

LEADERS NOTES

psalms

life lyrics

Blessed is the one
who does not walk in step with
the wicked
or stand in the way that sinners take
or sit in the company of mockers,
2 but whose delight is in the law of
the Lord
and who meditates on his law day
and night.

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

4 Not so the wicked!
They are like chaff

5 Therefore the wicked will not
stand in the judgment,
nor sinners in the assembly of the
righteous.



Introductory Notes

“The Psalms were the divinely inspired hymnbook for the public worship of God in ancient Israel (1 Chronicles 16:8-36). Because Psalms were not simply read, but sung, they penetrated the minds and imaginations of the people as only music can do. They so saturated the heart and imagination of the average person that when Jesus entered Jerusalem it was only natural that the crowd would spontaneously greet him by reciting a line from a Psalm (Mark 11:9; Psalm 118:26)...

All theologians and leaders of the church have believed that the Psalms should be used and reused in every Christian's daily private approach to God and in public worship. We are not simply to read the psalms; we are to be immersed in them so that they profoundly shape how we relate to God. The psalms are the divinely ordained way to learn devotion to our God...

[The psalms] are written to be prayed, recited, and sung – to be *done*, not merely to be read. Theologian David Wenham concludes that using them repeatedly is a ‘performative act’ that ‘alters one’s relationship [with God] in a way mere listening does not...’

The psalms lead us to do what the psalmists do – to commit ourselves to God through pledges and promises, to depend on God through petition and expressions of acceptance, to seek comfort in God through lament and complaint, to find mercy from God through confession and repentance, to gain new wisdom and perspective from God through meditation, remembrance, and reflection.

The psalms help us to see God – God not as we wish or hope him to be but as he actually reveals himself. The descriptions of God in the Psalter are rich beyond human invention. He is more holy, more wise, more fearsome, more tender and loving than we could ever imagine him to be. The psalms fire our imaginations into new realms yet guide them toward the God who actually exists.

Most of all the psalms, read in the light of the entire bible, bring us to Jesus.

The psalms are, then, indeed the songs of Jesus.”¹

At the beginning of each Psalm it is helpful to work out what the structure is. This can be done as a group. It may have some variance between group members but this is OK. Working out the structure helps to see changes within the text, the direction the Psalmist is trying to take and therefore help our understanding.

In our English bibles paragraphs are indicated which is often a good guide to the structure but is not always helpful. Look for things such as introductory verses, look for changes in pronouns from first to second or third and vice versa. This helps us to understand the perspective of what is being written and the line of thought.

It is also helpful to look at the context of the Psalm in relation to the events that give rise to the Psalm being written. An obvious example of this is Psalm 51 where David is begging for forgiveness after committing adultery with Bathsheba and killing her first husband (2 Samuel 11). Knowing this helps to see that our lives and situations may not always be that different, we are still sinners in need of a Saviour. We also see God’s mercy to us. Remember though to try to get an understanding of the Psalm in the time and space within which it is written before bringing it into our context. Understanding the structure can bring these ideas to light also.

Don’t be too strict with this, gently keep people on track.

1 Keller, Timothy and Kathy, “My Rock my Refuge.” pages vii-ix.

1. Blessed Defined (Psalm 1 and 2)

Redefining Us (what does it tell us)

"Blessed is the one..." Psalm 1:1.

1. Read Psalm 1 and 2. What do you think is the structure of this Psalm?

Suggested structure for Psalm 1: Verses 1-3 describe a blessed person. Verses 4-5 describe the wicked (the enemy as often comes up in Psalms). Verse 6 is God's response to each.

Suggested Structure for Psalm 2: Verse 1-3 talks of those who rebel against God. Verses 4-6 talk of God's response. Verses 7-9 describe the rule of God's king (verse 6). Verses 10-12 ought to be our response.

2. In verse 1 how is the blessed described? What do you think each of the three things mean?

The blessed are described firstly by what they do NOT do. The three things are 'walk in step', 'stand in the way', 'sit in the company.' It cannot mean do not mix with them because Jesus himself did this. Perhaps it means not to be influenced by them, do not have fellowship with them. To walk with them, or stand or sit is to say that this where we spend our time, who it is that influences us. In this we must choose carefully and meditating on the law of God is the antidote. We like community and being with others but we need to be discerning who it is that provides our need for community.

3. What does the law of the Lord encompass? What does it mean to 'delight' in the law of the Lord?

The 'law' is all of Scripture. We need to love what God commands. This means though that we need give ourselves over to God not out of a sense of duty but freely knowing that God can be trusted and therefore we want to know him more.

4. We are regularly told to read our Bible (we may even be sick of hearing it or worse it has become like white noise where we do not even hear it anymore). Psalm 1 tells us not merely to read but to meditate on it. What do think it means to meditate on God's word? How is a person who meditates on God's word described?

This question is to get people to think about how they read and meditate on the word of God. Meditation requires time, commitment. It will lead to us being challenged and helps us to see more clearly. Meditation means we are not just ticking the box of reading the bible but it is becoming so important to us that it becomes a lifeline. The answer for second question is in verse 3. Perhaps you can also ask those in your group what does it mean to prosper?

5. Read Psalm 2. In what ways do the nations conspire or plot in vain today?

We are told through media and other influences that obeying God ties us down, it takes away our freedom. The opposite is actually true. Perhaps you could in what ways is obeying God bringing freedom.

6. In verses 5-12 what is God's way of dealing with human pride and power? In what ways do we see people using power that is contrary to God's ways?

God installs his king on his holy hill. Husbands can use their power over their wives maybe even using the bible for justification. Leaders can use their power over those they lead to satisfy their own desires. Bullying, enticing unhelpful conformity like peer pressure (which can happen in the workplace a lot). There are many more people may be able to come up with but the idea is to get people to think about how they might use power even if they are unaware so that we might change our ways in the light of seeing Jesus give up his power for the glory of his father and for our good.

Challenging Us (Going Deeper)

7. In the book of Psalms God reveals himself in many different ways. Can you name some? What reasons are we given in Psalms 1 and 2 to delight in God and his law?

God is loving (Ps 23), he is a listener (Ps 5, 40), he is righteous, he is judge (Ps 51), he is mighty (Ps 18), he is majestic (Ps 8), he is merciful (Ps 51). There may be others people can think of. We delight in God's law for reasons set out in 1:3. He installs his king on his holy hill. He watches over the way of the righteous. He blesses those who take refuge in him.

8. What do you think it means to meditate *day and night* on his law (Ps 1:2b)?

9. In chapter 2:5. perhaps 2:9 and 2:12 we read of God's anger. How do you feel about God's and how is it different to ours or what we understand by anger?

God's anger is different to ours because it is always justified. God is slow to anger and never acts without justice.

Shaping Us (making it stick)

10. What obstacles make it difficult to meditate on God's word? Do you delight in God's word? If so why, if not why not?

11. In Psalm 2:11 we are told to serve the Lord with fear and celebrate his rule with trembling. How might we do this?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, arouse in us delight in your word as we grow in the love and knowledge of you. Protect us from following the ways of the wicked and the discernment not to sit in the company of mockers. We thank you that we take refuge in you and you do not turn us away as we believe and trust in you. Amen.

2. Life on the streets (Psalm 3)

Redefining Us (what does it tell us)

Story of David fleeing from his son Absalom can be found in 2 Samuel 15-19. This provides context for this Psalm. It is a lot to read during bible study but perhaps you could summarise it.

1. Read Psalm 3. What do you think is the structure of this Psalm?

Suggested structure for Psalm 3: Verses 1-2 is the intro. Verses 3-6 describe the Psalmists trust in God. Verse 7 is the David's prayer. Verse 8 a conclusion describing the basis of David's trust in God and his desire to give him glory.

This is the first of 48 lament Psalms and the first of a series of them up to Psalm 7.

2. This Psalm is written at a time when David's son Absalom was trying to kill him. David had tried to win his sons affections and in doing so had not disciplined him even after Absalom killed one of his brothers. In a sense then David has brought this anguish upon himself. Where does David's confidence then lie? What is the basis of this confidence?

David's confidence lies with God's strength and not his own. God is his shield. Not only that God grants him rest and sustains him. Deliverance does not lie in David's hands but God's. The basis of this confidence can be seen in Psalm 2 because God will install his king even if there are those who try to take it. There is a trust in God's promises.

3. In what ways does God protect the Psalmist from his foes? What are our expectations of God's protection today?

He is a shield, he answers when he calls so the Psalmist is aware of God's presence. God allows him the space to sleep and sustains him. God even fights for the Psalmist (verse 7).

Perhaps our expectations are we are kept safe from war or terrorism, from bad health or financial difficulty.

4. What does the Psalmist ask God to do to his enemies?

Verse 7.

5. In verse 7 how can David ask such things of God?

The enemies of king David in this case are those who are trying to place their own king on God's holy hill. They are not merely enemies of David and him wanting his own kind of justice. They are in turn enemies of God, those described in Psalm 2:1-3. We must be careful that when we are seeking justice it is for God's glory and not our own revenge. We must hand justice over to him.

6. In verse 8 what comes from the Lord? What form does this take for Israel at the time? What do you think it means that when he says "May your blessing be upon your people"?

God will deliver Israel from their enemies, he will even bring them back from exile through the agency of foreign kings. God will bless them with a king (Psalm 2). He will bless them by keeping his promises to Abraham.

Challenging Us (Going Deeper)

7. Why do you think God still protects David even though David had brought this upon himself?

Humans cannot thwart the plans of God. Psalm 1 and 2 will come to pass. God is always working for his names sake which means that despite us he will do what he says he will do. This is one of the reasons he can be trusted.

8. Why do you think it is difficult for us to have the same kind of confidence in God as David? How does this Psalm make you feel?

In other words what does this Psalm about us.

9. Through the prayer that David prays the glory goes to God. Where can you see this in the Psalm? How can we direct glory to God in our lives?

Shaping Us (making it stick)

10. What things are rising up against you that make life difficult, sad, tiring or maybe that bring shame? How can we develop the same kind of confidence in God as David?

It is OK to not be OK. Psalms such as this help us to come to God even at our lowest points and ask for protection and relief. Life can be hard.

11. What 'enemies' do you have that are also enemies of God? How can you pray for them?

Prayer: We are grateful that you hear our prayer and our cry for protection. We thank you that we are sustained by you as we put our trust in you while we wait for the return of Jesus. Even when we are oppressed with grief and difficulty we ask that by your Spirit you will remind us of your deliverance and your blessing us with redemption through your Son. Amen.

3. The Wonder of Life (Psalm 8)

Redefining Us (what does it tell us)

This is an important Psalm when thinking about what it is to be human. This is the first praise psalm. The lament run is broken by a reminder of our created place in God's Cosmos. This psalm reorientates us after the confronting impact of Ps 3 – 7. As such we are reminded (contrary to the words of the enemies in Ps 2:1) that we are not a mistake, God has given us a particular place in his created order and he is mindful of us!

1. Read Psalm 8. What do you think is the structure of this Psalm?

Suggested structure for Psalm 8: Verses 1a is the intro. Verse 9 is the same as the intro which is an inclusio and restating and summary of the Psalm. Verses 1a-2 offering of praise. Verses 3-8 description of human beings place in creation. It describes who we are, our role, our place in the order of creation.

2. What do we learn about God in this Psalm?

Please get people to consider what it says ABOUT God not just what he does, for example, in verse 2 it says that he establishes a stronghold. What this says ABOUT God is that he is a protector. Other answers could be that he is creator, ruler, he is majestic.

3. Given the majesty of God evidenced in the heavens and all of creation how do we know that we matter to God?

Verse 4.

4. What is the role of human beings within creation? How have we performed?

Rile over it. Not done so great. Perhaps you could talk about why we have not done so well.

5. In what ways does this Psalm help us to view other human beings?

All made in his image. He is mindful of all people.

6. How does this Psalm make a distinction between human beings and the rest of creation?

Humans rule over it. In Genesis 1 all other parts of creation are made according to their kind (Genesis 1:20-25). In Genesis 5:1-3 does anything change?

Challenging Us (Going Deeper)

7. What does it mean that God is majestic?

8. The Psalmist is astonished that God could create the heavens and the earth everything in them. Why do think it is that God seems to care for us (Verse 4)?

We are the only part of creation made in his image. He also gave us responsibility to care for the world as his agents.

9. In what ways does this Psalm help us to view other human beings? What distinctions does this Psalm make between human beings? What distinctions do we make? How are the distinctions we make helpful or unhelpful?

All made in his image. He is mindful of all people. This Psalm makes no distinction between human beings. We make distinctions through education, gender, sexuality etc. Perhaps making distinctions helps us to order things, to get the right people doing the right things in looking after God's creation and his church.

Shaping Us (making it stick)

10. In what ways can we better care for/rule over God's creation?

11. What vulnerable people in our area are there and how can we care for them?

Prayer: Majestic God, how is it possible that we fill your mind? You love and care for us so much you were willing to become a weak infant and vulnerable child, in order to save us. Now help me, in all my daily interactions, to treat every person I meet as being infinitely precious in your sight. Amen.²

2 Taken from "My Rock, My Refuge" by Tim and Kathy Keller. Page 12.

4. The Call to Praise (Psalm 28)

Redefining Us (what does it tell us)

1. Read Psalm 28. What do you think is the structure of this Psalm?

Suggested structure for Psalm 28: Verses 1-2 is the intro. Verses 3-5 describe the wicked. Verses 6-8 sing God's praises in response to his justice in dealing with the wicked. Verse 9 is a conclusion asking for God to keep his promises.

2. What does the Psalmist teach us about God in verses 1 and 2?

God hears us, he is our rock, God speaks (1a) and his silence is likened to having no hope to being in hell. He is merciful, he is majestic.

3. What does it mean that God is the Psalmists Rock? From what you know of God on what basis can the Psalmist use the metaphor of a rock?

Somewhere firm to stand. He keeps his word. He is jealous for his own name meaning that he will always ave integrity. You can explore this second question a bit more. Perhaps think through what it means that God does what he does for "his name's sake" (Psalm 23:3b).

4. What similarities do you see between Psalm 28:3-5 and Psalm 1 and Psalm 2?

Verse 7.

5. How are the wicked described (verses 3-5)? Are there things here for which we need to repent?

Get people to expand on their answer. For example, in verse 3b they are deceptive or false. Idea of second question is to get people to realise that we are among the wicked not the righteous which gives us reason to look forward to a Saviour. For us it is grounds for thanks for our Saviour.

6. In what way do verses 6-9 reflect verses 1 and 2?

He hears their cry for mercy. Strength and shield reflect him as the Psalmists rock etc.

Challenging Us (Going Deeper)

7. What do you think changes the Psalmist from calling out to the Lord and then praising the Lord at the end?

Strong emphasis on justice. Calling for justice and having confidence that God this is his way.

8. What does the Psalmist liken the silence of God to (verse 1)? Why?

Likens it to death even though this is not in the text explicitly. Going down to the pit is like death, not hearing God speak is like death as he is the source of life. If y=we do not hear him then there can be no life.

9. The Psalm describes what the Lord is to his people. Can you find some of these? Conversely, what are his people to him? What do you think this means?

Rock, shield, strength etc. His people are an inheritance. Want people to think about what it means to be God's inheritance, for example, what does it mean for Israel to be his inheritance etc.

Shaping Us (making it stick)

10. For what can you praise God? Do you find this difficult? If so, why?

11. Is the 'Lord' your first place to cry for mercy? If not, why not?

Prayer: Lord we thank you that you hear us when pray, when we call. By your Spirit urge us to seek you first, to accept that you are just and will do the right thing. We praise you because we can call out to you due to what Jesus did for us in reconciling us to you. Amen.

5. Trust Him (Psalm 55)

Redefining Us (what does it tell us)

David has been betrayed – by a peer, his companion and good friend. He is betrayed by a fellow believer – someone he used to walk into the gathering of God’s people with and there to worship God (v13 – 14). There is nothing so pain filled as betrayal. We will hear our own voices give expression to the raw pain of v 2 – 8, vv 13 - 14. “Psalm 55 is [David’s] passionate reaction to some extraordinarily stressful events. The poem’s structure, or lack of it, reflects this. It is quite possible, as we have often noticed already, for a Psalm to be deeply felt and yet the same time artistically constructed. However, there is so little agreement to the shape of this one, that perhaps David is not here thinking in terms of structure at all, but is simply pouring out his heart in distress and anger.” Michael Wilcock, BST series on Psalms. Page198.

1. Read Psalm 55. What do you think is the structure of this Psalm?

Suggested structure for Psalm 28: This a difficult Psalm to structure but maybe the following helps. Verses 1-8. Verses 9-19. Verses 20-23. Important tag at the end of Verse 23.

2. What is causing David such distress (include the verses that bring you to this conclusion)?

Betrayal. Verses 13-14.

3. In verses 4-8 what is David’s way of dealing with his distress? How might people do this nowadays?

He wishes he could fly away, be somewhere else. As Tim Keller points out for David it would mean giving up his place as king and let someone else deal with the pressure of leadership. Nowadays it might mean people undermining someone else to save yourself or a turning to other kinds of addictions, maybe also travel.

4. In Psalm 1 we are told the blessed person does not walk in the ways of the wicked. In this Psalm what are the ways of the wicked?

Verses 3, 9, 10, 11, 19 (opposite of humility is pride), 21, maybe 23b (more like a summary of the rest).

5. What is the psalmist calling for in verse 15?

Justice. We must be careful with this because if we fall in to the trap of betrayal we will be judged how we want others to be judged. This is not to say there should not be judgement.

6. What advice does the Psalmist give to the reader in verses 22-23? Why is this difficult?

Cast or cares on the Lord. This is difficult because God is not removing the difficulty but seeing him through it. We do not like the discomfort of this even though these are the times that character is built.

Challenging Us (Going Deeper)

7. Why do you think it important for us to trust God even in times of great distress?

If we do not trust God we will turn to other forms of escape or comfort. For some it maybe sexual immorality, substance abuse, depression, maybe the group can come up with more of these.

8. The Psalm begins with David giving God a command to listen and not ignore him. What do you think gives David the confidence to speak this way? Have you ever used such language when praying? If not, why not?

9. If we were the person spoken of in verses 13-14, who is it that we have betrayed? In what ways have we betrayed? How can this be dealt with?

Shaping Us (making it stick)

10. Can you think of a time in your life where you have been betrayed by someone close and have felt the kind of distress that David conveys in this Psalm? Were you able to trust God and cast your cares on him? What makes it difficult to trust God in these times?

11. What kind of things (idols) do you cast your cares on? How can we trust more God more?

Relationships, money, work, taking things into our own hands, holidays, etc. Good things that we trust in more than God.

Prayer: Lord, so much of my worry stems from a proud belief that I may know better than you what needs to happen. Teach me to cast my burdens on you – leaving them to your power and wisdom. Amen.³

6. Crisis Game Changer (Psalm 73)

Redefining Us (what does it tell us)

1. Read Psalm 73. What do you think is the structure of this Psalm?

Suggested structure for Psalm 73: Verses 1 is introduction. Verses 1-12 is a description of the wicked. Verses 13-14. Verses 15-17. Verses 18-20 has change of pronoun to “you.” Verses 21-26. Verses 27-28 are a conclusion. Alternatively, could also be in three sections starting with the word “Surely.” (second one probably better)

2. How do the wicked appear in verses 4-12? What things does the Psalmist say that is behind this appearance?

To answer the first question, they are healthy and strong, free from common burdens, free of care and amassing wealth (verses 4-5, 12). The second answer is found in verses 6-9.

3. What is the Psalmist’s complaint in verses 13-14? What does this say about the Psalmist? Do you or anyone you know ever feel this way and how do you/they respond?

His complaint is that being pure has been in vain, he has nothing for his efforts but trouble. The trouble is that “His obedience was not a way of pleasing God but rather a means of getting God to please him.”⁴

4. What is the psalmist response to feeling this way in verses 15-20?

Worship.

5. What do you think has been the Psalmist problem stated in verses 21-22?

He has been envious and full of self-pity.

6. What is the result of verses 23-28?

Answer is in verse 28b, I will tell of your deeds. Perhaps you could also ask who told him to do this? No one told him to tell of God’s deeds he just does. He overflows with the goodness of God (verse 1 and verse 28).

Challenging Us (Going Deeper)

7. What is the main issue or feeling that the Psalmist is dealing with in this Psalm (verse 3)? How would you define it? What leads us to feel this way today?

The main issue being dealt with here is envy. It is wanting what someone has and maybe being hurt because we can’t have it even though we think we have been doing the right things. FOMO (fear of missing out).

8. How do the people in verses 4 and 5 compare (how are they different or similar) with those mentioned in Psalm 2:1-3?

9. In verses 23-28 what is the Psalmist’s most treasures? Is this true for you? If so, why? If not why not?

The Psalmist most treasures God himself. Some may say heaven or God’s guidance but it is God himself. We treasure heaven not because of what we get and the relief that it brings but because God is there. F there was no heaven we are rich because we are known by our Maker.

³ Taken from “My Rock, My Refuge” by Tim and Kathy Keller. Page 118.

⁴ Taken from “My Rock, My Refuge” by Tim and Kathy Keller. Page 168.

Shaping Us (making it stick)

10. What things do you which you had or who do you wish you were more like? How can we be content in God?

11. What compels the Psalmist to tell the deeds of God (verse 28)? Do you find it difficult to talk of the deeds of God? To whom should we speak of God deeds?

Being near God compels him to speak. We should speak to both believers and non believers of God's deeds. To unbelievers so they might know that they are known by God and their need for him. To believers to build up and encourage others.

Prayer: Lord, thank you that you come close so that we can be near you, be known by you and that we might know you. Help us to see you as our greatest treasure, not to desire what we see others have. Forgive us for our envy and help us to be people who are thankful and content in you. Amen.

7. Finding Lost Words (Psalm 88)

Redefining Us (what does it tell us)

1. Read Psalm 88. What do you think is the structure of this Psalm?

Suggested structure for Psalm 88: Verses 1-2 is an introduction. Verses 3-5. Verses 6-9a. Verses 9b-12 he is asking questions of God. Verses 13-18.

2. As you read this Psalm what is missing?

Hope. May be a hint of hope in verses 1 and 2 and 9b.

3. In verses 3-5, what is the Psalmist's situation? Can you identify uses of hyperbole (exaggeration) to articulate his situation?

There may be no hyperbole, this may be the precise situation of the Psalmist. These would be words that Jesus could easily cry during his crucifixion, and maybe he did

4. In verses 6-14, what is the Psalmist saying about God?

That he has abandoned him. He is both the source and agent of his situation. Perhaps in verses 10-12 he cannot even see that God can help him as he is in a place God cannot reach.

5. In verse 7 and verse 16 the Psalmist laments about God's wrath. What are the similarities between these verses? What picture does it give of God's wrath?

Both talk about it in terms of sweeping over him. It is like relentless waves that crash not allowing us to take a breath. Differences are that it is overwhelming yet in verse 16 it is utterly destructive. How do we come back from this without help, without God's help whose wrath it is in the first place. Such is the grace of God toward us.

6. With what does the Psalm end? How do you feel about where the Psalm ends?

Darkness is my closest friend. Perhaps you could ask how can darkness be a friend?

Challenging Us (Going Deeper)

7. Why include such a Psalm as this in the Bible?

Times of spiritual darkness are real and it affects many parts of our lives. These times can also last a long time. It also shows what to do and that is call out to God.

8. Depression and anxiety are real for many people. What things in this Psalm indicate that this may be the case for Psalmist? How does he deal with it?

Verse 3-5, 14, 18. He does not have psychologists and counsellors to help him as we do. These people are a gift to us. He cries out to God, something we perhaps do not do enough.

9. “We can worship God in our despair.” What do you think about this statement in the light of Psalm 88? Is it possible to worship God at times like this? How would we do that? If we do not worship God at times like this where might we turn instead?

10. In what ways does Jesus lift us from such despair?

He experienced God’s ultimate abandonment for us. He bore God’s wrath so that we might breath again.

Shaping Us (making it stick)

11. What compels the Psalmist to tell the deeds of God (verse 28)? Do you find it difficult to talk of the deeds of God? To whom should we speak of God deeds?

Being near God compels him to speak. We should speak to both believers and non believers of God’s deeds. To unbelievers so they might know that they are known by God and their need for him. To believers to build up and encourage others.

Prayer: Lord, I praise you that you are a God who understands what it is like to be human! That you understand what it is to be hopeless in the dark. That you have been tried and tempted in every way, as we have. So when I struggle I can go to you, my wonderful counsellor, in my need. Amen.⁵

8. Still Point (Psalm 90)

Redefining Us (what does it tell us)

Psalm 90 opens Book 4 which we’ve entitled “Meditate on Torah”.

After discovering from the metanarrative David was a shadow king living in the valley of the shadows, the Solomon was also not Messiah; after experiencing life on the streets with all its joys and sorrows, Psalm 90 essentially calls us back to Ps 1 – 2.

1. Read Psalm 90. What do you think is the structure of this Psalm?

Suggested structure for Psalm 90: Verses 1-6. Verses 7-11. Verses 12-17.

2. How do verses 1-6 compare and contrast God and humans?

He is eternal we are not. He controls things we do not. He sees history in a single moment and we see it as it unfurls. He is big we are not. Perhaps you can ask your group do they view Go this way or as someone small and domesticated? We see things from generation to generation and God sees from everlasting to everlasting.

3. What do you think the Psalmist is trying to tell us about life?

To number our days is not to waste them on trivial things. It is short on this earth. To think about what we do with our lives.

4. In verse 7 we are told that God is angry. From this Psalm why is God angry (Verse 8)? What do think the Psalmist means by secret sins?

God is angry due to our sin.

5. What does verse 11 say about our view of God’s anger? Why do you think we take God’s anger so lightly?

Perhaps we view it lightly because he is slow to anger. It is not immediate, it is measured and it is just. God is different to us even in his anger.

5 Taken from “My Rock, My Refuge” by Tim and Kathy Keller. Page 215.

6. What does the Psalmist ask of God in verses 13-17? Does this mean we can change God's mind?

*Particularly look at verse 13 for answer to the first part of the question. For the second question perhaps consider what God does in Psalm 2. Is the Psalmist asking God to relent in the **time** it takes him to act (asking to come quickly) as we still want him to act the same way he promised?*

Challenging Us (Going Deeper)

7. What do you think verse 12 means?

8. Generally speaking the gospel is about creation, fall, redemption, restoration. Do you see these elements throughout this Psalm?

Verses 1 and 2 about creation. Verses 3-12 about the the fall and its effects. Verse 13-16 about redemption and verses 17 about restoration. Can God keep this promise? Only time will tell.

9. How might this Psalm help us to understand the world we are living in? How might it help us to understand our place as believers in the world?

Shaping Us (making it stick)

10. How do you use the days God gives to you? How might you use the days God has given you?

11. Would you be ready to die tomorrow? If not why not?

Prayer: Dear Lord, thank you for the days you give us and for the things that fill those days. Help us to live in a way that is honouring to you. We thank you that in Jesus you have relented and installed your king on your holy hill. We thank you that because you carried through with redemption in your son that we can find favour in your eyes because of him. Amen.

9. Come Let Us Worship (Psalm 95)

Redefining Us (what does it tell us)

1. Read Psalm 95. What do you think is the structure of this Psalm?

Suggested structure for Psalm 95: Verses 1-7 call us to praise. Verses 8-11 call us to listen to God's word.

2. What ought to be our response to verses 3-5? Is this something you find easy to do?

Answer is verses 1 and 2.

3. Why are we told to bow down in worship in verse 6?

Answer in verse 7.

4. What do you think we are being asked to do in verse 6 when we bow down?

We are being asked to be humble and to confess our sin and our need. "While adoration comes from seeing a God of glory, submission comes from seeing a God of grace."⁶

5. What happens when we hear God's voice (verse 7b)?

Answer is in verses 8-11. When we hear God voice our hearts are softened, we do not try god we trust him. Our hearts would not go astray and would know God's ways. They would enter his rest. If our hearts are this hard is would seem that we need someone to change this. This Psalm points out our need and Psalm 2 tells us there is solution.

6. How do we soften our hearts in corporate worship?

We listen to God's word read studied and taught. When we hear it we take it in and obey it.

6 Taken from "My Rock, My Refuge" by Tim and Kathy Keller. Page 236.

Challenging Us (Going Deeper)

7. What are the elements of corporate worship seen in this Psalm? What do we do in worship that does not facilitate this?

Adoration, humble submission, the Word.

8. How do you understand God's rest (verse 11)?

9. What does it mean to harden your hearts? In what ways can we do this?

Shaping Us (making it stick)

10. What priority do the elements of this Psalm, that is, adoration, confession, submission to God and the Word, have in your life? Where ought we express them?

We can express this at home but also in corporate worship where we encourage others as well as being edified ourselves. What priority does corporate worship have in the lives of the people in our group?

Prayer: Father, how I need rest! I am weary with obeying the dictates of my fears, my drives, my need for approval and control. I need the deep peace of soul that comes when I stop trying to earn my salvation through my works and rest in your Son's finished work of salvation for me. Amen.⁷

10. Here comes the King (Psalm 110)

Redefining Us (what does it tell us)

1. Read Psalm 110. What do you think is the structure of this Psalm?

Suggested structure for Psalm 110: Verses 1 is an introduction. Verses 2-4 uses the title of LORD in capital letters. Verses 5-7 use Lord which is the work of the LORD's Lord.

2. This Psalm is written by King David. If David is the king then who is his Lord to whom the LORD speaks?

Jesus is the obvious answer but that would not be obvious to David, so think through what might be happening here. The Psalm does not really tell us but leads back to Psalm 2. David is perhaps a shadow of the real king of Israel. It also prepares us for one to come. In Mark 12:35-37 we find out who this might be.

3. The person spoken of in this Psalm is not just a king. What other role does he fulfil?

King and Priest. A priest in the order of Melchizedek.

4. What do we learn about the LORD in verses 2-4?

5. What do we learn about the Lord in verses 5-7?

6. Can you see evidence of hope in this Psalm? How does it relate to Psalm 1 and 2?

Challenging Us (Going Deeper)

7. In Mark 12:13-37 Jesus answers many questions. Why do you think he finishes verses 35-37?

Perhaps it is because he is revealing something about himself. It is the reason he can speak with such authority.

8. Read Hebrews 4:1-13. How does the use of Psalm 110 help with the understanding of the Hebrews passage?

Remember to look at the whole of Psalm 110 to give context.

⁷ Taken from "My Rock, My Refuge" by Tim and Kathy Keller. Page 237.

9. In verse 3 we are told that the troops are ready for battle. What kind of weapons do we take into battle?
Love, service and truth. "While earthly kings conquer by filling the world with bodies (verse 6), Jesus conquers by converting and filling the earth with his body (Eph 1:22-23)."

Shaping Us (making it stick)

10. In what areas is Jesus Lord of your life? How does Jesus being Lord of your life help you?

Prayer: Father, we thank you for the Psalms. We thank you because they are raw and real and meet us where we are at. Please help us to turn to you in our despair and give you due praise because of who you are. We praise you because through the Psalms we see more of you revealing yourself and what you will do. We see more of our need for a Saviour and you did not disappoint. Amen.