of the Lord.

Although David committed adultery with Bathsheba and arranged her husband's death, he eventually returned to God's plan. Confronted with his sinful behavior, he repented and sought God's forgiveness and mercy (2 Sam. 11:1-12:13; Ps. 51). His example reminds us that being righteous does not mean being perfectly sinless. It means being acceptable to the Lord (Ps. 19:14).

EXPLORE Psalm 18:20-24



APPLICATION POINT: God rewards those who faithfully follow Him.

READ:

Read aloud Psalm 18:20-24 while the group listens for why David felt God rescued him.

DISCUSS:

Direct the group to examine the poetic structure of these verses as described on page 64 of the PSG. Lead a brief discussion on why God's Word (v. 22) stands at the center of David's poetic structure.

SHARE:

These verses reveal both David's attitude and actions toward God. David was far from blameless or perfect, but he sought to live with integrity. He chose to obey rather than disregard God's Word. David exhibited faithfulness toward God.

REVIEW:

Divide adults into groups of two or three. Instruct them to read Psalm 19:7-11 and to identify similarities and differences between those verse and Psalm 18:20-24. After a few minutes let volunteers report. Highlight the importance of honoring and obeying God's Word as we strive to maintain righteous hearts and clean hands.

ASK:

What steps of faithfulness to God do you need to take today? (PSG, p. 66)

TRANSITION:

David moved from examining his own attitude and actions to rejoicing in God's faithfulness.

NOTES

Group Activity Option

Antiphonal Reading

Remind the group of the poetic structure of these verses. Divide the group into three teams. Assign each team specific verses to practice reading together. Assign Psalm 18:20, 24 to the first team, Psalm 18:21, 23 to the second team, and Psalm 18:22 to the third team. Guide the group to read their assigned verses chorally, listening for the parallelism and rhythm in the verses.

Hope Given (Ps. 18:25-29)

25 With the faithful you prove yourself faithful, with the blameless you prove yourself blameless, **26** with the pure you prove yourself pure, but with the crooked you prove yourself shrewd. **27** For you rescue an oppressed people, but you humble those with haughty eyes. **28** LORD, you light my lamp; my God illuminates my darkness. **29** With you I can attack a barricade, and with my God I can leap over a wall.

(v. 25) Faithful: David affirmed the reason for being faithful to the Lord. He had complete confidence in the Lord being **faithful** to him. God's goodness toward His people emanated from His love (Neh. 9:17). Jesus taught His disciples about God's faithfulness in His parable about a master who distributed money to his servants. He affirmed the servants who had been loyal to him with what he had given to them. Rewarding them demonstrated his faithfulness to them (Matt. 25:21-23).

(v. 25) Blameless: Being **blameless** had to do with being a person of integrity. God's people who live with integrity are not be guilty of being pretentious or hypocritical in relationship with Him. Instead, they demonstrate complete sincerity as they follow Him. Their integrity reflects the Lord's influence in their lives. The apostle John wrote that Christians who seek to be upright prove that they belong to the Lord (1 John 3:7-10).

(v. 26) Pure: David affirmed the Lord's purity as well as His faithfulness and integrity. He also noted that God's people should strive to reflect **pure** lives as they serve Him. John shared the same sentiment. In his first epistle, he taught that believers belong to the Lord as His children. One day, we will see Him personally. Our confidence in His return should prompt us to strive toward spiritual purity that imitates His purity (1 John 3:1-3).

(v. 26) Crooked . . . shrewd: God's people exhibit godly character traits that He affirms and nourishes. Borrowing from John the Baptist's message, they make the way straight between them and the Lord (John 1:23). Others choose a **crooked** path that leads them to a warped and twisted lifestyle.

David warned that the Lord would hold people accountable for their foolish choices. God will judge their actions, and they would find Him hostile to their plans.

(v. 27) Rescue: David assured God's people that they could put their complete trust in the Lord. Along the way, oppression would strike them. Humbled by poverty or affliction, they could depend on Him to **rescue** them. However, self-exalting individuals could expect a different response. God has promised to humiliate the proud (Prov. 3:34; Jas. 4:6; 1 Pet. 5:5).

(v. 28) Light my lamp: David reflected on what the Lord had done for him personally. As he wrote, he chose a simple, but insightful, way to testify to the Lord's faithful ways. He used the word picture of **lamp** that drove away **darkness** to describe the Lord's influence in his life. Isaiah mentioned light and darkness in his prophecy about the Messiah (Isa. 9:1-2). Matthew pointed out that Jesus fulfilled Isaiah's prophecy (Matt. 4:15-16).

(v. 29) With you: Throughout his life, David faced incredible challenges, but God helped him each time. So, David declared that the Lord's presence kept him from being afraid. The Lord gave him the courage to charge any **barricade** and strengthen him to overcome any **wall**.

Bible Skill

Read, reflect on, and react emotionally to a Bible verse.

Focus on Psalm 18:16. Read the verse aloud several times. Each time, emphasize different words or phrases as you read. For example, in one reading emphasize the word "he" each time it appears. Then read the verse again, emphasizing all the action words. Take note of your thoughts. ***How does the verse move you emotionally? What feelings were evoked by the different words and phrases as you emphasized them? How can you turn this verse into a prayer?***

EXPLORE Psalm 18:25-29



APPLICATION POINT: Believers can trust God to be faithful to them.

READ:

Instruct the group to read Psalm 18:25-29 silently, noting key words that reveal more characteristics of God.

DISCUSS:

Write the following phrase on the board: *What goes around, comes around.* Allow volunteers to suggest how this phrase relates to these verses. Lead a brief discussion related to the words David used to describe how God responds to people.

ASK:

How have you seen God's faithfulness expressed in your life recently? (PSG, p. 67) Encourage adults to share times when they have seen God be faithful. Talk about why we can count on Him to be blameless and pure.

MEMORIZE:

Turn to Psalm 18:3. Share that this is the memory verse for this session and that it provides a great summary for the entire Psalm. Lead the group in reading it together aloud a few times. Encourage them to continue reading it and reflecting on it as they memorize it this week.

TRANSITION:

Verse 29 focuses on David's testimony of how God rescued him from his enemies. Because he trusted God, he had the courage and passion to fight any battle against any foe. God can still provide that kind of confidence and strength when we humble ourselves before Him. This week, think about how you can apply these verses to your life as you face struggles and challenges in life.

NOTES

Group Activity Option

Object Lesson: Lights

Display a light bulb, flashlight, lantern, or other light source. Direct attention to Psalm 18:28 and discuss ways that light impacts our lives. Ask: ***How does Christ provide light in your life? How are you a light for your family, neighbors, coworkers, and others who cross your path?***

CHALLENGE

- SUMMARIZE:** Review these points from Apply the Text on page 68 of the *Personal Study Guide*:
- *Believers can call upon God in times of adversity.*
 - *God rewards those who faithfully follow Him.*
 - *Believers can trust God to be faithful to them.*
- APPLY:** Encourage adults to read through today's focal passages again and look for ways these statements are described in the verses. Challenge them to consider how they can apply each of these to their lives.
- SHARE:** Ask a volunteer to share a testimony of a time when they called on the Lord and felt His guiding presence. Be prepared to share your own experience.
- ASK:** **Why do we sometimes neglect praising God?** (PSG, p. 68)
- LIST:** Direct adults to the second set of questions on page 68 of the PSG. Guide the group to list reasons the Lord is worthy of our praise.
- PRAY:** Lead the group to pray silently, asking the Lord to increase their faith in Him and faithfulness to Him as their Protector in times of adversity.

After the Session

Text or email the group, reminding them to be mindful in praising the Lord and allowing His light to guide their path. Encourage them to create their own list of reasons to praise God for His deliverance and protection. Suggest they read the focal passages again and use David's words as a model for their list. Let them know that you are praying for them.

LEADER EXTRAS



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EXPLORE  THE BIBLE.

God's Faithfulness

SESSION 8

Psalm 105:1-11,42-45

Memory Verse: Psalm 105:1-2

God deserves our worship because of His faithfulness toward His people.

Scholars deserve to be honored for their academic pursuits. Research projects demand initiative and diligence. Also, business leaders who have excelled in the corporate world deserve to be recognized for their successes. Growing a business requires hard work and a willingness to take risks with a dream. Military personnel also deserve our respect, as do law enforcement and medical professionals.

While these and other leaders deserve recognition for their achievements, God alone deserves our worship. When we worship Him, we see ourselves as we really are to Him, and we see Him as He really is to us. While we applaud the success of others, we worship God alone because He's faithful. As you dig into this session from Psalm 105, evaluate your worship. Ask God to help you give Him the worship He deserves and to guide you as you challenge adults to worship Him as well.



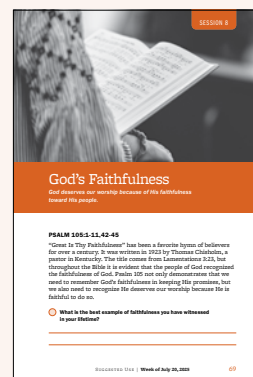
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“Great Is Thy Faithfulness” has been a favorite hymn of believers for over a century. It was written in 1923 by Thomas Chisholm, a pastor in Kentucky. The title comes from Lamentations 3:23, but throughout the Bible it is evident that the people of God recognized the faithfulness of God. Psalm 105 not only demonstrates that we need to remember God’s faithfulness in keeping His promises, but we also need to recognize He deserves our worship because He is faithful to do so. (PSG, p. 69)

What is the best example of faithfulness you have witnessed in your lifetime?



Understand the Context (Psalms 105–106)

Psalms 105–106 serve well as examples of hymns. Psalms in this category supply worshipers with expressions of praise and thanksgiving. They enable God’s people to shout and sing out loud that He’s worthy of our worship.

Studying these two psalms together would be beneficial because they get at the heart of the same truth, but in different ways. Taken together, they help worshipers declare God’s faithfulness. Psalm 105 directs worshipers to affirm God’s faithfulness to His people from one generation after another. Psalm 106 points to the painful reality that God’s people can be unfaithful to Him. Even so, He never stops being faithful to us.

Psalm 105 provides a series of short accounts from the history of God’s people that demonstrate His loyal love for them. After calling His people to worship, the psalmist pointed his readers to the early days of their relationship with Him. The account included a reminder about God’s covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. It also reviewed Joseph’s life in Egypt and God’s leadership in freeing His people from slavery (vv. 1–25).

From there, the psalmist highlighted God’s hand on the lives of Moses and Aaron. He enabled these brothers to lead Israel through the wilderness to the promised land (vv. 26–41). Through them, He instructed the nation to take His commands seriously. Obedience would nurture a growing relationship with Him that would be characterized by joy (vv. 42–45).

Psalm 106 offers a stark contrast. It’s a summary of the disturbing ways in which God’s people kept on being unfaithful to Him. The psalmist began with a call to worship God because He had been loyal to care for His people so they could flourish (vv. 1–5). Unfortunately, His people responded to His faithfulness by being unfaithful to Him.

The psalmist provided a brief list of ways in which they had not been loyal to Him, beginning with their questions of His leadership at the Red Sea (vv. 6–12). Before He parted the waters so they could escape from the Egyptian army, they demonstrated unfaithfulness by protesting His actions. However, once He led them to safety by parting the water, they sang praises to Him.

The psalmist went on to cite other instances of Israel’s lack of loyalty to God. Even so, He reflected His loyal love by leading them to the land of Canaan in keeping with His promise to Abraham. Not long after they settled in the promised land, they gave in to the temptation to worship pagan idols. Yet, He did not give up on them (vv. 13–46). For that reason, He alone deserved their worship (vv. 47–48).

As you read Psalm 105:1–11, 42–45, highlight the ways God demonstrated His faithfulness to His people. What was the proper response of the people to God’s faithfulness? (PSG, p. 70)



INTRODUCE: Prior to the session, research facts about the geyser called “Old Faithful” (yellowstonepark.com). As adults arrive, share that information with the group and briefly discuss why the geyser had earned that name.

ASK: **What is the best example of faithfulness you have witnessed in your lifetime?** (PSG, p. 69)

READ: Direct the group to read the introductory paragraph on page 69 of the PSG.

DISCUSS: Enlist a volunteer to read Lamentations 3:23 and review what it says about God’s faithfulness. Facilitate a brief discussion about the importance of God’s faithfulness in our lives, as well as our faithfulness to Him.

TRANSITION: *Lamentations 3 is not the only Bible passages that focuses on God’s faithfulness. As you might expect, many of the psalmists also reminded readers of God’s abundant goodness and loyalty. Today’s study in Psalm 105 calls us to praise God’s faithfulness and to remember how He has kept His promises to His people across the ages.*

NOTES

Group Activity Option

Music

Secure copies of the lyrics for “Great Is Thy Faithfulness” (*Baptist Hymnal*, 2008, No. 96) and “Find Us Faithful” by Steve Green. Display a coin and share that every coin has two sides. Note that just like a coin, our walk with God has two sides. Say: *We know that God is always faithful, but we are called to respond by being faithful to Him.* Either share the lyrics for both songs with the group or play recordings. (Note: “Great Is Thy Faithfulness” could be used to supplement Engage, while “Find Us Faithful” could supplement Challenge on page 90 of the Leader Guide.)

Call to Worship (Ps. 105:1-6)

1 Give thanks to the LORD, call on his name; proclaim his deeds among the peoples. **2** Sing to him, sing praise to him; tell about all his wondrous works! **3** Boast in his holy name; let the hearts of those who seek the LORD rejoice. **4** Seek the LORD and his strength; seek his face always. **5** Remember the wondrous works he has done, his wonders, and the judgments he has pronounced, **6** you offspring of Abraham his servant, Jacob's descendants—his chosen ones.

(v. 1) The LORD: God alone deserves our worship. Therefore, the psalmist used the Hebrew word (*Yahweh*) to identify Him as the one true God who reigned over everything (Ps. 93:1-2; Isa. 52:7). In addition, his call to worship centered exclusively on His presence among His people. For them, He stood completely apart, enthroned on their praises (see Ps. 22:3). This call to worship God included both acknowledging the glory of who He is and thanking Him for **His deeds among the peoples**.

(v. 2) Sing to Him: The worshiping community had been prompted to **sing** as they came into His presence (Ps. 100:2). In ancient Israel, singing played a vital role in worshiping the Lord. Songs gave a voice to the eagerness and anticipation growing in the hearts of the worshipers. Singing about Him helped them to worship, but singing praises directly to Him inspired them even more.

With songs to Him on their lips, they could testify to His **wondrous works** among them. For instance, God's people testified to what they witnessed at the Red Sea. The Lord parted the waters for them so they could make their way to safety in the wilderness (Deut. 4:32-39).

(v. 3) His holy name: Testifying about God's incredible actions would give way to honoring Him for how He revealed Himself to His people. The psalmist's perception of God as **holy** moved him to give God glory and exalt Him wholeheartedly. The Lord remained completely separate from the lifeless idols that the pagan people in the neighboring nations worshiped. Focusing on His **name** emphasized the holiness of His character. Therefore, the hearts of His worshipers would be stirred to **rejoice** as they entered His presence.

(v. 4) Seek the LORD: For God's people, meaningful worship involved gathering with others at a particular time and place to focus on Him.

However, it also included the discipline of personal worship. Such a lifestyle of personal worship placed a high priority on pursuing Him every day. Their confidence in Him grew as their efforts to **seek the LORD** became a regular feature of their lives. For that reason, the psalmist encouraged his readers to pursue His **strength** and His **face**.

(v. 5) Remember: God's people ran the risk of forgetting everything He had done for them. To diminish the risk, the psalmist challenged the Israelites to recall them intentionally. For example, refreshing their memories about His actions on their behalf in Egypt would renew their trust in Him.

In those days, He commissioned Moses to lead them from Egyptian bondage. He also sent supernatural plagues against Egypt (Ex. 4:21; 7:3-9; 11:9-10). Those plagues served to reflect His judgment and bring Him glory (6:6; 7:1; 12:12).

Key Doctrine

Man

Only the grace of God can bring man into His holy fellowship and enable man to fulfill the creative purpose of God. (See Ephesians 2:1-10; Colossians 1:21-22.)

(v. 6) His chosen ones: Having pointed to the Lord as the proper object of worship, the psalmist shed light on the worshipers themselves. They were Abraham's **offspring** and Jacob's **descendants**. Just as important, he referred to **Abraham** as a **servant** of the Lord. Abraham obeyed the Lord by leaving his home and settling in Canaan. There God made a covenant with Abraham (Gen. 12:1-3), which He later confirmed to Abraham's son, Isaac, and to his grandson, Jacob (Ex. 2:24; Deut. 9:27). He declared that Abraham's entire family belonged to Him (Deut. 7:6-9).

EXPLORE Psalm 105:1-6



APPLICATION POINT: Believers should be ready to tell others of what God has done.

- OVERVIEW:

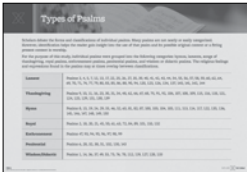
Using Understand the Context (PSG, p. 70) note things to consider when studying Psalms 105–106. Display **Pack Item 2** (Poster: *Types of Psalms*), noting that Psalm 105 is a hymn of praise. Share that this type of psalm is a call to praise God, usually giving reasons why He deserves our worship.
- READ:

Read aloud Psalm 105:1-6 as the group listens for imperatives related to worship. Guide the group to name these commands. As they share, record their responses on the board.
- ASK:

Which of the imperatives found in these verses come easy to you? Which are more challenging? (PSG, p. 73)
- DISCUSS:

Direct attention to **Pack Item 5** (Poster: *Key Verse: Psalm 105:1-2*). Lead a brief discussion about how these verses describe worship and believers’ responsibilities in worship. Note that these are the memory verses for this session. Read the verses aloud as a group two or three times. Encourage adults to continue working to memorize them during the week ahead.
- HIGHLIGHT:

Direct attention to the application point for these verses. Emphasize that one reason we praise God’s character and recall what He has done for us is to tell others about Him. Challenge adults to seek ways they can testify to God’s great works sometime in the next few days.



NOTES

Group Activity Option

Art
Distribute paper and markers to teams of two to four people. Direct each team to design a poster that would illustrate the worship imperatives in Psalm 105:1-6. As an alternate idea, attach a large sheet of paper on the wall and lead the group to create a graffiti wall based on Psalm 105:1-6. Allow time for teams to share and review the artwork.

Covenant Made (Ps. 105:7-11)

7 He is the LORD our God; his judgments govern the whole earth. **8** He remembers his covenant forever, the promise he ordained for a thousand generations—**9** the covenant he made with Abraham, swore to Isaac, **10** and confirmed to Jacob as a decree and to Israel as a permanent covenant: **11** “I will give the land of Canaan to you as your inherited portion.”

(v. 7) His judgments: In God’s relationship with His people, He gave personal attention to them through His wise **judgments**. As a result of the judgments that He rendered, He brought salvation to the people who devoted themselves to Him. However, anyone who lived in rebellion against Him could count on being accountable to Him.

As they aligned their lives to His ways, His people welcomed His judgments. They rejoiced over these commands because a godly lifestyle nourishes righteousness (Isa. 26:9-10), which leads to God’s blessings. Of course, God did not limit the reach of His judgments to Israel. In His sovereignty, the Lord reigns over **the whole earth**. As such, anyone who honored His judgments experienced His grace and favor.

Key Word

Covenant

Establishing a **covenant** meant making a promise or establishing an agreement. And only a sovereign God could take the initiative to institute an enduring covenant with His people. And, while ancient covenants typically put responsibilities on both sides of the agreement, God’s covenant to His people was unilateral. He promised to bless them simply because they were His people.

Many times in the ancient world, a covenant would be sealed when the parties cut an animal in half and walked between the portions. This served as a warning about the fate of anyone who decided to break the promise. Of course, God would never abandon His covenant. A **thousand generations** of His people could verify that He always kept His word (Ex. 34:7; Deut. 5:10).

(v. 9) Abraham: Initially, God established His covenant with Abram (Abraham). According to Genesis 12:1-3, God called him to leave his home country and move into a new land. He promised

Abram that he would become a great nation. In turn, that blessed nation would bless everyone in the world. Abraham obeyed God’s call and followed His leadership, and God repeatedly demonstrated His commitment to honor His covenant (Gen. 13:14-18; 15:18-21; 17:1-21).

(v. 9) Isaac: When God made His covenant, Abram had no children. In fact, his wife, Sarai (Sarah), was barren and both were past normal child-bearing years. This raised the question of how God would use him to build a nation when having children seemed impossible.

Abram brought nothing to the covenant except a willingness to trust God and obey Him. Still, God honored Abram’s faith with a miraculous intervention. He confirmed His covenant by providing a son named **Isaac**. Later, after his father’s death, Isaac received a renewal of the covenant promise from God (Gen. 26:23-25).

(v. 10) Jacob . . . Israel: Isaac’s son, **Jacob**, became the next member of Abraham’s family to receive the covenant. Absolutely nothing in God’s heart had changed. But Jacob also received a new name from the Lord: **Israel** (35:9-12). Jacob’s new name called to mind a person who struggled with God. It also came to be the name of the nation that had come from Abraham.

(v. 11) Canaan: Through the psalmist, God called attention to His covenant with Abraham and his descendants. Across the centuries that followed, the Israelites could trace the fulfillment of His promise. In fact, they were living in the specific territory that God promised (13:15). This is what made **Canaan** the “promised land.”

As the psalmist noted, Israel’s history was a testimony to God’s sovereignty and power. Every step of the way, the Lord was in control and working things out for His plans and purposes. Believers can still praise Him for His sovereign control over human affairs.

EXPLORE Psalm 105: 7-11



APPLICATION POINT: Believers can praise God for His sovereignty over all things.

READ:

Invite a volunteer to read Psalm 105:7-11 while the group identifies a shift in focus from Psalm 105:1-6.

RECAP:

Summarize the following information for verse 7 (PSG, p. 74):
“The main body of this psalm begins with a declaration of faith: He is the LORD our God. The psalmist recognized that the Lord is not a localized, national deity who has authority only within the confines of its borders, like the pagan nations believed about their gods. Rather, the Lord God of Israel has all authority and his judgments govern the whole earth. Therefore, wherever the people of God are, they are under God’s rule and in His domain. What’s more, He is always near to them.”

GUIDE:

Direct adults to scan the content for verses 8-11 (PSG, pp. 74-75) and to identify key ideas related to God’s covenant with Abraham’s family. After a few minutes, allow volunteers to share.

ASK:

How does an understanding of God’s sovereignty influence your faith? (PSG, p. 75)

TRANSITION:

The remaining verses of Psalm 105 highlight various ways God faithfully kept His promises. While these verses trace the history of the Israelites, they also are a call to remember. Remembering God’s works should be part of our worship.

NOTES

Group Activity Option

Object Lesson: Photo Album

Display a photo album that contains several pictures of special people, pets, vacation places, or events in your life. Direct the group to respond to the following questions: ***When was the last time you took a “selfie” to remember a special time? Is it still on your phone? Why is it important to remember special times in our spiritual lives?***

Covenant Fulfilled (Ps. 105:42-45)

42 For he remembered his holy promise to Abraham his servant. **43** He brought his people out with rejoicing, his chosen ones with shouts of joy. **44** He gave them the lands of the nations, and they inherited what other peoples had worked for. **45** All this happened so that they might keep his statutes and obey his instructions. Hallelujah!

(v. 42) He remembered: The psalmist provided a brief account of God's leadership of His people as they made their way to the land that He promised them. Across long centuries, God never forgot His covenant with Israel. In fact, the Hebrew wording suggests keeping something in mind, rather than recalling something that was forgotten. The psalmist affirmed that God's actions toward Israel were always based on His covenant with them. It served as a filter for His interaction with His people.

(v. 42) His holy promise: The Hebrew term for **holy** (*qades*) suggests being separated. In the context of God's relationship with His people, it also carries the connotation of being dedicated. For example, God used the term to declare that Israel had been dedicated to Him (Ex. 19:6).

His **promise** to Israel regarding the land of Canaan bore the distinguishing mark of His gracious devotion to Abraham. The living God who reigned with sovereignty over everything made a solemn promise to His servant, Abraham (Gen. 17:9-15). The call of Moses centuries later verified the Lord's devotion to His promise (Ex. 2:24; 3:16). He was still determined to keep His word.

(v. 43) With rejoicing: Unparalleled **rejoicing** in the hearts of the Israelites sprang up after their miraculous escape from Egypt. They knew for certain that God had delivered them, as evidenced by the miracle He performed at the Red Sea (Ex. 14:5-31). Their panic gave way to **shouts** of awe and wonder as they crossed the Red Sea to the safety of the wilderness. Moses led them to rejoice with his song of gratitude to God for saving their lives (15:1-19).

(v. 44) They inherited: God fulfilled His promise to the Israelites and gave them the land of Canaan as an inheritance. However, pagan nations inhabited the land. When He called Abraham, ten nations occupied the land. When He called Joshua to lead the conquest centuries later, seven

nations lived there (Josh. 3:10). The presence of the pagan nations did not prevent God from keeping His promise to Israel. He blessed His people and made sure they **inherited** all He had for them (Deut. 6:10-12; Josh. 5:10-12). They were able to live in houses they had not built and eat food they had not planted. In a nutshell, the psalmist noted, the children of Israel enjoyed the benefits of **what other peoples had worked for**.

(v. 45) Keep his statutes: The psalmist noted that God had a larger purpose when He established His covenant with Abraham, and that purpose did not change once He fulfilled His promise and granted Israel its inheritance. Ultimately, He intended for Israel to grow spiritually as His people.

In their relationship with Him, the Israelites could flourish as a nation only when they obeyed His **statutes**. Growing spiritually meant taking His law seriously and living according to His ways. Obeying His instructions with grateful hearts would strengthen their faith and nourish their joy as they served Him in the generations to come (2 Kings 17:37).

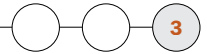
Key Word

Hallelujah

The term (*halalyah*) also can be rendered "praise the LORD" in the Hebrew language. It actually connects the word for praise to the most distinctive name for God. This unique Hebrew wording happens to be pronounced the same way in a variety of languages. Consequently, believers around the world use this same unique term to express wholehearted praise to God.

It appeared for the first time in Psalm 104:35 and again in this verse. The New Testament equivalent is used four times in Revelation 19:1-6.

EXPLORE Psalm 105:42-45



APPLICATION POINT: God's past faithfulness motivates believers to trust Him and obey Him.

READ:

Invite a volunteer to read Psalm 105:42-45 while the group listens for the actions God took and how He expects His people to respond to Him.

ASK:

How did God provide for the Israelites? How did the people respond to God's promise?

EXPLAIN:

Note that the definition of grace is getting a blessing we don't deserve—and escaping a punishment we do deserve. Highlight God's actions as acts of grace. Read the application point for these verses. Emphasize that God's people should always respond to His faithful grace with trust and obedience.

ASK:

Why is it important that God has made and keeps significant promises to His people? (PSG, p. 76)

RECAP:

Share the following from page 76 of the PSG: *The psalmist concluded with two important declarations. First, everything God did for Israel was so that they would keep his statutes and obey his instructions. In response to His faithfulness to them, God expected them to be faithful to Him. Second, the final word is the plural imperative exhorting the people to praise the Lord, Hallelujah! How could they not, given the faithfulness of their Lord to them?*

NOTES

Group Activity Option

Bible Skill

Encourage adults to work in pairs to review the Bible Skill activity (PSG, p. 76). Explain that Psalm 105 focuses on God's covenant with His people. Direct adults to read and reflect on the Bible passages in the activity and to record any insights they gain in the margin of the PSG. After a few minutes, review what these verses reveal about God.

CHALLENGE

- SUMMARIZE:** Review these points from Apply the Text on page 77 of the *Personal Study Guide*:
- *Believers should be ready to tell others of what God has done.*
 - *Believers can praise God for His sovereignty over all things.*
 - *God's past faithfulness motivates believers to trust Him and obey Him.*
- REVIEW:** Briefly review the imperatives found in verses 1-6.
- DISCUSS:** Allow some volunteers to respond to the first set of questions on page 77 of the PSG. Challenge adults to find ways they can proclaim God's awesome works to those who need to hear them. (Note: Review the lyrics to "Find Us Faithful" if you used the Music option on page 83 of the Leader Guide.) Encourage them to talk with God about obstacles or fears that might hold them back.
- IDENTIFY:** Read the second set of questions on page 77 of the PSG. Challenge adults to use these questions as prayer prompts during the coming days.
- PRAY:** Direct attention to **Pack Item 5** (*Poster: Key Verse: Psalm 105:1-2*). Pray the verses together as a group. Close with a prayer thanking God for His faithfulness.

After the Session

Send each adult in the group a text or email to connect with them during the week. Encourage them to share something God has done for them with at least one person this week. Recount a personal experience when you were able to tell someone what Jesus has done in your life during the week, as well as any words of praise or prayer. Urge them to respond to God's eternal faithfulness by trusting Him and obeying Him each day.

ADULT COMMENTARY



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God's Conviction

SESSION 9

Psalm 38:1-8,18-22

Memory Verse: Psalm 38:21-22

Believers should repent and confess their sins to God knowing that He will not abandon them.

In a courtroom, a conviction leads to a sentence. When someone is convicted of a crime, the judge determines the penalty. The greater the crime, the worse the penalty. After the judge determines the penalty, everyone leaves the courtroom, and the convicted criminal goes to jail.

In a relationship with God, conviction has the hope of a completely different outcome. Conviction of sin can lead to repentance and forgiveness, which actually provides freedom from bondage. Just as breathtaking, it can open the door to renewed intimacy with God.

As you prepare to lead this study from Psalm 38, ask God to convict you of unconfessed sin in your life. Pray that He will begin a new, reviving work in the adults of your Bible study group.



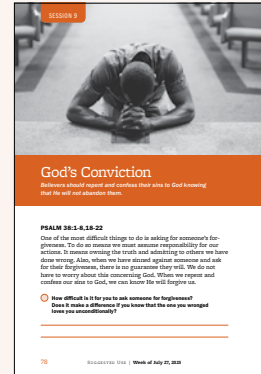
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One of the most difficult things to do is asking for someone's forgiveness. To do so means we must assume responsibility for our actions. It means owning the truth and admitting to others we have done wrong. Also, when we have sinned against someone and ask for their forgiveness, there is no guarantee they will. We do not have to worry about this concerning God. When we repent and confess our sins to God, we can know He will forgive us. (PSG, p. 78)

How difficult is it for you to ask someone for forgiveness? Does it make a difference if you know that the one you wronged loves you unconditionally?



Understand the Context (Psalm 38)

By placing psalms into various categories, Bible students can better understand a particular psalm's purpose. Psalm 38 is an example of a penitential psalm because it expresses the writer's genuine repentance and sincere sorrow over sinful behavior.

According to the information provided in the introduction, David wrote Psalm 38 in a quest to remember. For that reason, it may have been used with memorial offerings that God instructed His people to bring when they worshiped Him (Lev. 2:2; 24:7). At the same time, it also nurtured personal worship, fostering an awareness of sin against God and the need to repent.

The psalm does mention physical illness, but David was not implying that sin caused all sickness. However, in this context, he acknowledged that the sickness described resulted from his sin. His physical malady opened his eyes to his spiritual problem, and he repented.

Psalm 37 played a role in establishing this context for Psalm 38. It's a psalm about trusting the Lord during the long days of difficulty. In Psalm 38, David wrote about the difficulty he faced as he struggled with a serious setback in his health. He saw that his physical ailments had been rooted in a spiritual problem. He remembered his sinful behavior, and he confessed it to the Lord.

David began this psalm of remembrance by asking the Lord to have mercy on him (38:1-3). From there, he described his malady, as well as the physical and spiritual pain that he had been enduring as a result (38:4-10).

The painful struggle with his deteriorating physical health had been made worse by the treatment he received from troublesome people in his life. As he suffered, his friends turned their backs on him, as did his neighbors. At the same time, his enemies made their plans to take advantage of his weakened condition. In the face of such a threatening situation, he found himself unable to hear what they were plotting. Consequently, he didn't know what to say in response.

Fortunately, he did not blame the Lord for his predicament. Instead, he made a wise decision to turn to God for help. As he prayed, he asked for protection against the efforts of his enemies who rejoiced over his suffering (38:11-15).

As he continued to pray, he gave attention to his spiritual need instead of his physical agony. Sin had caused his sickness. Therefore, his spiritual health needed to be restored as his first priority. Just as distressing, his enemies seemed to be healthy and ambitious, ready to bring harm to him even though he had tried to do what's right. He asked the Lord to save him (38:16-22).

As you read Psalm 38:1-8,18-22, identify the consequences of sin. Identify also the assurances of faith expressed by the psalmist. (PSG, p. 79)



PREPARE: Make copies of **Pack Item 8** (*Handout: Praying Scripture in Psalms*), **Pack Item 9** (*Handout: Organizing the Psalms*), and **Pack Item 14** (*Handout: Our Forgiving God*).

DISCUSS: Show adults pictures of several emojis. Talk about some that might be confusing or easily misunderstood. Briefly discuss the messages various emojis convey.

ASK: **When have you sent a message or said something that was misunderstood by someone? How did you fix that situation?**

STATE: *Sometimes we send a message or take an action that hurts others. Sometimes we're on the other end of a hurtful message or action. Actions and words often lead to broken relationships.*

GUIDE: Direct a volunteer to read aloud the introductory paragraph on page 78 of the PSG.

ASK: **How difficult is it for you to ask someone for forgiveness? Does it make a difference if you know that the one you wronged loves you unconditionally? (PSG, p. 78)**

REVIEW: Distribute copies of **Pack Item 9** (*Handout: Organizing the Psalms*) and draw attention to the “Penitential” category. Note that it is all about confession and finding forgiveness. Point out that Psalm 38 is one of these psalms—and the focus of this session.

TRANSITION: *In today's session, we'll see the importance of confession and repentance, as well as remembering that God's love never fails—even when we do.*



Group Activity Option

Music

Secure a copy of the lyrics or a recording of “Forgiveness” by Toby McKeehan, David Arthur Garcia, and Lecrae. Be prepared to distribute a copy of the lyrics to the group. Highlight the lyrics beginning with “Cause we all make mistakes sometimes.” Read the lyrics or listen to the recording. Encourage the group to join in repeating the final stanza, “We all need forgiveness.”

Conviction (Ps. 38:1-4)

1 LORD, do not punish me in your anger or discipline me in your wrath. **2** For your arrows have sunk into me, and your hand has pressed down on me. **3** There is no soundness in my body because of your indignation; there is no health in my bones because of my sin. **4** For my iniquities have flooded over my head; they are a burden too heavy for me to bear.

(v. 1) Punish: David used the revered name for God (*Yahweh*) to convey the utmost respect and reverence to the God who had the sovereign right and authority to **punish** him for his sins. The wording is parallel poetry aligned with **discipline** later in the verse. It also suggests being validated or having an argument proven right, especially in a legal setting. David knew that he would come up on the losing end of any courtroom debate with God over his sin. He would be found guilty and face the consequences of his crimes.

(v. 1) Your anger . . . your wrath: This also reflects the poetic parallelism in verse 1. David's urgent appeal had stemmed from the agony that he endured because of God's rebuke. He begged God to refrain from letting His **anger** bring more punishment. Jeremiah made a similar appeal when he asked God to withhold His anger against the residents of Judah (Jer. 10:24). God's **wrath** did not result from losing His temper. Instead, it was rooted in His perfect wisdom in disciplining His people as He attempted to lead them back toward Him.

(v. 2) Your arrows . . . your hand: Figurative language helped David to describe the painful effect of God's discipline on him. Comparing God's discipline to **arrows** also helped Job as he tried to bear witness to the intense agony that he experienced during his painful physical ordeal (Job 6:4). God's people on their way to Babylonian exile described their travail using the same picture word (Lam. 3:12-13). Naomi, Ruth's mother-in-law, shared her sorrow over losing her husband by saying that God had turned His **hand** against her (Ruth 1:13).

(v. 3) No soundness . . . no health: In verse 3, David began to identify the link between his misery and his sin. He believed that his lack of **soundness** resulted from His disobedience to God. Therefore, he considered his physical crisis to be evidence of God's scorn. His entire body ached, and his torment reminded him that God

held him accountable for his foolish choices. As long as he harbored rebellion against God, David would never be able to experience genuine **health** in his body.

Key Concept

Sickness and Sin

In Psalm 38, David linked his physical malady and his spiritual malady. He was suffering because of **my sin** (v. 3). Yet, he was not suggesting that all sickness emanated from sin. The entirety of the Bible also bears this out. For example, Job's suffering had no connection with any judgment of sin on God's part. Even while his friends tried to convince him to come clean before God (Job 4:7-9), Job affirmed his integrity (31:5-6).

Likewise, when Jesus's disciples asked whose sin caused a man to be born blind (John 9:1-2), Jesus corrected their faulty theology. He emphasized that the man's condition was not the result of anyone's sin. Rather, it set the context for God to receive great glory (9:3).

(v. 4) My iniquities: Turning to another word picture, David compared the overwhelming agony of his **iniquities** to drowning in the rising water of a menacing flood. The Hebrew word (*awon*) conveys the idea of wickedness for which a person would be held accountable before God. Ezra also spoke of the staggering effect of God's accountability on a person's body (Ezra 9:6).

(v. 4) A burden too heavy: Using yet another mental image, David compared his spiritual and physical misery to a **burden too heavy . . . to bear**. It weighed him down to the point he could not discard it or escape from it. Nehemiah used a similar word to describe the excessive tax burden that previous governors placed on the Jews when they returned to Jerusalem (Neh. 5:15-18).

EXPLORE Psalm 38:1-4

1



APPLICATION POINT: The Holy Spirit convicts us so that we will recognize and turn from our sin.

READ:

Invite a volunteer to read Psalm 38:1-4 as the group listens for how David described his suffering before the Lord.

SHARE:

Using Understand the Context (PSG, p. 79), provide background information on Psalm 38. Highlight that while the sin that led to the psalm is unidentified, David knew it had caused problems.

RECAP:

To highlight the connection between sin and physical illness, summarize this content from page 81 of the PSG: “David recognized the interconnectedness of one’s spiritual condition with one’s physical condition. Not every physical problem happens as a direct result of a specific, personal sin. Our bodies are decaying and dying as a result of the Fall in Genesis 3. As descendants of Adam and Eve, we inherited a sin nature, and the wages of sin is death (Rom. 6:23). Unless the Lord returns first, we are all going to die. Nevertheless, penitential psalms often highlight the relationship between physical and spiritual suffering. David’s admissions about his physical and spiritual condition should remind us that sin not only has devastating spiritual consequences, it also impacts our physical, mental, and emotional well-being.”

ASK:

How might God convict us of our sin? What are the benefits of the Holy Spirit’s conviction? (PSG, p. 81)

NOTES

Group Activity Option

Object Lesson: Stone

Distribute a small piece of gravel or stone to each person. Guide the group to visualize the effect of putting the stone in their shoe and walking. Ask: *How would it feel? Would you stop and try to remove it?* Explain that sin is like the gravel in our shoe. Say: *Even if it seems small, it constantly grates and causes pain.* As time allows, walk the group through the Plan of Salvation on the inside front cover of the PSG. Let them know that you are available to speak with anyone who is struggling with sin or considering God’s offer of salvation through Jesus.

Anguish (Ps. 38:5-8)

5 My wounds are foul and festering because of my foolishness. **6** I am bent over and brought very low; all day long I go around in mourning. **7** For my insides are full of burning pain, and there is no soundness in my body. **8** I am faint and severely crushed; I groan because of the anguish of my heart.

(v. 5) My wounds: It's possible that David was speaking metaphorically, but it's just as likely that he was describing the effects of an actual illness. If so, his sickness brought on intense pain. A **foul** odor also emanated from his **wounds**, suggesting that his condition was getting worse. The putrid smell sent the heartbreaking reminder that David's body would waste away unless he confronted his sin.

(v. 5) My foolishness: Speculation regarding the exact diagnosis of David's physical problem serves as a useless distraction from what really mattered. Naming his medical problem does not matter as much as recognizing the need to be honest about our own spiritual condition. Because his misery resulted from sinful behavior, David turned his attention to the sin that caused it. He regarded what he had done as **foolishness**.

In truth, he didn't need medicine for his body nearly as much as he needed a remedy for his aching soul. What was true for David could be said for all of us as well. We all fall into **foolishness** at times and need to seek God for a way out.

(v. 6) Bent over . . . brought very low: David's inability to stand upright indicated that his medical problem had become severe. Others faced the same problem, but perhaps for different reasons. Solomon wrote that as people grew older, the changes in their bodies left them stooping instead of standing up straight (Eccl. 12:3). Jesus encountered a woman who had been sick and **bent over** for eighteen years. When Jesus saw her, he liberated her from her disability (Luke 13:11-12). Unable to stand up straight, David encountered a disturbing reality. His dire situation did not appear to be hopeful at all.

(v. 6) I go around in mourning: His seemingly hopeless outcome had an effect on him emotionally. Not only did he suffer physical pain, but he also grieved what had become of him.

To make his situation even worse, his sorrow never abated. His mourning lasted **all day long**. Within the context of God's discipline, David's sorrow would prove to have a beneficial impact on him. Jesus later assured His disciples that mourning in the context of spiritual discipline would give way to comfort (Matt. 5:4).

Key Doctrine

God's Purpose of Grace

Those whom God has accepted in Christ, and sanctified by His Spirit, will never fall away from the state of grace, but shall persevere to the end. (See John 5:24; Romans 8:29-30.)

(v. 7) My insides: David's pain didn't stop with his festering skin or his bent posture. He also pointed to agony caused by an internal problem. The Hebrew word for **insides** (*kesel*) could have referred to the effects of a fever, or he may have been struggling with an internal malady that had left him "in flames" (CEV). The constant pain that came from everywhere in his body plagued him with endless misery.

(v. 8) Anguish of my heart: David confessed that he was **severely crushed**. What was happening to him physically paled in comparison to what he was enduring spiritually. The awful impact of his sin had sapped his strength and worn him out.

However, the **anguish** in his heart didn't arise primarily from his physical condition. It arose from the spiritual sickness that existed in his heart. Along with longing for his body to be healed, he yearned even more for the recovery of his spiritual health.

EXPLORE Psalm 38:5-8

2



APPLICATION POINT: We can expect conviction of sin to create a range of emotions in us, including guilt and sorrow.

READ:

Direct the group to read silently Psalm 38:5-8, noting the depth of David's despair.

RECORD:

Encourage the group to list the various physical ailments David experienced from the verses. Write their responses on the board. Use information from page 96 of the Leader Guide to expand on what some of these terms might mean. Write the word *foolishness* on the board. Share that David identified this as the root of his problems.

RECAP:

Share the following content from page 82 of the PSG: *In Mark 7:21-22, Jesus included "foolishness" in a list of several sins which included sexual immoralities, thefts, murders, adulteries, greed, and evil actions. Jesus put foolishness on the same level as these other sins and put it last in His list as an expression that aptly describes all sin. David wisely recognized the foolishness of abandoning the way of faithful obedience to God and allowing sin to reign in his heart. This recognition and confession are essential steps toward reconciliation with God.*

ASK:

Why might people underestimate or dismiss the consequences of sin? (PSG, p. 83)

TRANSITION:

David understood that his condition was the result of his disobedience. He also knew the path back to God and to healing for his body and his spirit.

NOTES

Group Activity Option

Paraphrase

Give each adult a sheet of paper and a pencil. Encourage the group to imagine they are in the same type of situation as David. Direct them to write a paraphrase of Psalm 38:5-8. Lead the group to reflect on how sin affects both the person and their relationships.

Confession (Ps. 38:18-22)

18 So I confess my iniquity; I am anxious because of my sin. **19** But my enemies are vigorous and powerful; many hate me for no reason. **20** Those who repay evil for good attack me for pursuing good. **21** LORD, do not abandon me; my God, do not be far from me. **22** Hurry to help me, my Lord, my salvation.

(v. 18) I confess: David knew that something had to be done about his sin, but he had no way of taking it away himself. So, he opened his heart to God. According to Proverbs 28:13, hiding sin is never productive, but confessing sin leads to God's mercy. David's prayer reflected the only productive decision for anyone **anxious** about sin.

(v. 19) My enemies: As David dealt with his spiritual and physical pain, he brought up another issue that concerned him. He looked beyond his own condition and observed his **enemies**. They were **vigorous and powerful**. While they had no justification for their animosity, they had grown into a stronger threat to him and his kingdom.

(v. 20) Repay evil for good attack me: David disclosed the evil intentions of his enemies. They opposed him because he was pursuing **good**. This reason for their **attack** made it even more disgraceful. Jeremiah had to deal with a similar response because he preached God's Word faithfully (Jer. 18:20). Peter urged his readers to expect mistreatment by their enemies (1 Pet. 4:14-16).

(v. 21) LORD: As David prayed, he called out to God using three different names for Him. First, he called out to the **LORD** (*Yahweh*), God's most sacred name. The name served to remind God's people that He had no beginning and no end and that He brought everything in the universe into being. This name also assured them that He would never **abandon** them (Deut. 31:6). For David, God's presence in his life mattered more than even the restoration of his health.

(v. 21) My God: The second name for God David used comes from the Hebrew word *Elohim*. This title can be traced all the way back to creation (Gen. 1:1ff). It also was used in the conversation between God and Moses at the burning bush (Ex. 3:1-15). That name emphasized the greatness of God and the power He exerted on behalf of His people. Such a precious name rendered honor

to God for everything He had done. Accordingly, David used it to beg God to **not be far** from him.

(v. 22) My Lord: The third name for God (*adonay*) highlights the majesty and sovereign authority of the **Lord**. This title is distinct from the small caps translation that renders *Yahweh*, but it was just as meaningful, as David cried out for **help**.

In his heart, David believed that he could still call on God to be his **salvation**. He counted on God's grace and humbled himself before the sovereign God who ruled with complete authority. God alone would be the One who would deliver him and grant him forgiveness and victory.

Praying Scripture

Psalm 38:21-22

Spend time praying Scripture using Psalm 38:21-22. Read the verses, then respond to these questions:

- How does God reveal Himself in these verses?
- How should I respond to what He reveals?

Example: Ask God to help you examine your life for sinful habits and practices that are tearing you down. Seek His forgiveness and thank Him for never abandoning you.

During the session, invite adults to pray this Scripture, as well. You and the adults in your group can also take advantage of the Explore the Bible Prayer Guide. This QR code also appears on page 68 of the *Personal Study Guide*.



Explore the Bible Prayer Guide

Scan here for a weekly prayer guide based on this quarter's Bible passages.

EXPLORE Psalm 38:18-22



APPLICATION POINT: When we experience conviction, we should respond by confessing our sins to God and seeking His forgiveness.

READ: Invite a volunteer to read **Psalm 38:18-22** as the group listens for the first verb.

ASK: What does it mean to confess our iniquity?

RECAP: To emphasize the meaning and significance of confession, share the following from page 84 of the PSG: *David knew the Lord and trusted in Him. Therefore, he knew that instead of excusing his sin, ignoring his sin, or living in continued anxiety because of it, what he needed to do was confess his sin to God, trusting that the Lord would be faithful to forgive him (see 1 John 1:9).*

RESPOND: Distribute copies of **Pack Item 14** (*Handout: Our Forgiving God*). Give adults a few minutes to review the handout. Then allow a few volunteers to share things that stick out to them from the article. Highlight the importance of remembering that God is eager and able to forgive our sins.

ASK: What obstacles might keep us from confessing our sins to God? (PSG, p. 85)

PRAY: Provide copies of **Pack Item 8** (*Handout: Praying Scripture in Psalms*). Lead adults to take a few minutes to follow the “Praying Scripture” prompts on page 98 of the Leader Guide.



NOTES

Group Activity Option

Bible Skill

Guide the group to work in teams of three or four and complete the Bible Skill activity on page 85 of the PSG. Provide copies of a Bible dictionary to each team. Suggest one member of the team read the article on salvation before the group answers the questions. After a few minutes, review the questions and allow time for volunteers to share their responses.

CHALLENGE

- SUMMARIZE:** Review these points from Apply the Text on page 86 of the *Personal Study Guide*:
- *The Holy Spirit convicts us so that we will recognize and turn from our sin.*
 - *We can expect conviction of sin to create a range of emotions in us, including guilt and sorrow.*
 - *When we experience conviction, we should respond by confessing our sins to God and seeking His forgiveness.*
- SHARE:** Direct attention to the inside cover of the PSG. Lead the group to examine God's plan for each person. Note that for believers, salvation is secure but unconfessed sin can still hinder their relationship with Christ. Let the group know that if anyone does not have a personal relationship with Jesus, you are available to talk with them after Bible study or during the week.
- DISCUSS:** Review the second set of questions on page 86 of the PSG. Lead a brief discussion on ways believers experience conviction and how they should respond to His leading.
- PRAY:** Encourage adults to use **Pack Item 8** (*Handout: Praying Scripture in Psalms*) to reflect on and memorize Psalm 38:21-22 during the week. Close the session in prayer, asking God to help adults acknowledge and confess their sins to Him.

After the Session

Set up a time to meet with individuals who respond to your invitation to talk more about their relationship with Jesus. Be prepared to follow up on the session by sharing your own testimony through a text or email to the entire group. Remind them again that you are willing to speak with anyone who is wrestling with questions about salvation, confession, and faith.

LEADER BLOG



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God's Forgiveness

SESSION 10

Psalm 32:1-11

Memory Verse: Psalm 32:1

Experiencing God's forgiveness leads to worship.

Apologizing can be tough. Doing something that hurts another person might appear harmless at first, but a guilty conscience usually accompanies a sense of shame. Justifying the action doesn't work either. In time, the need for an apology surfaces, and then it lingers. However, the dread of admitting guilt delays the act of confessing it. But delaying an apology only feeds the agony.

A quick and sincere apology makes better sense. It opens the door to forgiveness and healing. It even can foster a renewed relationship. Similarly, confessing our sin to the Lord gives way to worship and gratitude for His forgiveness. As you dig into David's testimony about confession in Psalm 32, think about how confession has reconnected you with God and others. Take steps to foster that kind of reconciliation again as God leads and be prepared to share about God's forgiveness during the Bible study time.



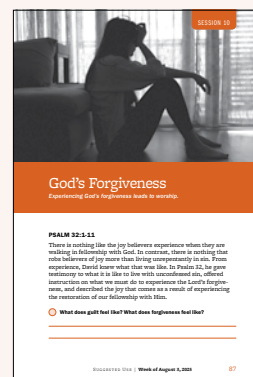
Weekly Podcast: Group Leader Training

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There is nothing like the joy believers experience when they are walking in fellowship with God. In contrast, there is nothing that robs believers of joy more than living unrepentantly in sin. From experience, David knew what that was like. In Psalm 32, he gave testimony to what it is like to live with unconfessed sin, offered instruction on what we must do to experience the Lord's forgiveness, and described the joy that comes as a result of experiencing the restoration of our fellowship with Him. (PSG, p. 87)

What does guilt feel like? What does forgiveness feel like?



Understand the Context (Psalm 32)

Like Psalm 38, Psalm 32 is a penitential psalm. The psalms in this category develop the theme of confession and forgiveness. Penitential psalms express the remorse of believers who come to grips with their sins. Also, they convey the necessity of confession, the grace of forgiveness, and the joy of a renewed relationship with God.

Interesting details appear in the introduction—or superscription—of Psalm 32 and provide helpful information about its context. First, the word “maskil” means “instruction” in Hebrew. Accordingly, the psalm was probably used to teach God’s people about the value of confession. Second, the phrase “of David” identifies the author. David may have written the psalm after he struggled with sin that he had tried to hide.

David wrote another psalm in which he developed the same theme of confession and forgiveness. Psalm 51 pointed specifically to his affair with Bathsheba and the murder of her husband, Uriah. According to 2 Samuel 11-12, King David tried to hide his sin, but the prophet Nathan exposed his evil behavior.

In response, David confessed his sin to God. Psalm 51 reflects David’s journey from contrition to repentance to forgiveness. It also underscores his eagerness to encourage God’s people so they would follow his example of humility and nourish an intimate walk with the Lord.

With Psalm 32, David struck the same chords of repentance and forgiveness. The beginning of the psalm includes an affirmation of joy over having been forgiven. It lists a series of Hebrew words that described sin, which set the stage for a testimony about the devastating effects of unconfessed sin in a person’s life (Ps. 32:1-2).

David’s words reveal that misery accompanies any attempt to keep sinful behavior a secret. After describing his personal agony in that regard, the psalmist went on to portray the value of coming clean before God through confession and repentance. The grace of God’s forgiveness relieves the burden of guilt that sin inevitably fosters (32:3-5).

Having been forgiven, the psalmist encouraged God’s people not to keep their sins to themselves. They would be wise to avoid the tendency to be stubborn. Such stubbornness prevents people from experiencing the deliverance from sin that comes from confessing sin to God. In addition, genuine confession leads to sincere worship.

Confessing sin also renews one’s relationship with Him. Again, those who experience God’s forgiveness are able to worship Him with hearts filled with joy because He makes them right with Him (32:6-11).

As you read Psalm 32, identify the words and phrases that express the blessing of forgiveness. Identify the words and phrases that express the burden of unforgiven sin. (PSG, p. 88)



PREPARE: Make copies of **Pack Item 10** (*Handout: Authors of the Psalms*) and **Pack Item 14** (*Handout: Our Forgiving God*). Hang **Pack Item 1** (*Map: Kingdom of David and Solomon*) on a focal wall.

INTRODUCE: Explain that you are going to say a word aloud and adults should respond with a word that has an opposite meaning. Affirm that there may be more than one correct answer. Share these words: *up, stale, before, serene, sadness*. Note that “happiness” might come to mind for “sadness,” but joy is more powerful than happiness.

DIRECT: Guide the group to the opening paragraph on page 87 of the PSG.

DISCUSS: **What does guilt feel like? What does forgiveness feel like?** (PSG, p. 87)

EXPLAIN: Share that today’s session focuses on Psalm 32. Distribute copies of **Pack Item 10** (*Handout: Authors of the Psalms*) and direct adults to identify the human writer of this chapter. (David) Tell the group that in Psalm 32 David expressed great joy in the forgiveness he experienced from God.

Author	Number of Psalms
David	73
Asaph	12
Solomon	1
Anonymous	11
Total	97

Psalm	Verse	Meaning
32	1	Blameless and innocent, the Lord has forgiven me all my iniquities.
32	2	He has forgiven all my lawless deeds and covered all my sins.
32	3	For my heart was secretly rebelling against you, O Lord, and I was lying in wait for your anger.
32	4	But your truth, O Lord, has prevailed, and you have forgiven my iniquity and not destroyed me.
32	5	Be merciful to me, O Lord, for my heart is afflicted, and my eyes are filled with tears.
32	6	For my heart is afflicted, and my eyes are filled with tears, because of the Lord's anger against me.
32	7	For my heart is afflicted, and my eyes are filled with tears, because of the Lord's anger against me.
32	8	For my heart is afflicted, and my eyes are filled with tears, because of the Lord's anger against me.
32	9	For my heart is afflicted, and my eyes are filled with tears, because of the Lord's anger against me.
32	10	For my heart is afflicted, and my eyes are filled with tears, because of the Lord's anger against me.
32	11	For my heart is afflicted, and my eyes are filled with tears, because of the Lord's anger against me.
32	12	For my heart is afflicted, and my eyes are filled with tears, because of the Lord's anger against me.
32	13	For my heart is afflicted, and my eyes are filled with tears, because of the Lord's anger against me.
32	14	For my heart is afflicted, and my eyes are filled with tears, because of the Lord's anger against me.
32	15	For my heart is afflicted, and my eyes are filled with tears, because of the Lord's anger against me.
32	16	For my heart is afflicted, and my eyes are filled with tears, because of the Lord's anger against me.
32	17	For my heart is afflicted, and my eyes are filled with tears, because of the Lord's anger against me.
32	18	For my heart is afflicted, and my eyes are filled with tears, because of the Lord's anger against me.
32	19	For my heart is afflicted, and my eyes are filled with tears, because of the Lord's anger against me.
32	20	For my heart is afflicted, and my eyes are filled with tears, because of the Lord's anger against me.
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32	66	For my heart is afflicted, and my eyes are filled with tears, because of the Lord's anger against me.
32	67	For my heart is afflicted, and my eyes are filled with tears, because of the Lord's anger against me.
32	68	For my heart is afflicted, and my eyes are filled with tears, because of the Lord's anger against me.
32	69	For my heart is afflicted, and my eyes are filled with tears, because of the Lord's anger against me.
32	70	For my heart is afflicted, and my eyes are filled with tears, because of the Lord's anger against me.
32	71	For my heart is afflicted, and my eyes are filled with tears, because of the Lord's anger against me.
32	72	For my heart is afflicted, and my eyes are filled with tears, because of the Lord's anger against me.
32	73	For my heart is afflicted, and my eyes are filled with tears, because of the Lord's anger against me.



NOTES

Group Activity Option

Music

Secure a copy of the lyrics for “Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee” (*Baptist Hymnal*, 2008, No. 13). Enlist three volunteers to each read one stanza of the hymn. Sing the first verse as a group. Highlight the following: “Melt the clouds of sin and sadness; Drive the dark of doubt away; Giver of immortal gladness, Fill us with the light of day.” Share that according to King David in Psalm 32, such joy and gladness are found through the forgiveness that comes when we confess and repent of our sin.

Joy (Ps. 32:1-2)

1 How joyful is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered! **2** How joyful is a person whom the LORD does not charge with iniquity and in whose spirit is no deceit!

(vv. 1-2) How joyful: The Hebrew word for joyful (*‘esher*) has also been translated “blessed” or “happy.” This word appears often in Psalms, and it conveys elation and gratitude for receiving a gracious gift. However, such a blessing from God does not always produce immediate happiness. Rather, David signaled that while God always cares for the ones He blesses the happiness sometimes is delayed.

(v. 1) Transgression: A **•transgression** (*pasa*) implies a rebellion against authority. The Hebrew wording suggests the actions of a disobedient, defiant heart. A transgression could begin with a solitary act of rebellion; but, over time, unchecked rebellion runs the risk of becoming a lifestyle.

Disdainful transgressions involved acts of rebellion against other people. However, the most serious transgressions involve one’s relationship with God. When His people transgress His law, they rebel against Him. The prophets warned about the consequences of transgressions against God (see Isa. 66:24; Hos. 7:13; Amos 1-2).

Key Word

Forgiven

In Hebrew, the word for “forgive” (*nasa*) suggests lifting something up or carrying something off. A most comforting term for portraying forgiveness, it’s used in the Old Testament approximately 650 times. For example, in Genesis 7:17, the word helps to describe how the flood water lifted Noah’s ark. The term also appeared in 2 Samuel 5:21, when David instructed his soldiers to carry away Philistine idols and dispose of them.

The image is similar to how David described God removing sin as far as the east is from the west (Ps. 103:12) and the prophet Micah’s words that He sends sin to the bottom of the sea (Mic. 7:19). The ancient Israelites were commanded to visually represent the removal of sin by sending away a scapegoat as part of the Day of Atonement observance (Lev. 16:6-10).

(v. 1) •Sin: This particular Hebrew word (*chataah*) conveys the idea of aiming at a target but missing the mark or falling short of it. The word first appears in Scripture when God confronted Cain before he killed his brother, Abel. God warned Cain that **sin** crouched “at the door” (Gen. 4:7). Generations later, when God instructed His people regarding the law, He used this word to characterize sin against Him (Lev. 4:14). Paul incorporated the Greek equivalent (*hamartano*) into his statement that everyone had sinned by falling short of God’s glory (Rom. 3:23).

David testified that God had **covered** his sin. It’s not that God hid or ignored David’s sin. Rather, He forgave it. Jesus’s blood provides the ultimate covering for our sin.

(v. 2) Does not charge with iniquity: God intended for His people to take the straight path of obedience as they followed Him. But they committed **•iniquity** (Heb. *awon*) against Him. Instead of honoring Him, they took a twisted, perverted path of disobedience and self-satisfaction.

God instructed Aaron to lead His people to confess their iniquities against Him and to guide His people so they could see for themselves that He would not hold them accountable for their sins. David found freedom in confession. The wording around **charge** implies a debt that is forgiven.

(v. 2) No deceit: David recognized that our hearts are the core of the sin problem. Sin starts with a heart that is filled with **deceit**. The prophet Jeremiah stated that the human heart is desperately wicked (Jer. 17:9), and the apostle Paul quoted several Old Testament passages to underscore the incredible depravity of our hearts (Rom. 3:9-18).

In contrast, Jesus affirmed the complete lack of deception in the heart of Nathanael (John 1:47). He was not perfect or sinless, but Jesus recognized a heart inclined toward the things of God rather than a heart overwhelmed by evil.

EXPLORE Psalm 32:1-2

1



APPLICATION POINT: We can celebrate God's forgiveness knowing that He no longer counts our sin against us.

OVERVIEW: Use Understand the Context (PSG, p. 88) to provide background for Psalm 32. Direct attention to **Pack Item 1** (Map: Kingdom of David and Solomon) to help set the historical context for the psalm. Share that Psalm 32 is a penitential psalm authored by David.

READ: Invite a volunteer to read **Psalm 32:1-2** as the group listens for what produces genuine joy.

IDENTIFY: Direct adults to work in pairs to identify words with similar meanings. (Examples: *transgressions, sin, iniquity, deceit.*) Encourage them to use the content for verses 1-2 (PSG, p. 89) to identify distinguishing characteristics of each word. Allow time for volunteers to share. Use information from page 104 of the Leader Guide to supplement the conversation.

ASK: What is the source of joy in these verses? What would it take for you to personally experience this joy? (PSG, p. 90)

TRANSITION: David found incredible joy in forgiveness and responded to God with praise and worship. But while he rejoiced in forgiveness, he never forgot how sin had tormented him.



NOTES

Group Activity Option

Word Studies

Divide the group into teams of two to four people. Provide a Bible dictionary for each group. Assign each team one of the following words: *transgressions, sin, iniquities*. (NOTE: For larger groups, more than one team can work on the same word. For smaller groups, an individual can be a team.) Instruct each team to use the dictionary to clarify the meaning of its word and to share their research briefly. Point out how these words indicate disobedience toward God. Discuss what Psalm 32:2 means by sin being “covered.”

Forgiveness (Ps. 32:3-5)

3 When I kept silent, my bones became brittle from my groaning all day long. **4** For day and night your hand was heavy on me; my strength was drained as in the summer's heat. *Selah* **5** Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not conceal my iniquity. I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the Lord," and you forgave the guilt of my sin. *Selah*

(v. 3) When I kept silent: David reflected on the long, agonizing days and nights when he tried to keep his sin to himself. He remained **silent** in the hope that his sinful behavior would not be exposed. While He said nothing about his sin, his body registered the harsh reaction to his silence. He groaned constantly, and His bones **became brittle**. In contrast, Job wisely asserted that he did not try to hide his sins (Job 31:33).

(v. 4) Your hand was heavy: As long as David tried to keep quiet about his sin, the Lord's **hand** of discipline pressed down hard on him. While the Hebrew word for **heavy** can imply honor (see Ex. 20:12), it also can describe a burden or weight that results from misfortune.

God's heavy hand rested on David's heart, bringing him under deeper conviction (John 16:7-8). The Lord urged him to give up on his futile attempt to cover up his sinful behavior. The spiritual struggle that resulted from this divine conviction took a heavy toll on the psalmist. It **drained** his energy and left him feeling as lifeless as a tender plant shriveling under an intense **summer's heat**.

Key Word

Selah

Bible scholars debate the exact meaning of this word, as well as its usage of the word within the context of Israelite worship. But it's found throughout the book of Psalms and three times in Habakkuk 3.

As a worship tool, it could have been used to prompt a moment of silent reflection or a musical interlude. It may also have directed God's people to consider what they had experienced in their time of worship or prompted worshipers to stand, kneel, or shout. Choirs may have used it as a cue to sing louder or softer.

(v. 5) I acknowledged: The Hebrew word for **acknowledged** (*yada*) has also been translated "confessed" (NLT) and suggests making something known. Here, David stopped trying to **conceal** his sin and made it known to the Lord. In the incident with Bathsheba, Nathan advised David to come clean regarding his adultery (2 Sam. 12:13). In the New Testament, the apostle John encouraged believers to confess their sins to the Lord and to find forgiveness in Him (1 John 1:9).

(v. 5) I will confess: Confessing sin always starts with a decision. Instead of burying his sin in his heart, David decided to come clean before the Lord. While it apparently took countless days and nights of sheer misery, he finally reached the point where he could make such a weighty decision. As a result of his honesty, the agony brought on by his silence would end. Once he held nothing back from the Lord, he encountered a God who had been willing to listen long before he was willing to confess.

(v. 5) You forgave: Acknowledging sin opened the door to forgiveness. Using the same Hebrew word for **forgave** (*nasa*) that he had used previously, David testified that the Lord picked up his sin and carried it away, never to be seen again. Just as remarkable, the Lord not only took away the sin, but He also removed the guilt that accompanied it. Therefore, the accountability and the punishment that would result from David's **sin** would be removed too. Jesus said that a believer who had been forgiven so lavishly would love Him just as extravagantly (Luke 7:47).



Thanksgiving Psalms

Bible scholars label Psalm 32 as a thanksgiving psalm. Find out how these reflective psalms draw believers closer to God.

EXPLORE Psalm 32:3-5

2



APPLICATION POINT: We can turn to God when we are burdened by our sins and count on His forgiveness.

READ: Lead the group to read **Psalm 32:3-5** silently, looking for the contrast between living with sin and finding forgiveness for sin.

ASK: Other than deep distress, what indicators let us know that we have sinned? (PSG, p. 91)

RECAP: Guide the group to discuss as pairs how God's heavy hand was actually a blessing for David. Summarize this content from page 90 of the PSG: "God's discipline of David, however, was an expression of His love. While discipline may be difficult to endure, the absence of discipline would be far worse. If God had not disciplined David, David would have proceeded down a spiritually treacherous path. The Lord loved David too much to allow him to continue to stray. So God used His loving, discomforting discipline to turn David around."

ASK: What was the result of David's confession?

SHARE: Emphasize that God is faithful to forgive us when we confess our sin and turn to Him. Distribute copies of **Pack Item 14** (*Handout: Our Forgiving God*). Provide a summary of the article, encouraging the group to read it in more detail after the session.



NOTES

Group Activity Option

Object Lesson: Before and After Pictures

Display "Before" and "After" pictures. Explain that advertisers frequently use "before and after" pictures to convince consumers that what they are selling really works. Encourage adults to suggest products that might use "before and after" photos. Briefly discuss how Psalm 32:4-5 reflects a "before and after" experience in David's life. Contrast his suffering before confession and the forgiveness he enjoyed after confession.

Instruction (Ps. 32:6-11)

6 Therefore let everyone who is faithful pray to you immediately. When great floodwaters come, they will not reach him. **7** You are my hiding place; you protect me from trouble. You surround me with joyful shouts of deliverance. *Selah* **8** I will instruct you and show you the way to go; with my eye on you, I will give counsel. **9** Do not be like a horse or mule, without understanding, that must be controlled with bit and bridle or else it will not come near you. **10** Many pains come to the wicked, but the one who trusts in the LORD will have faithful love surrounding him. **11** Be glad in the LORD and rejoice, you righteous ones; shout for joy, all you upright in heart.

(v. 6) Pray to you: After David finally confessed his sin, his relationship with the Lord was restored as he experienced the grace of His forgiveness. For that reason, he called on God's people to turn to Him in prayer instead of remaining silent about their sin. Confession promotes spiritual healing, but it also protects believers. Instead of being trapped by overwhelming currents of sin (Ps. 38:4), such **great floodwaters** are kept at bay. Prayers for forgiveness provide security.

Key Doctrine

God's Purpose of Grace

Believers may fall into sin through neglect and temptation, whereby they grieve the Spirit, impair their graces and comforts, and bring reproach on the cause of Christ and temporal judgments on themselves; yet they shall be kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation. (See Psalm 32:1-5; 1 John 1:7-9.)

(v. 7) My hiding place: Walking with the Lord does not mean that His people aren't met with trouble. But when trouble comes, we can depend on God to see us through any circumstance. God does not leave us by ourselves. Instead, He serves as our **hiding place**, a refuge of protection and deliverance. Centuries later, Paul taught believers to rest in the assurance that they were "hidden with Christ in God" (Col. 3:3).

(v. 8) My eye on you: The Lord reminded David of His watchful **eye** (see Prov. 15:3). His consistent oversight may have been threatening to anyone who rebelled against Him. But for His people, His careful attention offered a sense of assurance. For instance, He assured Joshua that He would watch

over the Israelites as they crossed the Jordan River (Josh. 4:23). Likewise, Peter encouraged believers to remember that the Lord would not let them out of His sight (1 Pet. 3:12).

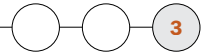
(v. 9) Do not be like a horse or mule: The challenge for God's people is not His involvement in their lives. Instead, the greatest obstacle is their own unwillingness to listen to and obey His instruction. Through David, the Lord warned them about being like a stubborn **horse** or **mule**. These animals require a **bit** in their mouths and a **bridle** around their heads to obey their master's commands. Similarly, believers always run the risk of nurturing stubborn hearts determined to rebel against Him (Jer. 5:23).

(v. 10) Faithful love: The stark contrast between **the wicked** and God's people is seen in the outcomes of their decisions. Those who rebel against the Lord can expect **many pains**. However, the one who trusts will be surrounded by **faithful love**. The Hebrew word used here (*hesed*) can also been translated as "goodness" or "lovingkindness." The Lord had promised His people that His love would never "be removed" (Isa. 54:10)

(v. 11) Be glad: The centerpiece of gladness was the Lord with whom His people had nourished an intimate relationship. As Hannah expressed her gratitude over the birth of Samuel, she testified that she rejoiced "in the LORD" (1 Sam. 2:1). Paul echoed Hannah's testimony when he instructed believers to "boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 5:11).

For God's people, intimacy with Him began when He made them right with Him. At one time, they were burdened by sin; but they turned to the Lord, confessed their sin, and became upright. Therefore, they could rejoice in Him (Phil. 4:4).

EXPLORE Psalm 32:6-11



APPLICATION POINT: Believers are to tell others how they can experience God's forgiveness.

READ: Invite a volunteer to read **Psalm 32:6-11** as the group listens for how to avoid the trap of sin.

ASK: What should be our first action when recognizing our sin?

EXAMINE: Lead the group to examine Psalm 32:6-11 for specific promises God revealed to David. As they share, record their responses on the board. Highlight any steps faithful people must take to experience these promises in their lives.

ASK: How would you describe God's forgiveness to an unbeliever? (PSG, p. 94)

RECAP: Highlight the images of a horse and mule in verse 9. To explain these images, summarize this content from page 93 of the PSG: "[God] warns [His people] to avoid being like a stubborn horse or mule that has no understanding and therefore needs to be controlled by a bit and bridle. Such stubbornness only leads to misery. Therefore, if necessary, God will prod His stubborn children to return to Him. But God's desire is for believers to turn back to Him willingly out of their yearning for Him—not under compulsion from Him."

SHARE: Note the contrast between the wicked and the righteous. Challenge adults to live in a way that allows them to enjoy God's faithful love rather than exposing themselves to the pain of sin.

NOTES

Group Activity Option

Bible Skill

Direct adults to complete the Bible Skill activity on page 94 of the PSG. An important principle of Bible study is that Scripture interprets Scripture. After they have compared the passages as instructed, allow a few volunteers to share what resonated with them. Highlight the common themes of confession and forgiveness. Give adults a few minutes to speak with God silently about an unresolved sin in their lives.

CHALLENGE

- SUMMARIZE:** Review these points from Apply the Text on page 95 of the *Personal Study Guide*:
- We can celebrate God's forgiveness knowing that He no longer counts our sins against us.
 - We can turn to God when we are burdened by our sins and count on His forgiveness.
 - Believers are to tell others how they can experience God's forgiveness.
- ASK:** **How can and should believers celebrate and express their joy in response to God's forgiveness?** (PSG, p. 95)
- SHARE:** Note that the opposing pictures of the devastation of sin and the joy of forgiveness should challenge us to let others know about what God has done in our lives—and what He can do for them as well.
- PRAY:** Distribute index cards and pencils to each person. Read aloud Psalm 32:5. Describe this verse as a turning point in David's life. Encourage the group to write their own prayer based on this verse. Close the session by sharing your own prayer based on Psalm 32:5 back to God.

After the Session

Text or email an encouraging word to the group to let them know you are praying for them. Encourage them to spend time during the week reading Psalm 32 and reflecting on the key themes in the chapter. Urge them to deal with any unconfessed sin that might be causing them pain or hindering their relationship with God. Let them know that you are available to talk with anyone who is struggling.

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God's Care

SESSION 11

Psalm 23:1-6

Memory Verse: Psalm 23:1

God is our good Shepherd who leads us daily

For too many people, God comes in handy only on special occasions. They keep their distance from Him until they need Him to solve a problem, heal an illness, or act when they've run out of options. This misguided perspective keeps them from wanting to know Him for who He really is.

For believers, however, a personal walk with Him gives us the settling assurance that He's constantly present and intimately involved with our lives. Like a good shepherd, He cares for us and leads us every day. Through the good times and the bad, we experience His leadership and protection.

As you reflect on this familiar passage from Psalm 23, consider what it means to be one of God's sheep. Recall times when He has led you through difficult times. Be prepared to share that testimony during Bible study this week.



Weekly Podcast: Group Leader Training

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The Roman philosopher Lucius Apuleius is credited with being the first to say, “Familiarity breeds contempt.” It means people can become so familiar with something that they begin to lose appreciation for it; they start taking it for granted. There are few Bible passages more recognized than Psalm 23. In one sense, this familiarity is a good thing. In another sense, such a familiarity with the psalm may result in a failure to carefully examine and appreciate the gold mine that is Psalm 23. (PSG, p. 96)

Can you give an example from your life that illustrates the saying, “Familiarity breeds contempt”?



Understand the Context (Psalm 23)

Thanksgiving psalms provide believers with a precious tool for expressing gratitude to the Lord in light of His countless blessings to us. Psalm 23 belongs in this category of psalms. Some of the psalms in this category work well for corporate worship (Pss. 106; 124; 129), while others seem to be written for personal worship (Pss. 9; 30). Psalm 23 may have been written for personal worship, but it serves as an extremely effective resource for congregational worship too.

King David wrote Psalm 23, but the exact setting in which he penned it cannot be determined. He could have written it after the Lord led him through a particularly difficult ordeal victoriously. His reflection on what he experienced along the way produced gratitude in his heart. In turn, he wrote a simple, but profound, tribute to the Lord who cared for him.

The word pictures in the psalm resonated with God’s people who lived in those days. They knew how shepherds worked with their flocks. Therefore, they could relate to the image of a shepherd that David incorporated into the psalm. And, of course, David knew what shepherding involved since he grew up tending to his father’s sheep (1 Sam. 16:11).

Centuries later, Jesus used the image of a shepherd in His instruction. He called Himself the Good Shepherd and contrasted a shepherd who cared for his flock with a hireling who ignored the needs of the sheep (John 10:11-13).

People living in the days of David also understood the role of an attentive host. Preparing and serving food to guests had a place of high regard in Israel. The festival occasions each year provided God’s people with opportunities to enjoy being together in banquet settings. These feasts usually included a generous display of food and devoted attention to the guests who had been invited. A gracious host would not overlook any details. The host would care for the guests before the meal began and would make sure the guests had everything they needed during the event.

Jesus made excellent use of banquets in His ministry. Such dinners gave Him opportunities to teach God’s Word and apply it to the guests (Mark 14:18-19; Luke 14:7-11; John 13:23). He declared that His day of complete victory would be marked by a marriage supper (Rev. 19:9).

In Psalm 23, David incorporated both images as he described the blessings that the Lord had showered on him. The image of a caring shepherd portrayed God in terms that people could grasp (Ps. 23:1-4). So did the image of a loving host who gave personal attention to the banquet guests (23:5-6).

As you read Psalm 23, highlight the ways David declared his dependence on God. (PSG, p. 97)



PREPARE: Prior to the session, display **Pack Item 4** (Poster: *God in the Psalms*). Make copies of **Pack Item 7** (Handout: *Psalms Time Line*).

INTRODUCE: Write the phrase “Familiarity breeds contempt” on the board. Talk about what that saying means. Enlist a volunteer to read the introductory paragraph on page 96 of the PSG.

ASK: **Can you give an example from your life that illustrates the saying, “Familiarity breeds contempt”?** (PSG, p. 96) Lead a brief discussion on how Psalm 23 might feel “too familiar” to many believers.

SHARE: Distribute copies of **Pack Item 7** (Handout: *Psalms Time Line*) and share that David wrote Psalm 23. Remind adults that David had been a shepherd, so he understood the symbolism behind what he wrote.

TRANSITION: *In today’s session we take a fresh look at this familiar psalm. As we do, challenge yourself to go beyond what feels “familiar.” Ask God to help you gain a better understanding of the character of God and how you should respond to Him as your loving and protecting shepherd.*

OUR GOD IS OUR...	
Shield	Psalms 33; 28; 119:114
Rock	Psalms 18:2; 42:9; 95:1
King	Psalms 52; 44:4; 74:12
Shepherd	Psalms 23; 1:1
Judge	Psalms 7:11
Refuge	Psalms 46:1; 63:7
Fortress	Psalms 31:3; 71:3
Avenger	Psalms 26:1
Creator	Psalms 8:3,4
Deliverer	Psalms 17:39-40
Healer	Psalms 103:2
Protector	Psalms 5:11
Provider	Psalms 78:23-29
Redeemer	Psalms 107:1

PSALMS TIME LINE		
1500-1000 BC David writes Psalm 23 while fleeing from King Achish. He is a shepherd and knows the symbolism of a shepherd.	1000-500 BC The psalm is passed down through generations of Jews. It is a part of the Hebrew Bible.	500-100 BC The psalm is translated into Greek by the Septuagint. It is a part of the Greek Bible.
1000-500 BC The psalm is translated into Latin by the Vulgate. It is a part of the Latin Bible.	500-100 BC The psalm is translated into Syriac by the Peshitta. It is a part of the Syriac Bible.	100-500 AD The psalm is translated into Old Church Slavonic. It is a part of the Old Church Slavonic Bible.
500-1000 AD The psalm is translated into Old English. It is a part of the Old English Bible.	1000-1500 AD The psalm is translated into Middle English. It is a part of the Middle English Bible.	1500-1800 AD The psalm is translated into Modern English. It is a part of the Modern English Bible.
1800-1900 AD The psalm is translated into Modern English. It is a part of the Modern English Bible.	1900-2000 AD The psalm is translated into Modern English. It is a part of the Modern English Bible.	2000-2025 AD The psalm is translated into Modern English. It is a part of the Modern English Bible.

NOTES

Group Activity Option

Music

Secure a copy of the lyrics and a recording of “Psalm 23 (Surely Goodness, Surely Mercy),” performed by Shane and Shane. Play the recording as the group arrives. To start the session, read the chorus aloud and introduce the study of Psalm 23. Encourage adults to share words or phrases they know from Psalm 23 and why those are so special to them. Urge them to ask God to help them look at this familiar passage with new eyes.

God's Provision (Ps. 23:1-3)

1 The LORD is my shepherd; I have what I need. **2** He lets me lie down in green pastures; he leads me beside quiet waters. **3** He renews my life; he leads me along the right paths for his name's sake.

Key Word

My shepherd

David pointed to God by using the holiest name in the Hebrew language (*Yahweh*, spelled **LORD**). The name suggested God's eternal existence and His sovereignty in making everything exist. He compared the extraordinary God to an ordinary shepherd. David humbly acknowledged his role as a sheep under the authority of **my shepherd**.

Shepherds were common in ancient Israel. Abraham and the other patriarchs had been shepherds before Jacob moved to Egypt. Later, Moses had spent time as a shepherd, as had David. The image of one who cares, provides, and protects is a fitting illustration for God.

(v. 1) I have what I need: The Hebrew phrase related to emptiness or deprivation. With God, neither of these is an issue. His flock has nothing to fear when it comes to provision.

As a shepherd himself, David knew what it meant to take care of a flock. On their own, sheep are helpless and defenseless. They need everything the shepherd can provide. Thinking about God as a shepherd nourished confidence that He would meet the needs of His people. (See also John 14:14; 15:7).

(v. 2) Green pastures: The dry climate in Israel only allowed for patches of grass here and there. A caring shepherd would always look for meadows with enough grass to feed his flock. These **green pastures** would give the sheep a safe place for them to take nourishment without being frightened. The Lord spoke through the prophet Ezekiel about recovering His scattered flock and taking them to the green pastures where He could nourish them (Ezek. 34:13-14).

(v. 2) Quiet waters: Like grass, water also could be in short supply. Therefore, a shepherd would search for an adequate source of water for the sheep. In his search, he faced another challenge.

Sheep often were startled easily by running water. To provide **quiet waters**, shepherds often used walls of rocks to build a tranquil pool where the sheep could drink.

(v. 3) He renews: The Hebrew word for **renews** (*shub*) suggests turning back or being returned. It paints a picture of a sheep wandering from the flock. A caring shepherd would notice that it had strayed and would search for it. Once he found the sheep, he would lead it back to the flock. Isaiah said that the Lord would bring His people back to Him after they had wandered (Isa. 49:5). Later, Jesus told a parable about a shepherd who searched for one lost sheep (Luke 15:3-7).

(v. 3) Right paths: The shepherd's care involved guidance as well as restoration. The flock couldn't see where a path would take them, but the shepherd knew exactly which **paths** to take. God's people affirm His wisdom when they follow His leadership (Prov. 4:11). By following His guidance, they become people of integrity (14:2). In contrast, turning from the Lord puts a person on the path of "ruin and wretchedness" (Isa. 59:7).

(v. 3) His name's sake: Shepherds earned a good name with their reputations. If they diligently cared for their sheep, people understood that they were reliable. They had a good name. However, if they ignored the flock, their reputations suffered along with the sheep.

Similarly, the Lord's good name was honored because He led His people well. His guidance wasn't just for their benefit. He also did it for **his name's sake**. He wanted His people—His flock—to serve as a testimony to Him and His character.



Our Good Shepherd

Shepherds are found throughout Scripture. Learn more about this important symbol in Psalm 23.

EXPLORE Psalm 23:1-3

1



APPLICATION POINT: Believers can rest in the fact that God knows and provides for our needs—both physical and spiritual.

MINI LECTURE: Direct adults to briefly review Understand the Context (PSG, p. 97). Discuss how kings were viewed as shepherds and how prophets used shepherds to point people to the Messiah. Direct attention to **Pack Item 4** (Poster: *God in the Psalms*), highlighting God as Shepherd, as well as Protector and Provider.

READ: Invite a volunteer to read **Psalm 23:1-3** as the group listens for words that reveal the Lord as a Provider. Encourage the group to share the words they identified. Record the responses on a whiteboard. Use information from page 114 of the Leader Guide to provide more details.

ASK: How can you best position yourself to receive God's provision? (PSG, p. 100)

RECAP: Encourage adults to consider what it means to walk in "right paths." Share this content from page 100 of the PSG: *Following the Lord means developing a lifestyle that will become a lifetime of habits that, when taken altogether, culminate in a righteous life, well-lived for his name's sake. God's faithfulness to lead His people along right paths to get them to their destination reflects His reputation.*

TRANSITION: David expressed confidence in the Lord's provision. He was sure of God's presence in both good and hard times.

OUR GOD IS OUR...	
Shield	Psalms 3:3, 28:7, 119:114
Rock	Psalms 18:2, 42:9, 95:1
King	Psalms 5:2, 44:4, 76:12
Shepherd	Psalms 23:1, 95:1
Judge	Psalms 7:11
Refuge	Psalms 46:1, 62:7
Fortress	Psalms 31:3, 71:3
Avenger	Psalms 26:1
Creator	Psalms 8:1, 6
Deliverer	Psalms 37:39-42
Healer	Psalms 30:2
Protector	Psalms 5:11
Provider	Psalms 78:23-29
Redeemer	Psalms 107:2

NOTES

Group Activity Option

Agree/Disagree

Label one side of the room "agree," and the other side "disagree." Direct each person to move to the side of the room that most closely represents his/her reaction to the following statements:

- Every person has the same needs and wants.
- Finding the right path is difficult.
- Daily life leads to self-dependence.

For each statement, allow time for adults to share why they chose a particular side of the room.

God's Protection (Ps. 23:4)

4 Even when I go through the darkest valley, I fear no danger, for you are with me; your rod and your staff—they comfort me.

(v. 4) *The darkest valley:* The picture painted by David here has provided immense comfort to believers for centuries. It has helped hurting and grieving people navigate life's most difficult challenges. His description had the shepherd in front of his flock. Of course, he knew the dark path well, but the darkness had a haunting tendency to frighten his sheep. Even though he led them down the right path, he didn't prevent them from going into the **darkest valley**. The prophet Jeremiah used a similar word picture in his message to God's people as they faced frightening ordeals in the days leading up to the Babylonian captivity and the fall of Jerusalem (Jer. 2:6).

(v. 4) *Fear no danger:* Along with God's provision, David affirmed His protection. As he encountered serious troubles in his life, he felt certain that no **danger** would come to him. The Hebrew word for "danger" (*ra'*) can also be translated as "evil." It suggests serious harm, but the term was used broadly in the Old Testament. For instance, in Exodus 32, it was used to describe both a catastrophic judgment arising from God's wrath (v. 14) and the wickedness of Israel (v. 22).

(v. 4) *You are with me:* The key to David's confidence was the abiding presence of the Lord. The knowledge that God was **with me**, prevented David from being frightened by the ordeals he faced. Isaiah encouraged God's people to rest in the certainty of His abiding presence. He assured them that the Lord would take them through perilous circumstances (Isa. 43:1-2). Likewise, Paul pointed believers to the assurance of the Lord's presence to protect them in their darkest moments. Believers can depend on the adequacy of His grace to help them (2 Cor. 12:9).

(v. 4) *Your rod:* Shepherds carried two important tools. The first was a **rod**, which was a straight stick of wood that also could serve as a club. A shepherd, like David as a young man, would use it to defend the flock against predators like bears or lions (1 Sam. 17:34-37).

(v. 4) *Your staff:* The other tool was a **staff**, a longer stick that had a crook at the end of it. A shepherd used a staff to guide sheep and to keep them under his control. Shepherds also used a staff to rescue sheep that had fallen into ravines or gotten tangled in thickets of weeds or vines.

A shepherd's staff played a memorable role in the history of Israel. The Lord prepared Moses for his encounter with Pharaoh by showing him how his staff would be used to perform miracles (Ex. 4:1-5). When Moses confronted Pharaoh, he followed the Lord's direction and performed miracles with his staff (7:9-12; 8:16-18). His staff was also a key element in the parting of the Red Sea (14:15-16) and of God providing water from a rock. (17:5-7)

(v. 4) *They comfort me:* In the Hebrew language, the word translated **comfort** (*nacham*) expressed the assurance of safety and protection. In 2 Samuel 12:24, the word was used in the context of a mother's grief. David comforted Bathsheba after the loss of their first child.

Seeing the Lord through the eyes of a shepherd helped David to convey the same sense of comfort that accompanied His presence. Therefore, the simple tools that a shepherd would use became word pictures. They reminded God's people of the comfort He gave them as He consistently protected, guided, and even disciplined them.

Key Doctrine

God the Father

God is Father in truth to those who become children of God through faith in Jesus Christ. He is fatherly in His attitude toward all men. (See Matthew 6:9-13; 7:11.)

EXPLORE Psalm 23:4



APPLICATION POINT: Believers are to choose faith over fear.

READ: Read aloud Psalm 23:4, directing the group to listen and reflect on dark times they have faced in their lives.

DISCUSS: Lead adults to name circumstances of life that are like walking through “the darkest valley.” Share with the group a difficult time in your own life when you felt God’s presence and how His presence helped minimize your fear.

RECAP: Use information from page 116 of the Leader to expand on the meaning of God’s rod and staff. Summarize the following content from page 100 of page PSG: “David knew his Shepherd was always with him, even in the most difficult and dangerous circumstances of life. Knowledge of this truth wiped away his fears. David emphatically stated that His Shepherd’s rod—used to correct, protect, and count the sheep—and His staff—used to guide the flock and rescue those sheep that got themselves into tight spots—comforted him.”

REFLECT: **When have you needed God’s protection or guidance? How did He provide for you?** (PSG, p. 101)

REFERENCE: Direct attention to the words and phrases about God’s provision previously listed on the board.

ASK: **How does knowing that God provides give us faith that He will protect us in the midst of fearful circumstances?**

NOTES

Group Activity Option

Object Lesson: Umbrella and Poncho

Put on a rain poncho. Hold up an umbrella and slowly open it. Explain that an umbrella offers protection from pouring rain, but an umbrella is of little use in rainy windy conditions. Note that the poncho offers protection even when the wind is blowing. Share that in Psalm 23:4, God’s presence with His sheep allays fear and strengthens our faith, regardless of the circumstances.

God's Care (Ps. 23:5-6)

5 You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. **6** Only goodness and faithful love will pursue me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD as long as I live.

(v. 5) You prepare: Turning from the image of the Lord as a shepherd, David began to think of Him as the attentive host of a banquet. Spiritually speaking, the Lord filled the banquet table with plenty of delicious food that He prepared Himself. David's description of the Lord as a banquet host resonated with Isaiah's declaration about the feast He would prepare for His people (Isa. 25:6-8). The shift from a shepherd to a host came abruptly in the psalm. However, the Lord's loyal love, provision, and protection remained the central themes of both images.

(v. 5) My enemies: For the ancient Israelites, hospitality played a pivotal role in their lives together. David portrayed the Lord as a host who did not forget anything when it came to hospitality. He prepared the banquet, and He also provided safety to his guests so they could enjoy themselves without fear of being attacked.

David had many **enemies** as he reigned over the kingdom of Israel. The possibility of enjoying a banquet meal and being protected from them underscored the Lord's careful attention and protection. It also supported the Lord's promise to turn David's enemies into his footstool (see Ps. 110:1).

(v. 5) You anoint: In another act of hospitality hosts would **anoint** the heads of banquet guests. The olive **oil** poured onto the scalp provided refreshing relief to guests who traveled long distances in the hot, dry climate. The Lord as banquet host demonstrates His care for His people by giving them a refreshing sense of His presence. Incidentally, Samuel anointed David with oil to underscore God's call on his life to serve as the king of Israel (1 Sam. 16:10-13).

(v. 5) My cup overflows: As David reflected on the Lord's careful attention to him, he brought up yet another demonstration of hospitality. In those days, the banquet host made sure to keep the cups of the guests filled to the brim. A cup that **overflows** served as a fitting description of

the Lord's lavish grace to His people. David used the description in other psalms as a testimony to God's grace (Ps. 16:5) and deliverance (116:13).

(v. 6) Goodness and faithful love: David mentioned two expressions of the Lord's care that he depended on for his future. God's **goodness** and His **faithful love** would be loyal friends who would never grow tired of pursuing him wherever life took him.

These two friends had been loyal to the Lord's people. Centuries earlier, the Lord declared that He would show His goodness to Moses (Ex. 33:19). Also, Moses sang about the Lord's faithful love after He parted the Red Sea (15:13). David affirmed what Moses had already experienced in his walk with the Lord.

(v. 6) I will dwell: As David looked into the future, he rejoiced over the promise of God's ongoing presence. Dwelling in the **house of the LORD** suggested never living apart from His presence. Paul had that cherished privilege in mind when he encouraged believers to look forward to their home in heaven (2 Cor. 5:1; 1 Tim. 4:8). Jesus assured His disciples that He would prepare a place for them (John 14:2-3). David's affirmation about God's house assured His people that He will never abandon the sheep of His pasture (see Ps. 94:14; Isa. 41:10; Matt. 28:18-20; Heb. 13:5).

Bible Skill

Use other Scripture to help understand a Bible passage.

Read the following verses about God as Shepherd: Isaiah 40:11; John 10:11-15; Hebrews 13:20; and 1 Peter 2:21-25. How do these passages deepen your understanding of what it means to say "the LORD is my shepherd"?

EXPLORE Psalm 23:5-6



APPLICATION POINT: Because God cares for His people, we can rely on His goodness and love.

READ:

Invite a volunteer to read Psalm 23:5-6 as the group listens for how the psalm describes God's care for His sheep.

STATE:

While Psalm 23:1-4 pictures the Lord as our Shepherd, He takes on a different role in verse 5. He serves as our gracious host, though He continues to provide and protect. In Israel's culture a host assumed full responsibility for the safety of his guests. A host provided protection and care for his guest. In verse six, we see another transition as David declares that he wants to spend the rest of his days worshiping the Lord.

ASK:

How have you experienced God's goodness and love?
(PSG, p. 102)

DISCUSS:

Guide the group to work in pairs. Direct them to read Romans 8:35-39 and to discuss the following question: **How do the promises found in Psalm 23 and Romans 8 encourage believers to follow God and put their trust in Him?** After a few minutes, allow times for volunteers to share what they discussed with their partners. Emphasize God's blessings and David's joy at the promise of God's presence.

PRAY:

Allow adults a few minutes for silent prayer. Encourage them to thank God for His provision and protection—both as a shepherd and as a host. Suggest they bring their greatest need to Him as they pray.

NOTES

Group Activity Option

Journal Entry

In teams of two to four people, instruct the group to develop a journal or blog entry they might write sharing their reflections of Psalm 23. Provide each team with paper and pencils. Be prepared to share an entry you would write as a model. Allow time for the teams to share their entries with the group.

CHALLENGE

- SUMMARIZE:** Review these points from Apply the Text on page 103 of the *Personal Study Guide*:
- *Believers can rest in the fact that God knows and provides for our needs—both physical and spiritual.*
 - *Believers are to choose faith over fear.*
 - *Because God cares for His people, we can rely on His goodness and love.*
- RELATE:** Corrie Ten Boom survived a German concentration camp and went on to write a book called *The Hiding Place* about her experiences. A quote attributed to her aptly describes Psalm 23: “If you look at the world, you’ll be distressed. If you look within, you’ll be depressed. If you look at God, you’ll be at rest.”¹ Psalm 23 gives us a picture of the joy and peace found in resting in the Lord as the Good Shepherd.
- DISCUSS:** As a group, discuss the first set of questions on page 103 of the PSG. Talk about the difference God’s provision, protection and guidance make in our lives as believers. Challenge adults to use the second set of questions on page 103 of the PSG as a prayer prompt during the week.
- PRAY:** Read Psalm 23:1-6 as a closing prayer.

After the Session

Send each adult in the group a text or email during the week. Encourage them to pray for one another and to remember that God cares for them in all situations. Remind them that this session’s memory verse is Psalm 23:1. Suggest they use this verse to reflect on God’s role as their shepherd and their role as His sheep. Urge them to incorporate the verse in their prayer time as they continue working to memorize it.

ADULT COMMENTARY



Want to go deeper in your study?
Explore the Bible Adult Commentary
offers additional information and biblical
insights related to the key passages.
(Available for purchase at **Lifeway.com**.)

EXPLORE  THE BIBLE.

1. https://azquotes.com/author/1659_Corrie_Ten_Boom, accessed 06 November 2024.

God's Greatness

SESSION 12

Psalm 139:1-4,7-16

Memory Verse: Psalm 139:1

Because God has made us, He knows us personally and is with us always.

Loneliness strikes people everywhere. We expect folks who live in remote corners of the world to say that they get lonely; but the truth is, individuals who live in crowded apartment complexes struggle with loneliness as well. Even though we have people all around us, we can still suffer with the ache of feeling alone. While everyone may know us, nobody knows us well.

The Lord gives hope when we wrestle with loneliness. He created us, so He knows us perfectly. Furthermore, He is with us wherever we go, and He nudges us to give ourselves to Him so we can know Him better. As you dig into these verses from Psalm 139, take some time to thank God for always being there and for knowing you better than you know yourself. Also, pray for the adults in your Bible study who may struggle with loneliness. Ask God to use this session to give them peace and the assurance of His presence in their lives.



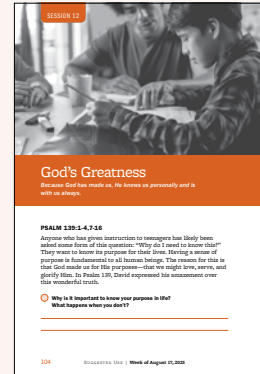
Weekly Podcast: Group Leader Training

Scan here to gain insights about this week's study on Apple podcasts, Spotify, Google Podcasts, or at goExploreTheBible.com/adults-training.



Anyone who has given instruction to teenagers has likely been asked some form of this question: “Why do I need to know this?” They want to know its purpose for their lives. Having a sense of purpose is fundamental to all human beings. The reason for this is that God made us for His purposes—that we might love, serve, and glorify Him. In Psalm 139, David expressed his amazement over this wonderful truth. (PSG, p. 104)

**Why is it important to know your purpose in life?
What happens when you don’t?**



Understand the Context (Psalm 139)

Psalm 139 provides us with a robust testimony of gratitude to the Lord. The testimony highlights the phenomenal blessing of His intimate presence and hands-on involvement in the lives of believers. For that reason, it belongs in the category of thanksgiving psalms.

The psalm has been credited to David, whose poetry served the kingdom well. With Psalm 139, he contributed a valuable resource for both public and personal worship. The introduction—or superscription—of the psalm indicates that he wanted the worship leader to put it to music for the choir. The theme of celebrating God’s greatness made it an excellent choice for a worship song.

At the outset of the psalm, David shared his personal testimony about how well the Lord actually knew him. God was aware of absolutely every detail of David’s daily activities. Nothing escaped His notice. The Lord observed what the king was doing, where he was going, and even what he was thinking. The reach of His awareness left David overwhelmed with amazement (139:1-6).

Next, David pondered how far he would need to go if he wanted to escape the Lord’s reach. His reflections took him to the realm of extremes. And, in the end, he concluded that the Lord would be with him no matter where he went or how far he traveled (139:7-12).

David then connected the Lord’s faithful presence with His intimate involvement in preparing him for God’s mission, even before he was born.

He asserted that the Lord formed him into infancy during his mother’s pregnancy. In the seclusion of her womb, the Lord worked meticulously and lovingly to fashion his body and to bring him into the world (139:13-16).

After David shared his testimony about the Lord’s presence, he asked God for His continued help and made an appeal regarding wicked people. The king opposed evildoers because they detested the Lord, and their behavior proved it. Their disdain for God came out in what they said about Him and how they rebelled against Him. David also despised them because of their murderous hatred. For that reason, he asked the Lord to do away with them for good.

However, David didn’t ask for the Lord’s help in retaliating against them. Instead, he asked Him to keep looking into *his* heart and revealing anything that would put him on the path of wickedness. In particular, he asked the Lord to scrutinize his thoughts. After all, God knew David’s thoughts better than he knew them himself.

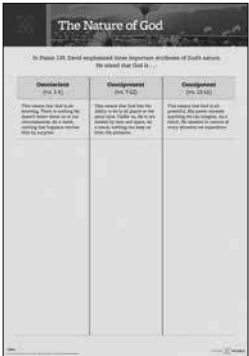
With the Lord guiding his heart and mind, David could avoid taking the path of wickedness. Instead, he would stay on the positive path that would make an eternal difference in his life.

As you read Psalm 139:1-4,7-16, identify what the verses reveal about God. Then identify what these verses reveal about you. (PSG, p. 105)



PREPARE: Prior to the session, make copies of **Pack Item 9** (*Handout: Organizing the Psalms*). Hang **Pack Item 6** (*Poster: The Nature of God*) on a focal wall.

- ASK:** **Why is it important to know your purpose in life? What happens when you don't?** (PSG, p. 104)
- READ:** Direct a volunteer to read the opening paragraph on page 104 of the PSG as the group considers the purpose God has for their lives.
- SHARE:** Command the digital voice assistant on your phone to find the answer to a question or to tell a joke. Point out that technology makes it easy to uncover some information or to get answers to certain questions. But questions of “why?” often require more than our phones can provide.
- CONTEXT:** Note that David had questions, and Psalm 139 offers a testimony of what God taught him as he sought answers. Direct attention to **Pack Item 9** (*Handout: Organizing the Psalms*) and point out that this is a psalm of thanksgiving.
- TRANSITION:** *David found a lot to be thankful when it came to God’s work in his life. The first thing he identified related to God’s character, especially the fact that He knew him so well.*



NOTES

Group Activity Option

Music
Secure a copy of the lyrics “How Great is Our God” by Chris Tomlin (*Baptist Hymnal*, 2008, No. 5). Enlist someone to read each stanza and someone else to lead the group in singing the chorus. Lead the group to spend a few minutes considering the wonderful attributes of our God. Ask: **How does knowing how amazing God is make a difference in your life each day?**

His Knowledge (Ps. 139:1-4)

1 LORD, you have searched me and known me. **2** You know when I sit down and when I stand up; you understand my thoughts from far away. **3** You observe my travels and my rest; you are aware of all my ways. **4** Before a word is on my tongue, you know all about it, LORD.

(v. 1) Searched . . . known: The Hebrew word for **searched** (*haqar*) carries the idea of a tireless examination. It was used in court settings to describe a thorough investigation (Prov. 18:17). Similarly, the Hebrew word for **known** (*yadah*) indicates an intimate level of knowledge that results in a personal understanding of an individual.

David's friends may have known him personally, and his enemies may have considered themselves experts at discerning his plans. However, only God could look into the deepest recesses of his soul and know him absolutely.

(v. 2) You know: David moved from past tense to present tense as he continued to write this psalm. The track record of God's intimate involvement in his life gave way to a testimony of His ongoing devotion that never wavers. As growing believers, we can identify with this part of David's testimony because we can attest to the reality of God's non-stop watchfulness over us.

Because He sees us perfectly, He doesn't miss even the seemingly insignificant details in our daily lives. Whether we **sit down** or **stand up**, God knows us and is present with us. That should provide a degree of comfort to believers who might be tempted to wonder if God really knows or cares about them and their struggles.

Key Doctrine

Man

Man is the special creation of God, made in His own image. (See Genesis 1:26-27; Psalm 8:3-6.)

(v. 2) My thoughts: Along with perfect eyesight, God has faultless insight. The public as well as the private features of our day get His attention. Even more astonishing, He understands what we're thinking. The ministry of Jesus toward His critics and even His disciples validates that He perceives our **thoughts** (Matt. 9:4; Luke 9:47). Even though

He has a heavenly perspective that appears to be remote, He knows us well enough to discern our undisclosed intentions (John 2:24-25).

(v. 3) You observe: In the Hebrew language, the word for **observe** (*zarah*) suggests that the Lord sifts through the details of our daily routines in order to separate the good from the bad (Matt. 3:12). In other words, He scrutinizes the path that we take each day (Job 31:4). He watches us as we work and as we rest. Working customarily takes place during the day, while resting ordinarily happens at night. Consequently, not a moment of our existence slips beyond His notice.

(v. 3) All my ways: Since the Lord understands everything we think, we can rest assured that He's also aware of everything we do. He is familiar with our **ways**. The Hebrew wording suggests a road being traveled or a journey being made.

The Bible provides examples of God's awareness of what we're doing even when we think we're concealing them from everyone. According to 2 Samuel 12:9-12, He knew that David tried to cover up his adultery with Bathsheba. Similarly, Jesus knew perfectly the secret steps that Judas had taken to betray Him (John 13:2).

(v. 4) Before a word: While God's awareness of our ways can leave us with a troubling sense of conviction, His discernment regarding our actions can also give us a calming sense of comfort and assurance. Our thoughts can be difficult to express verbally, but He does not need a **word** from us to untangle our minds. We might get frustrated when our words fall short of expressing what we're actually thinking (Matt. 12:35-37). But we can be grateful that the Lord still knows our thoughts completely (Heb. 4:12-13).

EXPLORE Psalm 139:1-4



APPLICATION POINT: Believers can praise God for His knowledge of them.

- CONTEXT:** Use Understand the Context (PSG, p. 105) to provide an overview of Psalm 139. Highlight God’s care and personal interest in each believer.
- READ:** Invite a volunteer to read **Psalm 139:1-4** as the group listens for how many times the word “know” appears in some form.
- LIST:** Direct attention to **Pack Item 6** (Poster: *The Nature of God*) for a definition of omniscient. Under the “Omniscient” column write: *thoughts, words, actions*. Direct adults to read through the verses again silently and to consider how they reveal God’s omniscience. Allow time for volunteers to share. Record their responses on the poster.
- DISCUSS:** Lead the group to turn to a neighbor and discuss how realizing that God knows all our thoughts, words, and actions might make us feel.
- ASK:** **What do these verses reveal about God’s care for us?** (PSG, p. 107)
- TRANSITION:** *Recognizing how God is all-knowing and still cares about each believer is sometimes overwhelming. It should lead us to praise Him for His omniscience.*



NOTES

Group Activity Option

Object Lesson: Do Not Enter Sign
Display a sign that says “Private: Do Not Enter.” Allow adults to suggest places that might have such a “keep out” sign. Share that sometimes we might like to put a sign like that on our lives to keep God at arm’s length. Explain that Psalm 139 makes it clear there is nothing that God doesn’t know about our lives. Share that while we can keep other people away at times, God always knows our words and our actions. Discuss how God’s omniscience should affect our everyday lives.

His Presence (Ps. 139:7-12)

7 Where can I go to escape your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? **8** If I go up to heaven, you are there; if I make my bed in Sheol, you are there. **9** If I fly on the wings of the dawn and settle down on the western horizon, **10** even there your hand will lead me; your right hand will hold on to me. **11** If I say, “Surely the darkness will hide me, and the light around me will be night”—**12** even the darkness is not dark to you. The night shines like the day; darkness and light are alike to you.

(v. 7) *Where can I go:* David asked the same question in two separate but similar ways: **Where can I go?** and **Where can I flee?** The parallelism emphasized the fact that it is impossible to **escape** God’s presence. God’s Spirit, as well as His presence, represented His intensely personal involvement in the lives of His people.

The prophet Jonah learned the only appropriate answer to the question raised in this verse. He tried to run away from God, but his attempt failed completely (Jonah 1:3-10).

Key Words

Heaven . . . Sheol

David speculated on where he possibly could go to escape the Lord’s presence. The use of **if** suggests two extreme destinations. Going to **heaven** meant traveling to God’s dwelling place. Jesus also referred to heaven as His Father’s home (John 14:2), while the writer of Hebrews associated it with the priestly ministry of Jesus (Heb. 4:13).

In contrast, making one’s bed in **Sheol** implied entering the dwelling place of the dead. The Hebrew word can be translated hell and typically refers to the final state of the wicked. Even in such a desperate place, the Lord holds full power and sovereign authority (Amos 9:2).

(v. 9) *Wings of the dawn . . . western horizon:* As he continued to speculate, David raised the possibility of visiting the most extreme locations imaginable to the ancient Jewish mind. From Israel, going east suggested heading toward the sunrise at **dawn**. Anyone planning to go in that direction would never reach their destination. Similarly, going toward the **western horizon** would meet the sea. The depths of the Mediterranean inevitably would halt their progress.

(v. 10) *Even there:* The reality of the Lord’s presence made David’s speculation entirely unreasonable. God would be present in even the most extreme locations. In fact, He would be waiting for the arrival of anyone who would have considered themselves to be out of His reach.

Not only would He be present when they arrived, but He also would be there to help them (Isa. 41:13). He would **lead** them so they would take the wise path and go in the right direction. In those days, a person’s **right hand** was seen as a symbol of strength and power. The Lord would use His right hand to protect those who came to Him.

(v. 11) *If I say:* Another **if** statement ushered in speculation pertaining to **darkness** and **light**. If anyone could have escaped the light, they would have wondered if they were beyond the Lord’s reach. Of course, light always drives darkness away. Therefore, hiding in the darkness was wishful thinking at best. Beyond the reach of light, a person could use the darkness as something like a blanket. In turn, the darkness would obscure the light. Covered in darkness, eventually day would become like night. But, as David would reveal, this was just a hypothetical argument rather than a real-life possibility.

(v. 12) *Alike to you:* Such speculation failed to factor in a couple of critical realities. First, the **light** of the Lord would never be limited. His light would always drive **darkness** away completely. Second, the distinction between light and darkness would never present a challenge for God. He created both (Gen. 1:4-5), and He used both within the scope of His perfect wisdom and eternal plans. From His perspective, they are **alike**. As a result, no one can cover themselves with darkness in an attempt to hide from Him (Job 34:22).

EXPLORE Psalm 139:7-12



APPLICATION POINT: Believers can be comforted by God’s presence.

READ: Read aloud **Psalm 139:7** as the group considers how they would answer David’s questions.

ASK: Would your answer be the same for both questions? Where do you think people today go to escape God’s presence?

READ: Invite a volunteer to read **Psalm 139:8-12** as the group listens for David’s description of the places God would be with him.

RECAP: Summarize these sentences from page 108 of the PSG to explain the format David used to emphasize God’s omnipresence: “David uses merisms to make his point. Merisms are polar opposites used together in words or phrases in order to express totality, completeness, or the whole.”

LIST: Direct the group to **Pack Item 6** (*Poster: The Nature of God*) and examine the definition for omnipresent. Encourage adults to list the merisms that highlight God’s omnipresence. Remind adults that David’s point was that it is impossible to hide from God or escape His presence. Note that while God’s consistent presence might terrify those trying to hide from Him, it offers genuine comfort for those who trust Him.

ASK: When has God’s presence provided comfort or peace for you? (PSG, p. 110)



NOTES

Group Activity Option

Comparing Verses

Divide the group into three teams, assigning each team one of the following Scriptures to read. Direct the teams to analyze how Psalm 139 relates to each of the passages: Genesis 3:8-13; Jonah 1:1-4; and Acts 5:1-6. After a few minutes, allow each team to share. Point out that in each situation, people tried to hide from God or lie to God. Discuss: *How do people today try to hide from God? Why does God’s omnipresence create fear for some people?*

His Power (Ps. 139:13-16)

13 For it was you who created my inward parts; you knit me together in my mother's womb. **14** I will praise you because I have been remarkably and wondrously made. Your works are wondrous, and I know this very well. **15** My bones were not hidden from you when I was made in secret, when I was formed in the depths of the earth. **16** Your eyes saw me when I was formless; all my days were written in your book and planned before a single one of them began.

(v. 13) *It was you:* Turning from the reaches of the Lord's knowledge and presence, David gave his attention to God's power, His omnipotence. The Lord alone **created** him, including the details of his **inward parts**. The Hebrew wording used here (*kilya*) literally means "kidneys." In the ancient mind, it served as a symbol of the vital organs in a person's body. God brought David into the world and was orchestrating a plan for his life.

Key Truth

Sanctity of Human Life

Because God Himself gave David life and purpose, He alone deserved the credit for the growth and formation of David's unborn body inside his **mother's womb**. God honors life from conception to the grave, and He holds authority over every aspect of our lives. We are created in His image (Gen. 1:27), and He expects us to follow His example. As the *Baptist Faith and Message* (2000) states, we are called to "speak on behalf of the unborn and contend for the sanctity of all human life from conception to natural death" (Article XV, "The Christian and the Social Order").

(v. 14) *Remarkably and wondrously:* As David reflected on the miracle of his conception and birth, he responded with sincere worship rooted in humble adoration. He recognized that he was **remarkably and wondrously** created by the powerful hand of God; and the artistic, as well as technical, precision that went into his formation filled his heart with wonder. David's reflection on the mysterious perfection of the Lord's work gave way to wholehearted praise.

(v. 14) *Your works:* Like David, we should respond with awestruck praise when we contemplate the Lord's omnipotence in creating us. We marvel at His extremely personal investment in His strangely **wondrous** work that went into forming our bodies before our birth.

We're much more than nameless mammals who entered the world by chance. We're precious to the God who wove us into being. We are "his workmanship" (Eph. 2:10).

(v. 15) *Not hidden from you:* David suggested that the most secluded place in the world happened to be a mother's womb. Nobody would be able to see the bones of an unborn child as they developed. Still, even there, nothing was **hidden** from God. As our all-powerful Creator, He can see the formation of a baby's body. In fact, each baby's growing body rests in God's hands (Job 10:9-11).

(v. 16) *All my days were written:* As David continued to reflect on the mysteries that swirled around the formation of a baby's body, he noted that the Lord had a **book**. In this book, God has details of each person's life that have been **written**. Before a baby comes into the world, the Lord knows how long that individual will live and everything he or she will experience. Job also echoed David's observation, explaining that the Lord numbers our days (Job 14:5).

(v. 16) *Planned:* Like David, we're wise to acknowledge how God has authority over every aspect of our lives. Because of His initiative, the purpose of our lives has been **planned** according to His will and for His glory. In the Hebrew language, *yasar* suggests the work of an expert craftsman who created something that would serve a useful purpose. It was also used to describe God's creation of Adam in Genesis 2:7.

EXPLORE Psalm 139:13-16



APPLICATION POINT: Believers can be encouraged that God has purposely created them to serve Him.

READ: Read aloud **Psalm 139:13-16** as the group identifies how God is the God of creation and nothing is hidden from Him.

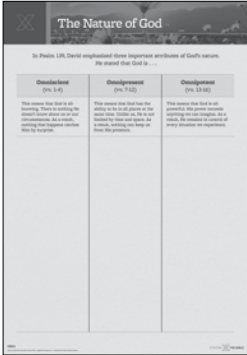
RELATE: David’s recognition that God had intricately created him for his purposes led David to praise God.

EXAMINE: Direct the group to **Pack Item 6 (Poster: The Nature of God)**. Read the definition for “omnipotent.” Encourage adults to read the verses again and to identify how David’s words reveal God’s omnipotence. Record their responses on the poster.

ASK: What do these verses say about the value of human life? How should we respond to that truth?

RECAP: To emphasize the sanctity of human life, share this passage from page 110 of the PSG: *God uniquely made us in His image to glorify Him, that is, to magnify His goodness and to reflect His beauty. God created human beings in this remarkable and wondrous way in order to fulfill this noble cause. Consequently, God’s creation of humanity in this way and for this purpose gives meaning and significance to every person, highlighting the sanctity of human life.*

ASK: How can you allow God to use your gifts and abilities for His kingdom this week? (PSG, p. 111)



NOTES

Group Activity Option

Bible Skill

Note that theologians speak of God as being omnipotent (all-powerful), omnipresent (present everywhere), and omniscient (all-knowing). Direct adults to number off as 1, 2, or 3. Assign the 1s to read the verses on God’s omnipotence from the Bible Skill activity on page 111 of the PSG. Instruct the 2s to do the same with God’s omnipresence, while the 3s examine God’s omniscience. After a few minutes, allow volunteers to report. Encourage adults to respond to the question at the end of the activity.

CHALLENGE

- SUMMARIZE:** Review these points from Apply the Text on page 112 of the *Personal Study Guide*:
- *Believers can praise God for His knowledge of them.*
 - *Believers can be comforted by God's presence.*
 - *Believers can be encouraged that God has purposely created them to serve Him.*
- DISCUSS:** Direct attention to the first set of questions on page 112 of the PSG. Lead a brief discussion on how God's presence might make someone uncomfortable. Emphasize the peace the guarantee of His presence can provide for those who trust Him.
- REFLECT:** Encourage adults to reflect on the second set of questions on page 112 of the PSG during the week. Challenge them to embrace God's intimate knowledge of them and His ongoing presence in their lives.
- PRAY:** Direct attention back to the responses on **Pack Item 6** (*Poster: The Nature of God*). Guide the group to pray silently about their response to God's omniscience, God's omnipresence, and God's omnipotence. Close the session by reading Psalm 139:24 as a prayer.

After the Session

Reinforce the session by texting or emailing the group. Remind them to look for opportunities to reflect the sanctity of life toward others. Encourage each person to consider how they are using their gifts and talents to serve others. Include Psalm 139:1 and challenge the group to memorize it during the week. Urge them to take comfort in the truth that God knows them and is always present with them.

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EXPLORE  THE BIBLE.

God's Righteousness

SESSION 13

Psalm 5:1-12

Memory Verse: Psalm 5:12

Believers can live with hope knowing that God will always do what is right and just.

Despair takes a toll on hope. When we're struggling with tough situations, we work to address them. When nothing changes, we let anxiety creep into our minds and hearts. It gets more entrenched when we think nobody seems to care.

Yet, when we cry out to the Lord for help, the examples of His grace in the past strengthen us in the present. That's when we settle into the confidence that we can trust Him. The reality that He will do what's right and just renews our hope.

As you prepare to lead this session from Psalm 5, reflect on God's grace in the past. Ask Him to help you apply your experiences with Him to a circumstance you're facing right now. Pray for the adults in your Bible study who may be on the verge of losing hope.



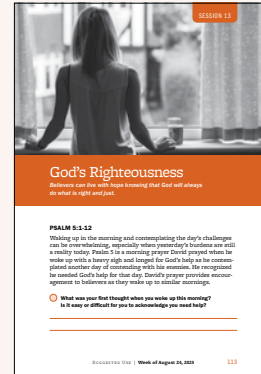
Weekly Podcast: Group Leader Training

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Waking up in the morning and contemplating the day's challenges can be overwhelming, especially when yesterday's burdens are still a reality today. Psalm 5 is a morning prayer David prayed when he woke up with a heavy sigh and longed for God's help as he contemplated another day of contending with his enemies. He recognized he needed God's help for that day. David's prayer provides encouragement to believers as they wake up to similar mornings. (PSG, p. 113)

What was your first thought when you woke up this morning?
Is it easy or difficult for you to acknowledge you need help?



Understand the Context (Psalm 5)

Psalms of lament express the deep despair of believers who cry out to God for help. Psalm 5 fits well into this category. It's a personal appeal for the Lord to intervene in a distressing situation. While it's a personal cry, it also serves a worshiping community. It gives a voice to the anguish that plagues God's people when they are on the verge of hopelessness.

In Ecclesiastes 4:1-3, Solomon gave an insightful description of people who had a cloud of despair hovering over them. Their painful distress resulted from cruel mistreatment. The vicious assaults of their oppressors had not abated. Further, they had no power to protect themselves and no one who would come to their defense. With no deliverance in sight, hope slowly leaked out of their hearts.

According to the information in the superscription of Psalm 5, David penned it and then passed it along to the worship leaders. He directed them to incorporate flutes as they added music to the words. In the psalm itself, he mentioned praying in the morning (Ps. 5:3). That suggests the psalm may have been used when God's people gathered in the morning at the tabernacle for worship and to offer sacrifices. While they may have used Psalm 5 as their morning prayer, Psalm 6 could have been their evening prayer.

David's emotional cry provides the heartbeat for Psalm 5. His adversaries had been relentless in their quest to destroy him. They did not appear

to be focused on taking his life. Rather, they seemed to be bent on destroying his reputation. In their assaults, they weaponized their words. They spread one lie after another about him while churning out empty flattery at the same time. Just as frustrating, nobody seemed to be able to stop them.

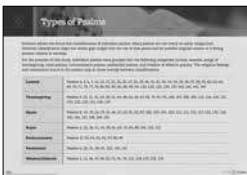
Psalm 5 gives growing disciples a simple but effective pattern for praying through distressful situations. The psalm begins with a heartfelt plea for God's help that grows out of a personal relationship with Him (5:1-3). Specifically, it emanates from the certainty that God always does what's right. Therefore, He cannot allow wickedness to come into His presence. However, His love for His people compels Him to welcome us. He will listen to us as we open our hearts to Him (5:4-7).

Our personal walk with the Lord prompts us to ask for Him to help us so we can keep on growing in righteousness. Our devotion to Him will keep us from behaving like our adversaries (5:8-9). We trust Him alone to hold them accountable for their wickedness (5:10). No matter what happens, we can always rejoice with hope because of His goodness to us.

As you read Psalm 5, identity what it reveals about God's character. (PSG, p. 114)



PREPARE: Hang **Pack Item 2** (*Poster: Types of Psalms*) on a focal wall. Make copies of **Pack Item 8** (*Handout: Praying Scripture in Psalms*).



INTRODUCE: To start the session, find a recording of “Reveille” and play it.

ASK: **What was your first thought when you woke up this morning?** (PSG, p. 113)

READ: Enlist a volunteer to read the opening paragraph on page 113 of the PSG.

DISCUSS: Allow a couple of volunteers to share times when a problem kept them up at night. Note that we are not alone when it comes to waking up to a stressful situation or difficult circumstance. Point out that this session is drawn from Psalm 5. Direct attention to **Pack Item 2** (*Poster: Types of Psalms*) and note that Psalm 5 is a lament psalm.



ASK: **Is it easy or difficult for you to acknowledge you need help?** (PSG, p. 113)

DISCUSS: Instruct a few volunteers to label their response using a scale of 1-5, with 1 being “Agree” and 5 being “Disagree.” Talk about what makes it hard to ask for help—both from other people and from God.

TRANSITION: *David made a habit of coming to God with his concerns. As we study this session, think about things that keep you up at night and why you need to bring them to God today.*

NOTES

Group Activity Option

Music

Secure a copy of the lyrics to “Great Is Thy Faithfulness” (*Baptist Hymnal*, 2008, No. 96) and be prepared to lead the group in reading the verses. After the last verse is read, sing the chorus together. Highlight the sentence, “Morning by morning new mercies I see; all I have needed Thy hand hath provided.” Share that today’s session finds David offering a morning prayer that confesses his struggles while affirming God’s faithfulness.

The Source of Righteousness (Ps. 5:1-6)

1 Listen to my words, LORD; consider my sighing. **2** Pay attention to the sound of my cry, my King and my God, for I pray to you. **3** In the morning, LORD, you hear my voice; in the morning I plead my case to you and watch expectantly. **4** For you are not a God who delights in wickedness; evil cannot dwell with you. **5** The boastful cannot stand in your sight; you hate all evildoers. **6** You destroy those who tell lies; the LORD abhors violent and treacherous people.

(v. 1) My sighing: As David dedicated himself to praying, he gave a significant clue about the reason he urged the Lord to **listen**. Something had happened to him that had left him in despair. It had been painful enough for his praying to turn into **sighing**, which in Hebrew suggests a burning sense of longing (*hagig*). Apparently, David's weak words could not convey completely the extreme agony in his heart. The apostle Paul also identified groaning with praying (Rom. 8:26). David's sighs indicated a measure of oppression or injustice that he had to endure.

Key Phrase

My King and my God

These are two titles that David used to exhibit his submission and humility to the Lord. Though he ruled over the kingdom of Israel as a king, the Lord reigned over him with even greater authority. The sovereign God who created the universe listened attentively to his anxious **cry**.

The Lord revealed Himself to David as an extremely personal friend as well as the supreme sovereign monarch. Meanwhile, David underscored the depth of his relationship with God by including **my** before each title. He had complete confidence that the God who loved him would answer His prayer.

(v. 3) In the morning: The heavy burden on David's heart prompted him to make prayer his first priority every **morning**. Daybreak would give him fresh hope that his prayer would be answered. He may have spent the early morning hours getting everything ready so he could make his way to the altar to worship and offer a sacrifice. Or he may have been thinking about going to the Lord personally to **plead my case**. Either way, he vowed that he would **watch expectantly** for the Lord's answer.

(v. 4) Wickedness: As David continued to pray, he underscored another character trait of God that set Him apart. The Lord refused to find pleasure in **wickedness**. Individuals who chose the paths of **evil** would never have access to Him.

David's affirmation of God's intolerance for wickedness placed him in the company of Old Testament prophets. For example, Isaiah recognized his sin when he found himself in God's presence (Isa. 6:1-5). Likewise, Amos warned God's people that they would be able to return to the Lord only when they hated evil (Amos 5:15). Habakkuk issued a similar warning (Hab. 2:17; 3:5).

(v. 5) The boastful: After rejecting evil in general, David identified specific behaviors that the Lord opposed. Those who give themselves to these expressions of wickedness **cannot stand** in God's holy presence. First on the list were **boastful** people. These are individuals who are consumed by selfish pride and have demonstrated with their behavior that they reject the Lord's ways. They hold no room for Him in their hearts. The Lord also placed such arrogance first on the list of behaviors that He abhorred in Proverbs 6:16-17.

(v. 6) You destroy: Lying happened to be next on the list of evil behaviors that the Lord hated (see also Prov. 6:17). David affirmed that the Lord hated **lies** and that dishonest people would face His destruction.

David also stated that **violent and treacherous people** could count on facing the Lord's judgment. The first term relates to individuals who long to shed blood, probably through murder. The second term relates to fraud and cheating. Apparently, David's arrogant enemies had told lies about him, along with threatening to harm him physically in some way.

EXPLORE Psalm 5:1-6

1



APPLICATION POINT: Believers can know for certain that God is fully righteous, and His acts will always be righteous.

OVERVIEW: Use Understand the Context (PSG, p. 114) to provide background for Psalm 5.

READ: Invite a volunteer to read **Psalm 5:1-3** as the group notes the requests in David's initial plea.

LIST: On the board, draw three parallel horizontal lines. Direct adults to list what David asked God to do in verses 1-3. Highlight the following words by recording them on the lines: *Listen-words; Consider-sighing; Pay attention-cry.*

RECAP: Summarize the following content from page 115 of the PSG: "Though a king, David knew he was under the Lord's authority. This earthly king was praying to the King of kings—his King. God alone is sovereign over all earthly affairs. Thus, David's intensity was balanced with submission, indicating that David's imperatives were not impertinent demands but reverent requests to his God."

READ: Read aloud **Psalm 5:4-6**, directing the group to listen for how David based his appeal on the character of God.

ASK: What were your first thoughts this morning? How do they compare with David's first thoughts (v. 3)? (PSG, p. 117)

TRANSITION: David recognized specific actions that displease God and chose to pursue righteousness instead.

NOTES

Group Activity Option

Relational

Divide the group into four teams. Using **Pack Item 4 (Poster: God in the Psalms)** assign each team three or four of the characteristics of God. Instruct the teams to consider how Psalm 5:1-6 highlights their assigned characteristics. Allow teams to share some of their results. Review the entire list by saying, "Our God is our . . ." and reading the list together.

The Benefit of Righteousness (Ps. 5:7-10)

7 But I enter your house by the abundance of your faithful love; I bow down toward your holy temple in reverential awe of you. **8** LORD, lead me in your righteousness because of my adversaries; make your way straight before me. **9** For there is nothing reliable in what they say; destruction is within them; their throat is an open grave; they flatter with their tongues. **10** Punish them, God; let them fall by their own schemes. Drive them out because of their many crimes, for they rebel against you.

(v. 7) Reverential awe: The Lord's adversaries had rebelled against Him. Therefore, He denied them access to His presence. In contrast, David testified that the Lord's **faithful love** prompted Him to welcome His people who came to worship Him. David testified that he found himself in sincere humility and awestruck adoration as he worshiped the Lord.

The king's desire was to **bow down** toward God's **holy temple**. Since there was no physical temple during David's reign, he could have been referring to the tabernacle (1 Chron. 6:31-32) or simply to God's presence in heaven. Either way, David was humbled and overwhelmed by **reverential awe** toward the Lord.

(v. 8) Lead me: The Lord demonstrated His faithful love by opening His arms to His people. In light of His faithfulness, David asked for help against **adversaries** who constantly harassed him in their wicked efforts to malign him. David intended to address their wickedness by walking closer with the Lord, but he knew that he couldn't do it alone. So, he asked God to **lead** him in the paths of **righteousness**. He sought spiritual wisdom and strength so he would not drift away from his desire to be upright.

(v. 8) Straight: David referred to his eagerness to be right with the Lord as taking the **straight** path. The Hebrew word used here suggests a smooth or pleasing way to go. The king asked God to keep him on the best path possible. John the Baptist later called on God's people to take the straight path as they awaited the Messiah's arrival (Matt. 3:3).

Here, David testified that God had to be the One who made the path straight. He could not do it himself. And if he stumbled, he would fall to violent and relentless enemies who chose a spiritually crooked path. He might even be tempted to adopt their wicked behavior himself.

Key Doctrine

Man

Only the grace of God can bring man into His holy fellowship and enable man to fulfill the creative purpose of God. (See Romans 3:22-24; Ephesians 2:8-10.)

(v. 9) Nothing reliable: In the Hebrew language, being **reliable** (*kun*) conveyed the idea of being firmly established or anchored. The prophet Isaiah used this word when he proclaimed that the Lord created the earth and "established it" (Isa. 45:18). Accordingly, the words of David's enemies had not been established and could not be trusted. Their false accusations and meaningless speech were nothing more than an outward display of the **destruction** they harbored in their hearts.

(v. 9) Their throat . . . their tongues: David's enemies concealed their destructive desires under a thick blanket of verbal deceit. The **throat** and **tongues** served as symbols of what people said. As the prophet Jeremiah declared, evil people often use words to deceive others (Jer. 9:3). Paul also called out the rebellion that motivates deceitful speech (Rom. 1:29-31; 3:10-13). David stated that the flattering words of his adversaries would have a deadly effect if left unchallenged.

(v. 10) Punish them: Some psalms are considered "imprecatory," which means they invoke curses and judgment on God's enemies. Here, David called on God to bring calamity on those who were plotting against him. He pleaded with the Lord to convict them of their crimes and to **punish them**. David asked the Lord to **drive them out** because of their endless rebellion.

EXPLORE Psalm 5:7-10



APPLICATION POINT: The righteous enjoy God's presence and depend on His guidance.

READ:

Invite a volunteer to read Psalm 5:7-10, dividing the group into two teams. Direct one team to listen for why David felt he could approach God with his concerns, while the other team listens for characteristics of David's enemies.

VISUAL:

Draw two columns on the board: *David* and *David's enemies*. Ask each team to share what they heard. Record their responses on the appropriate columns.

ASK:

As believers, how are we called to deal with our enemies?

RECAP:

Summarize this content (PSG, p. 119): "First, we must recognize who our true enemies are. The apostle Paul indicated that our ultimate struggle is against the devil and his forces (Eph. 6:12). Second, we must understand that people who are opposed to Christ and His Church are darkened in their understanding of the gospel "because of the hardness of their hearts" (4:18). They are blinded by Satan from "seeing the light of the gospel" (2 Cor. 4:4). Third, the Lord has instructed believers to pray for unbelievers (Matt. 5:44-48; Luke 6:27-38) and share the gospel with them so that their eyes will be opened. Jesus came for this purpose (Isa. 42:6-7; Acts 26:17-18)."

ASK:

In what area of life do you currently need God's guidance? (PSG, p. 118)

NOTES

Group Activity Option

Object Lesson: Rope

Display a piece of rope and enlist two volunteers to pull on opposite ends of the rope. Explain that in Psalm 5 the psalmist seems to be in a tug of war with his enemies. Emphasize that David recognized God as the source of righteousness and sought His help in conquering his enemies. Point out that he gave us a great example of trusting God's presence and depending on His guidance.

God's Blessing of Righteousness (Ps. 5:11-12)

11 But let all who take refuge in you rejoice; let them shout for joy forever. May you shelter them, and may those who love your name boast about you. **12** For you, LORD, bless the righteous one; you surround him with favor like a shield.

(v. 11) Take refuge in you: The presence of adversaries could not be denied, but their threats were not the last word in this psalm. David turned the focus of his testimony to God's people who had run to Him for **refuge**. Seeking safety in Him underscored a courageous act on the part of His people. It suggested that they had developed an intimate relationship with Him and clung to Him for protection. By contrast, their adversaries had been banished from His presence (Ps. 5:10).

(v. 11) Rejoice: Earlier David wrote about turning toward God with a groaning heart. His sighs spoke volumes about the desperation caused by his enemies' evil schemes (5:1). Here, he called on God's people to **rejoice** for all the Lord had done for them. Everyone who trusted the Lord should shift from troubled sighing to endless joy.

(v. 11) Shelter: This word has also been translated as "spread your protection." The Hebrew word for **shelter** (*sakak*) conveys the idea of providing security by way of fencing in, overshadowing, or covering. The Lord used the word as He instructed Moses how to build the ark of the covenant. In the construction process, He directed Moses to make two cherubim whose wings would cover the mercy seat (Ex. 25:20). In the same way, David asked the Lord to protect His people by overshadowing them with His presence. God covers His people with Himself.

(v. 11) Boast: God's people have good reason to brag on their King. In Hebrew, **boast** (*alatz*) implies exaltation and praise. For example, Moses exalted the Lord for His holiness and His miracles at the Red Sea (Ex. 15:11). The Lord alone deserves to be the sole object of the exaltation among His people because only He can protect them and give them peace.

Their exaltation also signifies their sincere love for Him. For believers in David's day, God's **name** was associated with the tabernacle (Deut. 12:5). So, loving His name was tantamount to turning to Him in worshipful submission.

(v. 12) Bless the righteous one: Previously, David had asked the Lord to guide him so he would grow in righteousness (Ps. 5:8). As he concluded the psalm, he returned to the priority of being **righteous**. He urged all of God's people to embrace the value of being in a right relationship with Him and to live with character that revealed what it means to live by His standards.

In Genesis 15:6, Abram (Abraham) placed his faith in the Lord. In response to this act of trust and submission, the Lord deemed him as righteous. In other words, Abram was considered to be right with God. In Psalm 5, David asked the Lord to **bless** everyone who surrendered to Him in the same way.

(v. 12) Favor: The Hebrew word rendered **favor** (*ratsown*) has also been translated as "kindness" (CEV) and "love" (NLT). It suggests being accepted or experiencing goodwill. The Lord used the word when He taught His people about the appropriate way to bring pleasing sacrifices to Him (Lev. 1:3; 19:5).

David asserted that the Lord accepted His righteous people with open arms because He loved them. In turn, His acceptance served as a **shield** to defend them from their enemies. The Lord's favor provided protection for His people (see also Ps. 91:4).

Praying Scripture

Psalm 5:12

Spend time praying Scripture using Psalm 5:12. Read the verse, then respond to these questions:

- How does God reveal Himself in this verse?
- How should I respond to what He reveals?

Example: Ask God to help you recognize His trustworthiness and protection. Thank Him for His blessings and for surrounding you with His favor.

EXPLORE Psalm 5:11-12

3



APPLICATION POINT: God will bless and protect the righteous.

READ: Invite a volunteer to read **Psalm 5:11-12** while the group notes how the psalmist uses the parallel structure.

IDENTIFY: Guide the group to examine the verses and identify three words that picture God as a Source of security. (*Refuge, shelter, and shield*)

ASK: **How did David's view of the character of God affect his perspective of his circumstances?** (PSG, p. 120)

HIGHLIGHT: *David ended the psalm expressing that even when facing enemies, he could rejoice and boast in the Lord. He knew that he was safe regardless of his circumstances.*

PRAY: Distribute copies of **Pack Item 8** (*Handout: Praying Scripture in Psalms*). Lead adults to take a few minutes to pray Psalm 5:12 using the “Praying Scripture” prompts on page 138 of the Leader Guide. Remind them that this is the memory verse for this session and encourage them to memorize it during the week.

SUMMARIZE: *David began the psalm crying out to the Lord and pleading with Him for protection. He appealed to God's righteousness and faithful love for guidance. In the end, David was able to offer praise and joy for the blessings he had received. We can follow his example by calling out to God and expressing our gratitude to Him for all He has done for us.*

NOTES

Group Activity Option

Bible Skill

Direct adults to work in groups of two or three to complete the Bible Skill activity on page 120 of the PSG. After a few minutes, review these questions about the people who came to Jesus: ***What caused their desperation? How did they turn to Jesus for help? What did Jesus do in response? What does this teach you to do with your despair? What does it teach you about Jesus's response?*** Allow volunteers to share their responses.

CHALLENGE

- SUMMARIZE:** Review these points from Apply the Text on page 121 of the *Personal Study Guide*:
- *Believers can know for certain that God is fully righteous, and His acts will always be righteous.*
 - *The righteous enjoy God's presence and depend on His guidance.*
 - *God will bless and protect the righteous.*
- DISCUSS:** Direct attention to the first set of questions on page 121 of the PSG. As a group, discuss how being a part of a Bible study can help adults connect with God's presence and guidance.
- CHALLENGE:** Encourage the group to read and reflect on the second set of questions on page 121 of the PSG during the week. Also, remind them to take advantage of **Pack Item 8** (*Handout: Praying Scripture in Psalms*) and to pray through other verses using the handout.
- PRAY:** Call on a pre-enlisted volunteer to close in prayer, thanking God for His faithful love and blessings.

After the Session

Reinforce the session by texting or emailing the group. Encourage them to look for opportunities to “boast” about the Lord and to rejoice in His righteousness. Remind the group that they can take their deepest concerns to God because He will always do what is right and just. Direct them to continue memorizing Psalm 5:12 and using **Pack Item 8** (*Handout: Praying Scripture in Psalms*) during their quiet times this week.

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God's Presence

SESSION 14

Psalm 42:1-11

Memory Verse: Psalm 42:1

God's presence brings peace and comfort even in times of adversity.

Water takes us from one extreme to another. When we don't get enough water, we're parched. However, when water overwhelms us, we run the risk of drowning. In a similar way, tough times can take us to extremes in our walk with God. His silence in the face of our struggles can leave us wondering if He's there. Or we wonder why He's allowing adversity to strike us. In those difficult days, we can count on Him to grace us with His peace. And we can depend on Him to settle us with His comfort.

As you dig into this final session from the book of Psalms, spend time thinking about times you've felt "parched" spiritually, as well as times when you've been overwhelmed by God's good grace. Thank Him for His comfort and look for ways you can challenge the adults in your Bible study to lean into His comfort as you lead this session,



Weekly Podcast: Group Leader Training

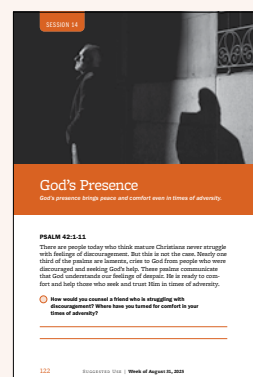
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There are people today who think mature Christians never struggle with feelings of discouragement. But this is not the case. Nearly one third of the psalms are laments, cries to God from people who were discouraged and seeking God's help. These psalms communicate that God understands our feelings of despair. He is ready to comfort and help those who seek and trust Him in times of adversity. (PSG, p. 122)

How would you counsel a friend who is struggling with discouragement?

Where have you turned for comfort in your times of adversity?



Understand the Context (Psalms 42–43)

Psalms 42 and Psalm 43 are considered lament psalms. They reflect the distress of a person who's crying out to God for help in a deeply discouraging situation. These two psalms also express sincere praise to God for the certainty of lasting hope that He alone can give.

Psalms 42 introduces the second of five sections—or books—in the Psalms. The second book includes Psalms 42–72. One of the distinguishing features of this section involves God's name. In the first book (Pss. 1–41), the writers referred to God as Yahweh. However, the psalms in the second section referred to Him as Elohim. Both names set Him apart as holy to His people.

The superscription—or introduction—of Psalm 42 includes helpful information about its purpose. In Hebrew, a “maskil” identified a psalm used for instruction. The “sons of Korah” signified a group of Levites who served as musicians in the tabernacle (Num. 26:11) and in the temple (1 Chron. 6:22,37; 2 Chron. 20:19). Psalms 44–49, 84–85, and 87–88 also underscored the extent of their investment in music during worship.

Psalms 42–43 have been taken together because of their distinctive connections. They share an emotional message about longing for God in adversity, but they're also connected structurally. The two psalms taken together can be divided quite naturally into three sections: 42:1-5; 42:6-11; and 43:1-5. Each section ends with the same refrain: “Why, my soul, are you so

dejected? Why are you in such turmoil? Put your hope in God, for I will still praise him, my Savior and my God.”

In Psalm 42:1-5, a thirsty deer portrays the depth of despair for the psalmist. He lamented his distressing situation. He had been removed from the temple, probably against his will, and he longed to return there. Just as frustrating, his enemies taunted him with a troubling question about God's concern for him. Even in his difficult circumstances, however, he continued to place his hope in God.

He returned to his lament in Psalm 42:6-11. He was engulfed in a torrent of God's mysterious ways that left him drowning in emotional and physical agony. Even so, he vowed that he would keep on praising God for His faithful love.

Once more, he cried out for God's help. In Psalm 43:1-5, he begged God to rescue him from his enemies who were using lies to assault him. At the same time, he asked God why he felt so alone. He pleaded with God to guide him in the right direction and looked forward to returning to the temple. Until then, he would continue to anchor his hope in God.

As you read Psalm 42, highlight any repeated words and phrases. What does the repetition of these words and phrases reveal about the pain the psalmist was experiencing? (PSG, p. 123)



PREPARE: Hang **Pack Item 2** (*Poster: Types of Psalms*) on a focal wall. Make copies of **Pack Item 10** (*Handout: Authors of the Psalms*).

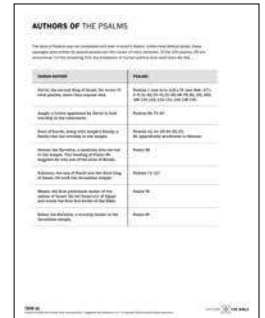
ASK: **How would you counsel a friend who is struggling with discouragement? Where have you turned for comfort in your times of adversity?** (PSG, p. 122)

READ: Discuss responses. Then, enlist a volunteer to read the opening paragraph on page 122 of the PSG.

DISCUSS: Affirm that feelings of discouragement or discontent can surround all of us at times. Guide the group to discuss some life situations that might lead to feelings of discouragement or despair. Distribute copies of **Pack Item 10** (*Handout: Authors of the Psalms*). Share that today's session comes from Psalm 42, written by the sons of Korah.

SHARE: Direct attention to **Pack Item 2** (*Poster: Types of Psalms*). Point out that this is categorized as a psalm of lament because it reflects a cry to God for help and deliverance.

TRANSITION: *If your heart is beating and your lungs are breathing, you'll be able to identify with the psalmist in Psalm 42. He longs for restoration and healing, just like all of us do at one time or another. As you study these verses today, consider how you can find peace and rest in God's presence, even during times of adversity.*



NOTES

Group Activity Option

Music

Secure a copy of the lyrics to “Have Faith in God” (*Baptist Hymnal 2008*, No. 508). Begin by asking the group what it means to have faith in God. Be prepared to share a brief personal experience of overcoming discouragement. Allow one or two volunteers to share times when their faith has been tested. Read the verses of the song chorally as a group and sing the chorus together.

In Times of Longing (Ps. 42:1-5)

1 As a deer longs for flowing streams, so I long for you, God. **2** I thirst for God, the living God. When can I come and appear before God? **3** My tears have been my food day and night, while all day long people say to me, “Where is your God?” **4** I remember this as I pour out my heart: how I walked with many, leading the festive procession to the house of God, with joyful and thankful shouts. **5** Why, my soul, are you so dejected? Why are you in such turmoil? Put your hope in God, for I will still praise him, my Savior and my God.

(v. 1) As a deer: The graphic image of a thirsty deer panting for water captured the desperation of the psalmist’s yearning for God. The parched animal’s frantic search for **flowing streams** of water had proven futile. Every stream had run dry. Likewise the writer felt a desire for God that had not been satisfied. The prophet Joel mentioned animals panting for water during a drought brought on by the Lord’s judgment (Joel 1:20).

(v. 2) Come and appear before God: The psalmist punctuated his **thirst for God** with his affirmation about the Lord’s presence. He longed for the day when he would **come and appear before God** once again for worship (see also Ex. 23:17).

Generations earlier, Joshua urged the Israelites to place their trust in the living God as they marched around Jericho (Josh. 3:10). Generations later, King Darius affirmed God when he saw the lions had not harmed Daniel (Dan. 6:26).

(v. 3) My tears: Memories of the past had brought the psalmist to tears. His heart had been broken to the point that he cried inconsolably and lost his appetite. His tears replaced the **food** he would have eaten normally. His grief was the result of his disconnect with God and His sanctuary.

(v. 3) Where is your God: Adding insult to injury, people in the psalmist’s life prodded him with an insulting question that burned a heart that had already been broken. With cruel cynicism, they questioned the presence and compassion of **your God**. From their perspective, God was nowhere to be found as the psalmist dealt with his awful crisis. The Jewish leaders exhibited that same brand of cruelty when they taunted Jesus as He suffered on the cross. (Matt. 27:39-43).

(v. 4) I remember: The heartbreaking memories of the psalmist as he worshiped God at the temple gave way to recollections of some joyful days too.

He could **remember** when he joined others during a **festive procession**. In those days, God’s people celebrated three major festivals each year: Passover (Ex. 34:18-26), Firstfruits (Lev. 23:4-44), and Shelters (Deut. 16:1-17). They celebrated these, in part, with **joyful and thankful shouts**.

(v. 5) Dejected: The psalmist’s pain placed him in good company of others in the Old Testament who grieved over God’s apparent silence. For instance, Hannah was despondent as Eli watched her weep for a child (1 Sam. 1:15). Also, God’s people were demoralized as they marched from Jerusalem into Babylonian exile (Lam. 2:17-19). The writer’s deep sorrow gave way to a conversation with himself. He challenged his soul to get past the paralyzing sadness and the spiritual restlessness that left him feeling **dejected**.

(v. 5) Hope in God: The psalmist determined that instead of being overwhelmed with sadness, he would take a step of faith. Accordingly, he ordered his soul to embrace God with a heart full of **hope** in Him (see Heb. 11:1). When he placed His faith in the living God, his hope had a durable resting place. In turn, lasting praise would replace the painful sorrow in his broken heart.

Key Doctrine

God the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit cultivates Christian character, comforts believers, and seals the believer unto the day of final redemption. The Holy Spirit’s presence in the Christian is the guarantee that God will bring the believer into the fullness of the stature of Christ. (See John 7:37-39; Romans 8:9-11; Ephesians 1:13-14.)

EXPLORE Psalm 42:1-5

1



APPLICATION POINT: Believers can seek God's Comfort in times of need.

CONTEXT:

Use Understand the Context (PSG, p. 123) to explain why scholars connect Psalms 42–43. Summarize this information for context: “The heading of these psalms indicate they are a “maskil,” a psalm of instruction meant to enlighten those who hear or read it. The “sons of Korah” were worship leaders in the temple. That said, the writer and specific occasion of Psalms 42–43 is unknown.”

READ:

Invite a volunteer to read Psalm 42:1-5 as the group listens for evidence of spiritual dryness.

ASK:

What do you desire more than anything else? If your consuming desire is for something other than God, how would your life change if you desired Him more than you desired anything else? (PSG, p. 125)

EXPLAIN:

Sometimes verse 1 is pictured as peaceful and serene. Actually, it highlights a time of an intense longing for God's presence. Note that verse 5 is repeated in Psalm 42:11 and 43:5.

DISCUSS:

The psalmist talked to himself in verse 5. In light of this verse, what do you need to be saying to yourself? (PSG, p. 127)

PRAY:

Encourage adults to ask God silently to meet them in the middle of a desperate situation.

NOTES

Group Activity Option

Object Lesson: Picture of Death Valley

Display a picture of Death Valley. Explain that Death Valley, located in California's Mojave Desert, is the hottest, driest, and lowest National Park in the United States. Note that in Psalm 42 we find the psalmist desperately longing for relief from his spiritual dryness like he is living in a spiritual desert. Guide the group to reflect on a time of personal discouragement when they could identify with the psalmist's struggles.

In Overwhelming Times (Ps. 42:6-8)

6 I am deeply depressed; therefore I remember you from the land of Jordan and the peaks of Hermon, from Mount Mizar. **7** Deep calls to deep in the roar of your waterfalls; all your breakers and your billows have swept over me. **8** The LORD will send his faithful love by day; his song will be with me in the night—a prayer to the God of my life.

(v. 6) Deeply depressed: For the second time, the psalmist confessed his desperation using the Hebrew word *shachach*. This term described individuals who were bent over or humbled because they carried a heavy burden. The prophet Habakkuk used this word to proclaim that the presence of God made the hills “bow down” (Hab. 3:6).

But the psalmist’s concerns were more spiritual and emotional than physical. His body may have been fine, but his spirit was **depressed**. The psalmist bore a heavy burden that buckled his heart. He was devastated because he could not go to the temple and worship God.

(v. 6) The land of Jordan . . . Mount Mizar: His absence from the temple left the writer in a struggle with discouragement, but his memories provided a measure of comfort. At the same time, they added misery to his sense of longing. His memories helped him to reduce the spiritual distance between himself and his home.

The psalmist remembered the place in the northeastern corner of Israel where the **Jordan** River began to flow south toward the Dead Sea. He also identified two mountain peaks that marked the area: **•Hermon** and **•Mizar**. If the psalmist was in this region, he would have been about 100 miles from Jerusalem and the temple.

(v. 7) Deep calls to deep: The expression offers a vivid description of the psalmist’s emotional peril. The word picture suggests chaos or a tumult. It centers on aggression, with waves of trouble crashing without mercy on a helpless victim.

The prophet Jeremiah used a similar expression in his lamentation about “disaster after disaster” (Jer. 4:20). Such a flood of misery overwhelmed Job as he received one tragic report after another about the loss of his property and the deaths of his children (Job 1:13-19; 10:17).

(v. 7) Your: The emotional images that swirled around the overwhelmed psalmist register the intensity of his despair. Like a raging storm at sea, the intensifying agony that came his way kept on separating him from the temple for a long stretch of time. The intensity had become most troubling for him. It swelled into an emotional flood that threatened him spiritually.

Yet, he acknowledged that God was in control. The **waterfalls, breakers, and billows** that had humbled him were directed by God (**your**) and were being used for His purposes. Jeremiah (Lam. 3:53-55) and Jonah (Jonah 2:3) also used the imagery of a storm to describe God’s overwhelming actions.

Key Phrase

Faithful love

The psalmist praised God for His **faithful love**, but this was no ordinary love. The Hebrew *hesed* emphasizes the enduring nature of God’s favor and grace toward His people. Often, it is used to describe redemption from sin or deliverance from an enemy. But it always denotes God’s kindness and mercy in reaching down to help His people because they cannot help themselves. We do not deserve this love and cannot earn it. But He demonstrates this grace because it is innate to His holy character.

(v. 8) By day . . . in the night: The emotional typhoon that God had stirred would not be the last word about His involvement in the psalmist’s struggle. Every **day**, the psalmist reflected on God’s grace. **In the night**, a **song** filled his heart, possibly music associated with temple worship. Singing God’s song provided a sense of intimacy with the Lord and served as a vehicle for the psalmist’s prayers. It helped him focus on the God who had given him a reason to live.

EXPLORE Psalm 42:6-8



APPLICATION POINT: Believers can take comfort in God's love for them.

READ:

Read aloud Psalm 42:6-8, directing the group to reflect on the psalmist's tone.

ART:

Give each adult a sheet of paper and a pencil. Direct them to draw an image or scene that reflects the psalmist's tone and feelings in verses 6-8. After a few minutes allow adults to share their work and to explain their drawings. Emphasize the contrast between the writer's sadness and his hope.

RECAP:

Highlight this content from page 128 of the PSG:
Metaphorically speaking, the psalmist was barely able to keep his head above water as the waves of despair incessantly crashed against him. One setback followed another, and he was physically, emotionally, and spiritually overwhelmed. It was as if he was literally drowning in his despair. . . . Nevertheless, the psalmist recognized God's faithful love for him at all times.

ASK:

To what Bible truths can you cling when you feel overwhelmed? (PSG, p. 128)

TRANSITION:

The psalmist expressed a longing to be close to the Lord, yet he felt overwhelmed and depressed. In the next few verses, we will see that he also was feeling abandoned and impatiently waiting for an answer for his distress. It's a place most of us have been in our walk with the Lord at times.

NOTES

Group Activity Option

Diary or Blog Entry

Distribute index cards and pencils to each person. Direct the group to read Psalm 42:6-8 silently and to consider how the psalmist's words might be recorded in a diary or blog today. Encourage them to write their entry or post on the index card. Allow time for volunteers to share their entry or post.

In Seasons of Waiting (Ps. 42:9-11)

9 I will say to God, my rock, “Why have you forgotten me? Why must I go about in sorrow because of the enemy’s oppression?” **10** My adversaries taunt me, as if crushing my bones, while all day long they say to me, “Where is your God?” **11** Why, my soul, are you so dejected? Why are you in such turmoil? Put your hope in God, for I will still praise him, my Savior and my God.

(v. 9) Why have you forgotten me?: Even though the psalmist had been separated from worship at the temple, he testified that he had depended on God with extreme confidence. For him, God had been the constant and unmovable **rock** of his stability. Even so, he wondered if God had wandered away from him, and why he had been **forgotten**. The term suggests that God was oblivious to the writer and his struggles.

Of course, that was not the case. God does not forsake or abandon His people (Deut. 31:8; Heb. 13:5). The prophet Isaiah even compared God to a loving mother who could not forget or forsake her children (Isa. 49:14-15).

(v. 9) Oppression: God has a reliable reputation for being faithful (Luke 12:6; 2 Tim. 2:13). However, He had not come to help the psalmist yet. Consequently, the distance the writer felt left him wondering how long he would have to live with a troubling sense of **sorrow**. To make his difficult situation even worse, he had felt **oppression** from his enemies. His sadness prompted him to ask why God had not come to his rescue. Peter later taught believers that persecution was part of living for Jesus (1 Pet. 4:12-13).

(v. 10) Crushing my bones: The oppression that he endured and his question about God had a physical impact on the psalmist’s body. He complained that he felt his enemies’ attacks in his **bones**. Earlier he called attention to the emotional pain. Here, he described his distress in terms of a physical **crushing**. Job used the imagery of burning bones to describe his desperation (Job 30:30).

(v. 10) Where: The twin adversaries of the psalmist continued to assault him simultaneously. The distressing absence of God and the crushing presence of his enemies left him terribly discouraged. He noted that his enemies would **taunt** him because God had not helped him yet (Ps. 42:3). Now he brought them up again. God hadn’t shown up, and his adversaries wouldn’t go away.

Their cruel question about God’s absence left him in deep despair. The apostle Paul taught believers that they belonged to the Lord. Therefore, they could count on Him living in them (1 Cor. 3:16).

(v. 11) Why: The psalmist returned to a conversation with his soul that he had initiated in verse 5. Now, instead of asking God about His absence, he questioned himself about being **in such turmoil**. Once more, his soul was restless.

This verse in which he questioned his soul functioned as something like a hymn refrain. It appears for the first time in verse 5, and it appears again in Psalm 43:5. The repetition of the refrain reinforced the potency of his question that he raised about his soul’s sadness.

(v. 11) Savior: The writer simply could not justify the turbulence in his soul when he compared it to the certainty that came with his confidence in God, his **Savior**. For that reason, he would not allow the circumstances swirling around him to dictate his life.

He determined that he would anchor his **hope** in the Lord alone. Instead of dwelling on the insults of his enemies and the mystery of God’s silence, his heart would be filled with praise. Therefore, as he dealt with the uncertainties in his life, he declared his certainty that the Lord would be **my God**.

Bible Skill

Compare two similar Bible passages.

Most Bible scholars believe Psalms 42–43 originally were one composition. Compare the two psalms. *What are the similarities? What words and phrases are repeated in both? How does Psalm 43 enrich the insights offered in Psalm 42?*

EXPLORE Psalm 42:9-11



APPLICATION POINT: Believers can know that God's timing is always perfect.

READ: Invite a volunteer to read **Psalm 42:9-11** as the group listens for words or phrases that reveal what the psalmist was feeling.

RECAP: Share this content from pages 128-129 of the PSG: *The psalmist exhibited strong faith in God while at the same time experiencing intense sorrow. By calling God my rock, he believed God was trustworthy, that God would protect him and strengthen him in this ordeal. Still, he wrestled with his feelings as he expressed them to God through rhetorical questions. He felt as if God had forgotten and abandoned him by not responding to his prayers, especially as the painful oppression of his enemies intensified. His enemies asked him, "Where is your God?" Their question said out loud what the psalmist was wondering himself.*

ASK: **What is this psalm telling you to do when you are in the midst of a hard season?** (PSG, p. 129)

REREAD: Read aloud Psalm 42:5,11 and Psalm 43:5. Note how the psalmist reminded himself to have hope in God each time he raised these questions. As time allows, direct the group to complete the Bible Skill activity on page 129 of the PSG. (See p. 148 of the Leader Guide.) Allow volunteers time to share what they found.

RELATE: *Even amid difficult times we are encouraged to seek the Lord's presence and follow His guidance.*

NOTES

Group Activity Option

Case Study

Prepare a case study based on a life situation appropriate for the group. In four or five sentences describe the difficult situation, such as the a parenting issue, loss of a job, health diagnosis, or a broken relationship. Group adults into teams of two or three and direct each team to determine what advice they would give the person in that case study. Allow time to review responses. Highlight the psalmist's challenge to put our hope in God despite painful or difficult circumstances.

CHALLENGE

SUMMARIZE: Review these points from Apply the Text on page 130 of the *Personal Study Guide*:

- *Believers can seek God's comfort in times of need.*
- *Believers can take comfort in God's love for them*
- *Believers can know that God's timing is always perfect.*

DISCUSS: Direct attention to the first set of questions on page 130 of the PSG. Discuss practical ways the group can reach out to individuals who are struggling. Reflect on the impact being the “hands and feet of Jesus” can be in those situations.

MEMORIZE: Direct the group's attention to Psalm 42:1. Read it together and share that it is the memory verse for the session. Point out the second set of questions on page 130 of the PSG. Encourage adults to write out a personal prayer based on Psalm 42 and to use it as a prayer prompt during the week. Urge them to continue working to memorize Psalm 42:1 as well.

PRAY: Lead the group to pray silently, sharing their own struggle with God. Read aloud Psalm 42:5, praying for God to provide comfort and guidance to those who need it.

After the Session

Text or email the group, asking them to reflect on the sessions in Psalms. Encourage them to share one principle they learned from these studies and how they are trying to apply them to their lives each day. Remind them the next session will begin a new study in the books of Numbers and Deuteronomy. Encourage them to come and to invite a friend or family member to join them.

LEADER EXTRAS



For free bonus introduction and application ideas that connect to a current news event, go to **goExploreTheBible.com/LeaderExtras**.

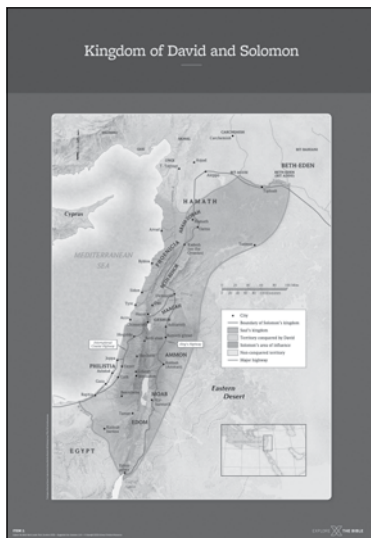
EXPLORE  THE BIBLE.

LEADER PACK **IDEAS**

Pack Item 1

Map: Kingdom of David and Solomon
Sessions 1-14

Locate a map that highlights the areas controlled by Israel during the reigns of David and Solomon.



Example from *Explore the Bible Leader Pack*

Pack Item 2

Poster: Types of Psalms
Sessions 1-14

Create a poster that identifies the categories found in the book of Psalms and list the chapters that fit into each category. See page 7 of the PSG.

Pack Item 3

Poster: Key Verse: Psalm 19:14
Session 3

Create a poster with the text of Psalm 19:14:

May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable to you, LORD, my rock and my Redeemer.

Pack Item 4

Poster: God in the Psalms
Sessions 1, 3, 4, 7, 11, 13, 14

Create a chart that identifies the various ways God is described in the Psalms. Provide a list of images used and the passages where those images are found in Psalms. Possible images could include Shield, Rock, King, Shepherd, Judge, Refuge, Fortress, Deliverer, Protector, and Redeemer.

Pack Item 5

Poster: Key Verse: Psalm 105:1-2
Session 8

Create a poster with the text of Psalm 105:1-2:

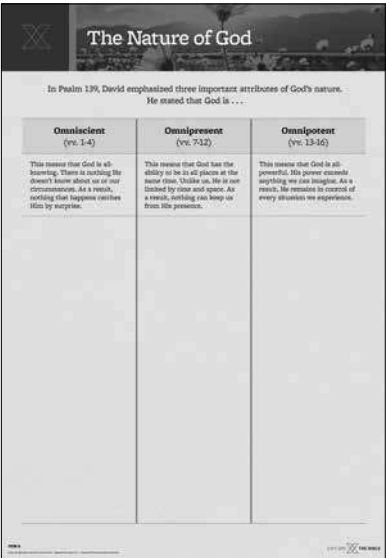
Give thanks to the LORD, call on his name; proclaim his deeds among the peoples. Sing to him, sing praise to him; tell about all his wondrous works!

Examples from *Explore the Bible Leader Pack*.
The Pack is available for purchase at [goExploreTheBible.com](https://www.explorethebible.com).

Pack Item 6

Poster: Nature of God
Session 12

Create a poster with three headings: Omniscient (vv. 1-4); Omnipresent (vv. 7-12); and Omnipotent (vv. 13-16). During session, direct adults to examine the passages in Psalm 139 and to identify ways the verses affirm these attributes of God.



Example from Explore the Bible Leader Pack

Pack Item 7

Handout: Psalms Time Line
Sessions 1-14

Locate a study Bible with a time line of the major people and events related to the book of Psalms. Include both biblical and non-biblical historical references to provide context.

Pack Item 8

Handout: Praying Scripture in Psalms
Sessions 1-14

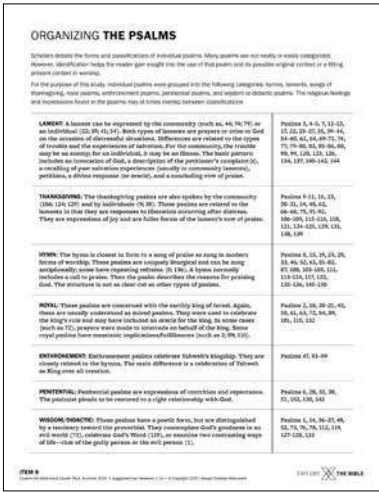
Create a handout to help adults pray through key Scriptures in the book of Psalms. Provide the following prompts:

- Session/Verse
- General thoughts from the passage
- What does this passage teach you about God and His character?
- How is God leading you to respond to what He is showing you about Himself?
- Written prayer based on the passage

Pack Item 9

Handout: Organizing the Psalms
Sessions 1-14

Create a handout similar to Pack Item 2. Provide more details about the various categories so adults can study them at home.



Example from Explore the Bible Leader Pack

Pack Item 10

Handout: Authors of the Psalms
Sessions 1-14

Create a chart that identifies the human writers who penned the various psalms, along with the psalms they wrote. The list should include David, Asaph, Solomon, Moses, the sons of Korah, Heman, and Ethan. Note that many psalms are also anonymous.

Pack Item 11

Handout: A Hymn to God's Law
Session 2

Use a commentary, Bible handbook, or other source to create a handout that digs into the key points related to Psalm 119, including its acrostic structure and its focus on God's Word.

Pack Item 12

Handout: God as King
Session 4

Use a commentary, Bible handbook, or other source to create a handout that highlights how psalmists portrayed God as the ultimate King and Ruler over all creation.

Pack Item 13

Handout: Christ in the Psalms
Sessions 4-6

Use a commentary, Bible handbook, or other source to create a handout that examines messianic psalms and how they pointed people to the life and ministry of Jesus centuries later.



Example from *Explore the Bible Leader Pack*

Pack Item 14

Handout: Our Forgiving God
Sessions 9-10

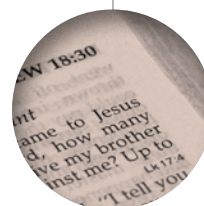
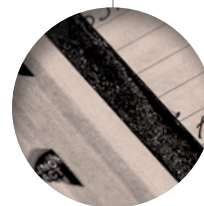
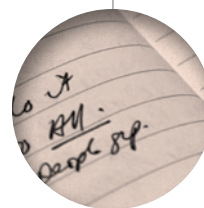
Use a commentary, Bible handbook, or other source to create a handout that focuses on how the psalmists portrayed the forgiveness of God, especially in the context of how pagan religions viewed their deities.

Examples from *Explore the Bible Leader Pack*.
The Pack is available for purchase at [goExploreTheBible.com](https://www.explorethebible.com).

COMING **NEXT QUARTER**

NUMBERS AND DEUTERONOMY

- Session 1: **The Journey** (Num. 9:15-23)
- Session 2: **Provision** (Num. 11:4-17)
- Session 3: **The Land** (Num. 13:17-31)
- Session 4: **Rebellion and Judgment** (Num. 14:11-24)
- Session 5: **Lack of Trust** (Num. 20:2-13)
- Session 6: **God's Plans** (Num. 22:22-45)
- Session 7: **Instructions Given** (Num. 33:50-56; 34:13-15)
- Session 8: **Remember** (Deut. 4:1-9,15-20)
- Session 9: **Love** (Deut. 6:1-9,20-25)
- Session 10: **Undivided Worship** (Deut. 12:1-11,29-32)
- Session 11: **Covenant Relationship** (Deut. 28:1-6,15-19)
- Session 12: **Fully Committed** (Deut. 30:11-20)
- Session 13: **God's Power** (Deut. 33:1-5,26-29)



Kingdom of David and Solomon

