

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






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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.”

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

EACH STUDY WILL TAKE THIS STRUCTURE:

REDEFINING US

What is the Psalm telling us?

CHALLENGING US

Going deeper and exploring the Psalm

SHAPING US

Making it stick

PRAYER

1. BLESSED DEFINED: (PSALM 1 & 2)

REDEFINING US

“Blessed is the one...” Psalm 1:1.

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

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

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

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?

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

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?

CHALLENGING US

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?

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 anger and how is it different to ours or what we understand by anger?

SHAPING US

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

Story of David fleeing from the 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?

2. This Psalm is written at a time when David's son Absalom was trying to kill him. David had tried to win his son's 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?

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

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

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

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”?

CHALLENGING US

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

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?

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

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?

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

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?
2. What do we learn about God in this Psalm?
3. Given the majesty of God evidenced in the heavens and all of creation how do we know that we matter to God?
4. What is the role of human beings within creation? How have we performed?

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

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

CHALLENGING US

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)?

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?

SHAPING US

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.

4. *THE CALL TO PRAISE (PSALM 28)*

REDEFINING US

1. Read Psalm 28. What do you think is the structure of this Psalm?
2. What does the Psalmist teach us about God in verses 1 and 2?
3. What does it mean that God is the Psalmist's Rock? From what you know of God on what basis can the Psalmist use the metaphor of a rock?
4. What similarities do you see between Psalm 28:3-5 and Psalm 1 and Psalm 2?

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

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

CHALLENGING US

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

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

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?

SHAPING US

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

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?

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

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

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?

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

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

CHALLENGING US

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

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

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?

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.

6. *CRISIS GAME CHANGER (PSALM 73)*

REDEFINING US

1. Read Psalm 73. What do you think is the structure of this Psalm?
2. How do the wicked appear in verses 4-12? What things does the Psalmist say that is behind this appearance?
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?
4. What is the Psalmist's response to feeling this way in verses 15-20?

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

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

CHALLENGING US

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?

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 does the Psalmist most treasure? Is this true for you? If so, why? If not why not?

SHAPING US

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?

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

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

2. As you read this Psalm what is missing?

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

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

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?

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

CHALLENGING US

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

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?

9. “We can worship God in our despair.” What do you think about this statement in the light of Psalm 88?

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

SHAPING US

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?

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.

8. STILL POINT (PSALM 90)

REDEFINING 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, that 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. What do you think is the structure of this Psalm?

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

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

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?

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

take God's anger so lightly?

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

CHALLENGING US

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?

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

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

1. What do you think is the structure of this Psalm?
2. What ought to be our response to verses 3-5? Is this something you find easy to do?
3. Why are we told to bow down in worship in verse 6?
4. What do you think we are being asked to do in verse 6 when we bow down?

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

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

CHALLENGING US

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

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

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?

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. Amen¹

1. Taken from "My Rock, My Refuge" by Tim and Kathy Keller. Page 2379.

10. HERE COMES THE KING (PSALM 110)

REDEFINING US

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

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

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

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

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

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

9. In verse 3 we are told that the troops are ready for battle. What kind of weapons do we take into battle?

SHAPING US

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.



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