

Heart to Heart with the Living God

Psalm 1

"Blessed is the man...whose delight is in the law of the Lord." Psalm 1:1, 2

Day 1: Read Psalm 1.

- Psalm 1 draws two very different portraits. Describe the differences between the wicked man and the righteous man.

	Wicked Man	Righteous Man
Use of His Time and Energy		
Results of His Choices		
His Final Destiny		

- What are the three action verbs in verse 1? What progression do you see in the wicked man's involvement with evil?
- Why is it so important to guard the sources from which we get input in our lives? (1 Cor. 15:33-34; Col. 2:8)
- As you consider the two different lifestyles described in verses one and two, what is the main influence that shapes each one?

Day 2: Read Psalm 1. (Focus on verse 2.)

- The words "love" and "delight" could be interchangeable. What does a person mean when she says "I love history" or "I love cooking" or "I love children"? Choose something or someone you "delight" in. How could someone recognize the thing you delight in?
- Read Psalm 19:7-11. What does this passage show us about the Psalmist's view of the law? How does this compare with how you have thought about God's law?

7. The Law (Torah) of God given in the Old Testament was the way Israelite believers had a relationship with God. How does the New Testament unpack and expand our understanding of the law? (Rom. 3:19-22; Gal. 2:15-16;  Gal. 3:19-24)
8. How would a correct understanding of God's law cause you to delight in it? What would it mean for you to delight in God's law?

Day 3: Read Psalm 1.

9. Consider the image of a tree planted by streams of water. What enables the tree to grow and flourish? Why is this a good image of our relationship to God's Word?
10. What is the job description of a tree? What enables it to do what it was created to do?
11. How does the New Testament use similar "tree" language to describe the believer? (Eph. 3:16-19; Col. 2:6, 7)

Day 4: Read Psalm 1.

12. What does prosperity look like for the righteous now? In the future? (vv. 3, 5, 6; Jn. 15:5; Jn. 6:40)
13. On the other hand what is the final destiny for the wicked? (vv. 4-6; Jn. 15:6)
14. As we seek to follow Christ, sometimes our lives appear to be characterized more by difficulty and loss than by prosperity. How does the Bible bring perspective to this apparent contradiction? (2 Cor. 4:17-18; Phil. 3:7-11; Jas. 1:2-4;  *Ps. 73)

Day 5: Read Psalm 1.

15. Reread or write out the first three verses of Psalm 1 and replace "the man" with Jesus Christ. How is this psalm a fitting description of him? (Heb 1:9)
16. As we study the Psalms, we want to see Jesus. How does the New Testament help us understand Jesus' relationship to the Law of God? (Mt. 5:17; Acts 28:23; Rom. 10:4)

* The  symbol identifies verses for further study.

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Psalm 2

"I have installed my King on Zion, my holy hill." Psalm 2:6

Psalm 2 is a 'Royal Psalm'. It was probably written by (or for) King David and was recited at the coronation ceremony of every new Davidic King. It describes the unique relationship between the Divine King—the God of Israel—and the human King. This human King was to be God's special representative on Earth. He was called to faithfully obey God's Law and to extend God's rule throughout the whole earth.

Day 1: Read Psalm 2.

1. There are three speakers in this Psalm. The Narrator is King David (v. 7). Who are the other two voices? List the verses where each one speaks.

2. The Psalm opens by setting out what the writer considers to be a big problem. Complete the table.

	Who	Is doing what?
1a.		
1b.		
2a.		
2b.		

3. Who is all this hostility directed against? (v. 2)

How is the Lord's anointed described? (vv. 6-9, 12)

What are the nations and the kings conspiring together to do? (v. 3)

4. The Psalmist says that all this plotting will be "in vain" (v. 1).
 - a. What does the writer know about God that these rebellious people have failed to understand? (vv. 4-5; Ps. 47:7-9) Is this the way you normally think about God?

 - b. What is your reaction to this portrait of him?

Day 2: Read Psalm 2.

5. This Psalm is about the 'kings of the earth and the nations' being required to submit to the human king of the insignificant nation of Israel. Why does God require this of them? (vv. 2, 6-8; * Gen 12:1-3)

* The  symbol identifies verses for further study.

6. How should a "wise" (v.10a) foreign king behave and what will be the result? (vv. 10-12)

Day 3: Read Psalm 2.

7. Describe what happens to the man God chooses to be King. (1 Sam. 16:1, 11-13; Ps. 2:7; 2 Sam. 7:4, 5, 14)

8. What binding promises does God make to King David and his descendants? (2 Sam. 7:4, 8-16; Ps. 89:20-29)

9. The history of Israel shows that the kings failed to live up to their calling to be God's faithful Sons. They led the nation into idolatry and rebellion against God. The result of this disobedience was that by 586 BC, the nation was conquered, enslaved and exiled. And there was no longer a King on David's throne. The exiles must have begun to wonder if God had gone back on His promises. The prophet Isaiah writes to the exiles and gives them hope: one day, a new King will sit on David's throne.

Read Isa. 9:6-7; 11:1-5. How is this promised King like the King in Ps. 2?

How is he better?

Day 4: Read Psalm 2.

10. Read Luke 3:21-22. With Psalm 2 in the background, what is Luke telling us about Jesus' identity and calling?

11. After the resurrection of Jesus, the disciples understand Psalm 2 with new perspective. How does God's love for his kingly Son find its ultimate fulfillment? (Acts 13:32-37)

12. How does Psalm 2 help the early church understand why Jesus was killed and why they were experiencing so much opposition? (Acts 4:23-28)

Day 5: Read Psalm 2.

13. How are the promises made to David in Ps. 2:8, fulfilled in Christ? (Rev. 7:9, 10)

What is our role now in their ongoing fulfillment? (Mt. 28:16-20; Acts 1:8)

14. Read Luke 7:36-50 with Psalm 2 eyes.

a. What does it mean to "kiss the Son"? (Ps. 2:12)

b. How is the woman blessed?

15. Read aloud John's vision of Jesus in Revelation 19:11-16. Now pray and ask the Father to fill you with hope.

Heart to Heart with the Living God

Psalms 42 and 43

*“Why are you downcast, O my soul...for I will yet praise him,
my Savior and my God.” Psalm 42:11*

“... it is evident that the Psalmist was isolated from the temple worship. He may have been a refugee, but it is more likely that he had been exiled to Aram, Assyria, or Babylon and was in the hands of taunting captors.”¹

Day 1: Read Psalms 42 and 43.

1. What is the mood of the Psalmist?
 - a. Why is his soul “downcast” and “disturbed”?
 - b. What does he long for?
2. What is the Psalmist remembering and longing for?
3. How does the Psalmist challenge himself? (42:5, 11; 43:5)

How does the New Testament encourage us to do the same thing? (Phil. 4:8; Col. 3:1-3)

Day 2: Read Psalm 42.

4. How does the Psalmist describe his longing for God? (Ps. 42:1-2)

Under what circumstances have you “thirsted for God?”

5. What does the “house of God” (v.4), the Temple, mean to the people of Israel? (1 Kings 8:27-30, 33, 34)

What would it mean for them to be cut off from the Temple? (*  Ps. 137:1-6)

6. The Psalmist says he “thirsts for God” (v. 2); how did Jesus experience the ultimate thirst? (Mt. 27:45, 46; Jn. 19:28)

What does that mean for us? (Jn. 4:10-14; 14:16-18; Rev. 7:16-17)

* The  symbol identifies verses for further study.

¹ Gaebelien, Frank E., Expositors Bible Commentary: Zondervan, 1992, p. 330

Day 3: Read Psalms 42 and 43.

7. What words do the enemies use to taunt the Psalmist? (42:3, 10)
 - a. Why are these words so painful for the Psalmist? (Ps. 42:9; 43:2)
 - b. How do the taunts affect him physically and emotionally? (42:3, 9, 10; 43:2)
8. What does the Psalmist ask God to do for him? (43:1)
9. How will God answer the Psalmist's prayer for vindication? (43:1-5; compare Micah 7:8-10)
10. The taunts of the wicked reach their climax at the cross in Matthew 27:39-44. How was Jesus vindicated by God? (Acts 2:22-36)

Day 4: Read Psalm 43.

11. What does the Psalmist ask God to do in verse 3? Why?
12. How has God sent forth His light and truth to us? (Jn. 8:12; 14:6)
(* 📖 Isa. 9:1-3; 2 Cor. 4:5, 6)
13. How does Jesus, God's light and truth, bring us to the place where God dwells (vv. 3, 4)?
(Heb. 10:19-23; 12:18, 22-24)

Day 5: Read Psalm 42 and 43.

14. No matter how he feels, what does the Psalmist really believe about God?
15. Even though God seems silent and distant, what is He doing for the Psalmist in the midst of his deepest darkness? (42:8)
16. How is the refrain of the Psalmist full of hope? (43:5)

How does this Psalm fill you with hope?

Heart to Heart with the Living God

Psalm 44

"We are brought down to the dust; our bodies cling to the ground. Rise up and help us; redeem us because of your unfailing love." Psalm 44:25-26

This Psalm is a national lament, sung at a time of great defeat and suffering for the Israelites. Through most of the Psalm the first person plural (we/our/us) is used to reflect the voices of the people of Israel. Occasionally the first person singular (I/my/me) appears; this is likely a collective voice (the voice of the people as one), or it may be the voice of the King of Israel.

Day 1: Read Psalm 44. Then read it again aloud.

1. Using your own words, write a short sentence that tells what the Psalmist is saying in each group of verses.
 - a. vv. 1-3:
 - b. vv. 4-8:
 - c. vv. 9-12:
 - d. vv. 13-16:
 - e. vv. 17-22:
 - f. vv. 23-26:

Day 2: Read Psalm 44:1-8.

2. About whom are the Psalmist and his fellow Israelites boasting? Which great deeds of the past do they sing about in verses 2 and 3? (See also Jos. 24:8, 11-13.)
3. How does the Psalmist's generation know of the Lord's past deeds? (v. 1; * Deut. 4:9, 10)
4. How do we today know what God has done? What is your role in passing down the history of salvation to the next generation?

Day 3: Read Psalm 44:1-16.

5. Look again at verses 9 through 14.
 - a. What word appears over and over again at the beginning of these verses?
 - b. Whom do the people of Israel hold responsible for their suffering?
 - c. What do the people tell God he has done?

* The  symbol identifies verses for further study.

6. What belief about God is behind both the praise in verses 1-8 and the lament in verses 9-16? (Ps. 135:5, 6; Lam. 3:37-38)
7. What else do the Israelites know about God that makes them bold to come before him now? (vv. 3b, 26b; Deut. 7:7-9)
8. How do verses 9-16 strike you? Would you feel comfortable talking to God this way?

Day 4: Read Psalm 44.

9. According to God's covenant with His people, obedience brings blessing and disobedience brings disaster (📖* Deut. 28). But what does the Psalmist say about his experience in verses 17 and 18?

How does the Psalmist back up the truth of what he says about his faithfulness to God? (vv. 20-21)

10. The first few words of verse 22 hint at one reason for the Israelites' suffering at the hands of their enemies. What is it? (Consider Ps. 2:2, which we studied earlier.)
11. In this psalm the Israelites have recounted the glorious heights of the victories God gave them in the past and have laid out before God the depths of their present defeat and humiliation.
 - a. What do we hear from the people at the close of the Psalm? (vv. 23, 26)
 - b. Do they receive any answer in this Psalm?

Day 5: Read Psalm 44.

12. Is God actually asleep (v. 23a) and oblivious while his people are suffering? (Ps. 121:4)
13. Even as the Israelites suffered, God was working out his plan to set things right. What do the following passages reveal about this plan? (Is. 9:1a, 2-7; 📖* Isa. 11:1-12)
14. Where in the Bible do we see the truest picture of the innocent suffering unjustly? (Mk. 10:32-34; 15:25, 34; Lk. 23:20-25)
15. In the resurrection of Jesus Christ, the most humiliating defeat is reversed to become the most glorious victory. How does this give suffering believers today an "answer" that the Old Testament faithful were unable to see? (Rom. 8:11, 17, 18, 28-39; 📖* 1 Cor. 15:51-57; 1 Pet. 1:3-9)

For further thought: John R.W. Stott writes in *The Cross of Christ*, "I could never myself believe in God, if it were not for the cross.... In the real world of pain, how could one worship a God who was immune to it?" (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1986, p. 335). Read Isaiah 53, and meditate on the many ways Christ suffered and the victory he won.

Heart to Heart with the Living God

Psalm 51

"Have mercy on me....cleanse me from my sin." Ps. 51:1-2

Day 1: Read 2 Samuel 11:1–12:14 to get the back story for Psalm 51.

1. Summarize what happened in chapter 11 in your own words. Include how David got into trouble and what strategy he employed to get out of it. (Resist the temptation to see David's sin as all that different from your own.)
2. What does David deserve for his sin? (Lev. 20:10; 24:21)
3. How does God confront David?

Day 2: Read Psalm 51.

4. Contrast the way David deals with his sin with Bathsheba in 2 Samuel 11 with what you see in Psalm 51. What has made the difference?
5. Look at the Psalm phrase by phrase. What burdens is David carrying because of his sin?
6. What is David's only hope as he stands before God with a terrifying awareness of his sin? (📖* Ps. 130)

What is our only hope? (Eph. 2:1-9; 📖* Rom. 5:6-8; Col. 1:21-22)

7. What must it have been like for the sinless Son of God to carry the weight of our guilt and pay the penalty for our sin? (Isa. 53:3-12; Mt. 26:36-39; 1 Jn. 2:2) This would be a good time to pause and respond in gratitude and worship.

* The 📖 symbol identifies verses for further study.

Day 3: Read Psalm 51.

8. David defiled Bathsheba and murdered Uriah. Yet what point is he making in verse 4? (2 Sam. 12:9, 13)

How is this instructive as we consider and confess our own sin? (Ps. 32:1-5)

9. What does David understand about the cause of his sins? (v. 5; Ps. 14:2-3; * Mk. 7:20-23)

10. What is the scope of the work that God does in changing us? (vv. 6, 7, 10, 12; Heb. 9:13-14)

Day 4: Read Psalm 51.

11. What three requests in verses 1 and 2 are repeated in verses 7-9? What results does he expect?

12. What evidence do you see of David's passion to have his relationship with God restored? (vv. 10-12)

How are you challenged by David's passion? Pray that God would give you a heart like David's.

Day 5: Read Psalm 51.

13. David's sorrow over his sin could have left him in despair; instead what hope does he express in verses 13-15? How is this psalm in part an answer to that hopeful prayer?

14. What kind of sacrifices pleases God? (v. 17) How is this illustrated in Luke 18:9-14?

15. As you reflect on the tragic story behind this Psalm and God's merciful rescue of David, how are your observations comforting, alarming, life-changing, freeing, etc.? In other words, what difference does the study of this psalm make in your day-to-day life?

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Psalm 26

"But I lead a blameless life; redeem me and be merciful to me." Psalm 26:11

This psalm is attributed to David. It appears that he is the object of false accusations. In response to this slander he writes the prayer we have recorded in Psalm 26.

Day 1: Read Psalm 26.

1. To whose "court" does David go to plead his case when he is slandered by evil men?

Read 1 Corinthians 4:3-4. How did Paul respond in a similar situation?

2. Where do you "go" when others slander you? What responses do David, Paul and Jesus model for us in the face of undeserved criticism and accusations? (1 Cor. 4:5; 1 Pet. 2:19-23)
3. After entering the courtroom David talks about his allegiances.
 - a. With what and with whom has David aligned his heart?
 - b. What things and people has David taken a stand against?

Days 2 and 3: Read Psalm 26.

4. How do David's statements about being blameless strike you?
5. David's claim to be blameless carries the sense of being wholehearted and sincere in his desire to follow the Lord. What does David pray for that shows he does not see himself as faultless (or sinless)? (v. 2, 11b; * Phil. 3:4b-14)
6. What surprising evaluation does God give of David's life in 1 Kings 9:4?

Since God certainly knows David is a sinner (remember Psalm 51), how can his evaluation be accurate? (2 Sam. 12:13; Ps. 32:1, 2, 5; Ps. 103:10-12)

* The  symbol identifies verses for further study.

7. What do you think motivates David to ask the Lord to test, try and examine his “heart and mind” (v. 2)? (Ps. 139:23-24)

Why does he trust the Lord to examine him so thoroughly? (v. 3; Ps. 130:3-8)

Day 4: Read Psalm 26

8. Clearly, David does not want to associate with the wicked. (📖* Ps. 1)
- Describe their character and their actions. (vv. 4-5, 9-10)
 - Describe how David feels about them. (v. 5)
 - Describe the end David knows awaits them. (v. 9; Ps. 5:4-6)
9. Where does David want to be and what does he want to do? (vv. 6-8, 12; Ps. 27:4)
10. David had to go to a specific place to experience God’s presence. How do we enter the presence of God? (Heb. 10:19-23)

Day 5: Read Psalm 26.

11. Although David is in the midst of difficult and potentially very disheartening circumstances, he states at the end of his prayer: “My feet stand on level ground” (v.12). How can he say this with such confidence? (v. 3; Ps. 16:8-11; 21:7; 27:1-3)
12. The desire of King David was to trust and obey the Lord, and yet because he knew his record was far from perfect, he calls out for redemption and mercy. (v. 11)
- What does the New Testament tell us about the record of King Jesus? (2 Cor. 5:21; Heb. 4:14-15; 1 Jn. 3:5)
 - What does that mean for you? (1 Cor. 1:30; Heb. 4:16)
13. How can you get to the same place as David—with your feet on level ground and with a commitment to praise the Lord both now and in the future? (Phil. 4:4-9; Col. 1:19-23; 2:6-7)

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Psalm 78

"They did not remember his power—the day he redeemed them from the oppressor." Ps. 78:42

Day 1: Read Psalm 78.

1. In light of the history this psalm rehearses, why does Asaph plead with the people to hear his teaching and listen to his words? (vv. 7, 9)
2. What is the current generation to tell the next generation? Why?
3. Why are these stories of Israel's history still important for us today? (1 Cor. 10:1-12; Heb. 2:1-4)

Day 2: Read Psalm 78:9-33.

A "parable" (v.2) is a story about one part of life (in this case historical) that brings spiritual light to another part of life. The first parable in this psalm is about the Israelites' deliverance from Egypt and their desert wanderings.

4. List the ways that God visibly provided for the Israelites in the desert. (vv. 12-16; 23-29)
5. List Israel's responses to God's provision? (vv. 17-20) What attitudes of the heart do these actions reveal? (vv. 22, 32; Lk. 6:45)
6. What was the result of their unbelief and rebellion against God? (vv. 21, 31-34)

Day 3: Read Psalm 78:34-39.

7. What does true repentance involve? (Hos.5:15—6:6; 14:1-3; Jas.4: 7-10)

How does the repentance of the Israelites fall short of this? (vv. 36-37; Mt. 15:7-9)

8. What amazing description of God are we given in the midst of Israel's unfaithfulness? (vv.38, 39)

Day 4: Read Psalm 78:40-58.

The second parable is of the Israelite's miraculous deliverance from slavery in Egypt to settling in the land God promised to them.

9. a. How did God display his power in Egypt? (vv. 44-51)

b. How did God display his mercy and power toward the Israelites? (vv. 52-55)

c. What had Israel done to be worthy of God's favor? (Dt. 7:7-8)

10. What was Israel's response to God's intentional and steadfast love for them? (vv. 56-58)

Day 5: Read Psalm 78.

11. Verses 56 to 58 refer to a generation of Israelites living well after the settling of the Promised Land. How is this generation "like their fathers" (v. 57)? (vv.8, 56-58)

12. How did God punish this new generation? (vv. 59-64)

13. Because of their sin God rejects the prominent tribe of Ephraim. Instead God continues His story of redemption through the tribe of Judah by choosing David to be king. (Acts 13:22-23)

How is David's leadership different from that of the "men of Ephraim" (v. 9)?

Men of Ephraim		David	
v. 9		Ps. 18:37	
v. 10		Ps. 18:21-23	
vv. 11, 41-43		Ps. 18:46-49	
vv. 36-37		v.72	

14. What is the leadership of our true Shepherd, the Son of David, like? (John 10:11-16; Heb. 8:8-12)

15. Psalm 78 has shown God's miraculous redemption, Israel's rebellion, and God's restrained wrath. Take a moment to consider your own redemption by reading Ephesians 2:11-13.

How will remembering what was involved in your redemption help you this week as you face a trial or struggle with sin? (Heb. 12:1-3)

Heart to Heart with the Living God

Psalm 106

"Many times he delivered them, but they were bent on rebellion..." Ps. 106:43a

Day 1: Read Psalm 106.

1. Why does the psalmist say the Lord is to be praised and thanked? (vv. 1-2)

2. What answer do you think the psalmist expects to his question in verse 2? Why?

3. Who does the Psalmist say is blessed in verse 3?

4. Reread verses 4 and 5.
 - a. What things does the psalmist ask of the Lord? (v. 4)

 - b. What benefits does he anticipate will happen as a result of God's intervention? (v. 5)

Days 2 and 3: Read Psalm 106.

5. This psalm gives a condensed history of the relationship between God and His people. On the copy of Psalm 106 highlight in one color all the ways God's people sinned against Him; then with another color highlight the ways in which God responded.

6. When we look at the Israelite's sins we tend to distance ourselves from them. Even though the Psalmist hasn't committed the same sins as his fathers, what does he recognize? (v. 6)

7. What pattern do you see in the Israelites?

8. God responds to the sin of His people in two very different ways:
 - a. What are the two responses?

 - b. What unchanging purpose lies behind God responses? (Hos. 5:15—6:2; Rom. 2:4)

Day 4: Read Psalm 106.

9. What purposes do you think the Psalmist has in confessing Israel's repeated rebellion and sin?

10. The Israelites committed some unbelievably shocking sins, such as sacrificing their children to idols. Look back at your highlighted version of the psalm and identify some of the "smaller" and seemingly insignificant sins that led up to such horrific acts.

11. Pray and ask God to reveal any sins you may have considered "small" and insignificant sins. Give glory to God by confessing these sins and asking for forgiveness.

Day 5: Read Psalm 106.

12. In the midst of Israel's history of sin and rebellion which two leaders "stood up and intervened" (v. 30) on behalf of the people? (vv. 23, 30)

What did each of these men do? (Ex. 32:7-14; Num. 25:1-13)

13. The intervention of Moses and Phinehas stayed God's hand temporarily, but what is the result of Jesus' intervention on our behalf? (Isa. 53:4-6; Heb. 9:27-28; 1 Pet. 2:24)

14. The last two verses of the psalm contain both prayer and praise.
 - a. What does the Psalmist petition the Lord for in verse 47?

 - b. Why does he want the Lord to grant his request?

15. What has the Lord taught you through the study of this psalm?

Psalm 106 (New International Version)

¹ Praise the LORD.
Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good;
his love endures forever.

² Who can proclaim the mighty acts of the LORD
or fully declare his praise?

³ Blessed are they who maintain justice,
who constantly do what is right.

⁴ Remember me, O LORD, when you show favor to
your people, come to my aid when you save
them,
⁵ that I may enjoy the prosperity of your chosen
ones, that I may share in the joy of your nation
and join your inheritance in giving praise.

⁶ We have sinned, even as our fathers did;
we have done wrong and acted wickedly.

⁷ When our fathers were in Egypt,
they gave no thought to your miracles;
they did not remember your many kindnesses,
and they rebelled by the sea, the Red Sea.

⁸ Yet he saved them for his name's sake,
to make his mighty power known.

⁹ He rebuked the Red Sea, and it dried up;
he led them through the depths as through a
desert.

¹⁰ He saved them from the hand of the foe;
from the hand of the enemy he redeemed them.

¹¹ The waters covered their adversaries;
not one of them survived.

¹² Then they believed his promises
and sang his praise.

¹³ But they soon forgot what he had done
and did not wait for his counsel.

¹⁴ In the desert they gave in to their craving;
in the wasteland they put God to the test.

¹⁵ So he gave them what they asked for,
but sent a wasting disease upon them.

¹⁶ In the camp they grew envious of Moses
and of Aaron, who was consecrated to the LORD.

¹⁷ The earth opened up and swallowed Dathan;
it buried the company of Abiram.

¹⁸ Fire blazed among their followers;
a flame consumed the wicked.

¹⁹ At Horeb they made a calf
and worshiped an idol cast from metal.

²⁰ They exchanged their Glory
for an image of a bull, which eats grass.

²¹ They forgot the God who saved them,
who had done great things in Egypt,
²² miracles in the land of Ham
and awesome deeds by the Red Sea.

²³ So he said he would destroy them—
had not Moses, his chosen one,
stood in the breach before him
to keep his wrath from destroying them.

²⁴ Then they despised the pleasant land;
they did not believe his promise.

²⁵ They grumbled in their tents
and did not obey the LORD.

²⁶ So he swore to them with uplifted hand
that he would make them fall in the desert,
²⁷ make their descendants fall among the nations
and scatter them throughout the lands.

²⁸ They yoked themselves to the Baal of Peor
and ate sacrifices offered to lifeless gods;
²⁹ they provoked the LORD to anger by their wicked
deeds, and a plague broke out among them.

³⁰ But Phinehas stood up and intervened,
and the plague was checked.

³¹ This was credited to him as righteousness
for endless generations to come.

³² By the waters of Meribah they angered the LORD,
and trouble came to Moses because of them;
³³ for they rebelled against the Spirit of God,
and rash words came from Moses' lips.

³⁴ They did not destroy the peoples
as the LORD had commanded them,
³⁵ but they mingled with the nations
and adopted their customs.

³⁶ They worshiped their idols,
which became a snare to them.

³⁷ They sacrificed their sons
and their daughters to demons.

³⁸ They shed innocent blood,
the blood of their sons and daughters,
whom they sacrificed to the idols of Canaan,
and the land was desecrated by their blood.

³⁹ They defiled themselves by what they did;
by their deeds they prostituted themselves.

⁴⁰ Therefore the LORD was angry with his people
and abhorred his inheritance.

⁴¹ He handed them over to the nations,
and their foes ruled over them.

⁴² Their enemies oppressed them
and subjected them to their power.

⁴³ Many times he delivered them,
but they were bent on rebellion
and they wasted away in their sin.

⁴⁴ But he took note of their distress
when he heard their cry;

⁴⁵ for their sake he remembered his covenant
and out of his great love he relented.

⁴⁶ He caused them to be pitied
by all who held them captive.

⁴⁷ Save us, O LORD our God,
and gather us from the nations,
that we may give thanks to your holy name
and glory in your praise.

⁴⁸ Praise be to the LORD, the God of Israel,
from everlasting to everlasting.
Let all the people say, "Amen!"
Praise the LORD.

Heart to Heart with the Living God

Psalm 46

"God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble." v. 1

Bible scholars believe that this psalm was written following one of God's miraculous interventions on behalf of Jerusalem. (* 2 Chr. 20:1-30; 2 Ki.18-19) Known to be Martin Luther's favorite psalm, it formed the basis for one of the church's greatest hymns, "A Mighty Fortress is Our God."

Day 1: Read Psalm 46.

1. Write out Psalm 46:1 on an index card and make a point to meditate on it through out the week. As the week progresses use the chart below to record thoughts as well as ways that you see these truths playing out in your life.

God is my...

Refuge	
Strength	
Ever-present help	
Fortress	

2. a. Describe the "extreme adversity" the Psalmist is in the midst of.
 - b. What truths about God enable him to say "we will not fear" (v. 2) with such great confidence?
3. This psalm was not intended for personal use only, but also for use by the community. How have times of corporate worship helped you in times of trouble?

Day 2: Read Psalm 46.

4. What contrasts do you see between verses 2-3 and verses 4-5?
5. Why is the "city of God" secure? (v. 5)

*The  symbol indicates verses for further study.

6. What is the image of a river associated with in the Old Testament? (Gen. 2:10a; Ps. 1:3; Ps. 65:9-13)
 - a. What new meaning does Jesus bring to this image? (Jn. 4:4-14; Jn. 7:37-39)
 - b. How is the future river described in Revelation 22:1-5?

Day 3: Read Psalm 46.

7. What does God do in verse 6? What happens as a result? What does this reveal about him? (📖* Ps. 29:3-11)
8. What two things does the refrain in verses 7 and 11 affirm?
 - a. Why would this fill the Israelites with confidence?
 - b. Why can we be confident that God is with us? (Mt. 1:23; Mt. 28:20b; Jn. 14:16-17a; 2 Cor. 6:16)

Day 4: Read Psalm 46.

9. Because we live in an extremely unstable world, many people feel like their foundations are being shaken, and as a result seek refuge somewhere.
 - a. What areas of confidence and security have been shaken in your life?
 - b. Where do you tend to find refuge in times of trouble? (Ask yourself: Where do I feel safe, comforted, secure, beyond the reach of hardship, etc.?)
 - c. How do these places of refuge compare to what the Psalmist is talking about?
10. Verse 10 is God's rebuke to a restless, troubled world.
 - a. What does God command us to do in this verse?
 - b. What benefits do you think the Lord intends for us in doing this? (Ps. 131; Isa. 30:15)
11. While there were times of peace for Israel, verses 8-10 point forward to a lasting peace and the final eradication of war. Look at Isaiah 9:2-7 for a picture of that peace and who ushers in this unending reign of peace. Write down your findings.

Day 5: Read Psalm 46.

12. Look how Martin Luther unpacked this psalm in his hymn, "A Mighty Fortress is Our God."

1. A mighty fortress is our God,
a bulwark never failing;
our helper he amid the flood
of mortal ills prevailing.
For still our ancient foe
doth seek to work us woe;
his craft and power are great,
and armed with cruel hate,
on earth is not his equal.
2. Did we in our own strength confide,
our striving would be losing,
were not the right man on our side,
the man of God's own choosing.
Dost ask who that may be?
Christ Jesus, it is he;
Lord Sabbaoth, his name,
from age to age the same,
and he must win the battle.
3. And though this world, with devils filled,
should threaten to undo us,
we will not fear, for God hath willed
his truth to triumph through us.
The Prince of Darkness grim,
we tremble not for him;
his rage we can endure,
for lo, his doom is sure;
one little word shall fell him.
4. That word above all earthly powers,
no thanks to them, abideth;
the Spirit and the gifts are ours,
thru him who with us sideth.
Let goods and kindred go,
this mortal life also;
the body they may kill;
God's truth abideth still;
his kingdom is forever.

Heart to Heart with the Living God

Psalm 23

"The LORD is my shepherd..." Psalm 23:1a

Days 1 and 2: Read Psalm 23.

1. God is referred to as Israel's shepherd in other places in the Old Testament, but the comparison is especially fitting coming from David. Why? (Ps. 78:70-72;  1 Sam. 16:1, 11-13; 1 Sam. 17:34-35)
2. Look at the second part of verse 1.
 - a. What does the Psalmist David confidently assert here?
 - b. What needs does God the shepherd meet in the verses that follow?
 - c. What do you sometimes rely on to meet your needs, rather than turning to your Shepherd?
3. In the book of Ezekiel, written long after David's reign, God says that one day he will deliver his people from the evil, self-serving "shepherds of Israel" (Ezk. 34:1-10).
 - a. What does the Lord promise he will do? (Ezk. 34:11-16)
 - b. What else does God promise his people? (Ezk. 34:23-27)
 - c. Who is the promised one referred to as "my servant David" (Ez. 34:23, 24) and how will he fulfill the promises of God? (Jn. 10:1-4, 14-16; Rev. 7:13-17;  Lk. 15:1-7)

Day 3: Read Psalm 23.

4. Focus on verses 1 through 3.
 - a. What feeling do these verses convey?
 - b. How well do you feel these verses describe your everyday life?
 - c. Despite appearances, and despite your feelings, how do these verses in fact describe what God does for us, his sheep? (Mt. 6:25-33; 11:28-30; Jn. 14:26-27; 1 Thess. 5:23-24; 1 Pet. 5:7)

*The  symbol indicates verses for further study.

5. Verse 3 says that God guides his sheep by right paths “for his name’s sake.” The name “the LORD,” used in verse one, is God’s covenant name, Yahweh.
 - a. What qualities are bound up with that holy name? (Ex. 34:5-7)
 - b. Why is the reputation of that name at stake in the way God leads his sheep? (Num. 14:11-16)
6. In verse 4 the Psalmist switches from “he” to “you.” Why is this shift to the more intimate second person especially appropriate here?
7. The phrase traditionally translated “the valley of the shadow of death” (v. 4) can also mean something like the valley of the deepest shadows or darkness. Thus it can mean facing not only death but also other difficult and frightening things in life. What reason does the Psalmist give for fearing no evil?
8. How is Jesus, “that great Shepherd of the sheep” (Heb. 13:20), uniquely qualified to lead us safely through the valley of the shadow of death? (Rev. 1:17b-18; * Rom. 6:8-10; Heb. 2:14)

Day 4: Read Psalm 23.

9. The picture changes in verse 5 from God as shepherd to God as gracious host. What details in this verse show us how lavish a host God is toward his guest?
10. In the culture of ancient Israel, what does anointing a guest’s head with oil demonstrate? (Ps. 45:7; Lk. 7:44-47)
11. Who is unexpectedly present at this feast but not permitted to share in it? (v. 5a) How might their presence be a picture of how God has answered David’s prayers? (Ps. 26:1; 31:11-16; 35:22-26)

Day 5: Read Psalm 23.

12. Come what may, what blessings can you expect from the Lord “all the days of [your] life” (v. 6)? (v. 6a; Also remember Yahweh’s self-description in Ex. 34:6-7a.)
13. How can you develop eyes to see the way your shepherd is caring for you each day.
14. Look at Psalms 27:4-5 and 65:4. (Ps. 84:10-11)
 - a. To what place is the psalmist David referring when he writes of “the house of the LORD” (v. 6b)?
 - b. What does he desire to do there? (Ps. 27:4b)
15. Like other images in this psalm, “the house of the LORD” also points forward, suggesting our heavenly home at the end of a lifelong pilgrimage of faith (* Heb. 11:13-16).
 - a. What does Jesus promise his followers? (Jn. 14:2-3)
 - b. Read Revelation 21:1-7 and 21:22–22:5, and take a moment to contemplate what lies at journey’s end.

Heart to Heart With the Living God

Psalm 56

"When I am afraid, I will trust in you." Psalm 56:3

Day 1: Read Psalm 56.

1. Summarize each section, describing what's happening and what the Psalmist wants and or affirms.

vv. 1-2

vv. 3-4

vv. 5-7

v. 8

vv. 9-11

vv. 12-13

2. Make a list of some of the emotions that you see expressed in this psalm.

3. In spite of the emotional roller coaster ride in this psalm, what phrases express:

Dependence, Rest, Confidence	
Praise, Thankfulness, Worship	

4. Spoken words are extremely powerful. In this psalm what do we learn about:

the words of the enemy? (vv. 2, 5)

the word of God? (vv. 4, 10)

different ways we can use our words in prayer? (vv. 1, 7, 8, 12-13)

5.
 - a. What words is the Psalmist choosing to say over and over to himself as he runs away from his enemies? (vv.3-4; 10-11)
 - b. How might constantly repeating them make a difference in his attitude?
 - c. Think of a specific situation in your life. How could choosing to say these words to yourself help you cope with a conflict or as you struggle with a fear?

Days 2 and 3: Read Psalm 56.

Psalm 56 is linked to a time in the life of David before he became king. See the introduction to the psalm in your Bible before verse 1.

6. What was David's role and status while he was living in King Saul's household?
 - 1 Sam. 16:21-23
 - 1 Sam. 14:49; 18:1-4
 - 1 Sam. 18:5-7
 - 1 Sam. 18:27
7. Saul becomes increasingly jealous and afraid of David and tries several times to kill him. Finally, David runs for his life and goes to the Philistine city of Gath. Read 1 Sam. 21:10–22:1.
 - a. Why is David justifiably afraid of the king of Gath? (1 Sam. 21:8-12; 1 Sam. 17:4)
 - b. What does David resort to, so he can escape unharmed?
 - c. How are all these circumstances in conflict with what he knows is his calling? (1 Sam. 16:1, 11-13; 1 Sam. 18:12)
8. "Mortal man" (v. 4) is quite capable of doing horrendous things to other humans.
 - a. So what do you think David means when he asks the two rhetorical questions in verses 4 and 11?
 - b. Where does he decide to place all his confidence? Why?

Day 4: Read Psalm 56.

9. Jesus often prayed out of the Psalms. In what situations could you imagine Jesus praying this psalm?
10. How did Jesus put his trust in God? (Lk. 22:39-44; 23:46; Heb.5:7; 1 Pet. 2:23)
11. How did God show himself to be worthy of Jesus' trust? (Acts 2:24)

Day 5: Read Psalm 56.

12. a. What is David's (and our) greatest fear? (v.6; 13a) Why?
 - b. What confidence do we have if we believe in Jesus? (Rom. 8:11; 1 Cor. 15:51-57; Heb. 2:14-15)
13. Why do you think David wants God to keep a record of his laments and tears? (v.8)

What will God one day do with all those tears? (Isa. 25:7-8; Rev 21:3; *Isa. 61:1-3)

What does that say about his relationship to you?

*The 📖 symbol indicates verses for further study.

Heart to Heart with the Living God

Psalm 90

"Lord, you have been our dwelling place throughout all generations." Psalm 90:1

The children of Israel were slaves in Egypt for four hundred years until God sent the deliverer — Moses. Then they wandered in the desert for forty years before they settled in the Promised Land. This psalm was written by Moses during their time of wandering.

Day 1: Read Psalm 90.

1. When you think of a "dwelling place" what comes to mind?

2. What do you think it means for God to be our dwelling place?

3. Considering the Israelites' history, why is the concept of God as their dwelling place such a comfort?

Day 2: Read Psalm 90:1-11.

4. The first eleven verses of this psalm lay a foundation for Moses' prayer in the last six verses by comparing God and man.
 - a. What do these verses teach about what God is like both directly and indirectly?

 - b. What do these verses teach us about man?

 - c. Why do you think Moses makes these contrasts between God and man, before leading the people in prayer?

Day 3: Read Psalm 90.

5. What kind of relationship did God want to have with his people? (Deut 4:32-40)

6. How have the people responded to God's covenantal love? (Skim back through Psalm 106:7-33.)

7. What is God's response? (vv. 7-11; Ps. 106:40)

8. In light of God's anger, what is the Israelites' hope? (vv. 13-15)

9. Just like the Israelites, we are also rebellious and sinful and just as deserving of God's wrath.
 - a. What is our only hope for rescue? (Rom. 5:6-11)

 - b. What has God done to spare us from experiencing his wrath? (Eph. 2: 1-5)

Days 4 and 5: Read Psalm 90.

10. What does it mean "to number our days aright" (v. 12)? (Ps. 39:4; Eph. 2:10)

How does this make us wise?

11. What does Moses know about God that is revealed in the way he prays? (Ex. 34:6-7)

12. What does Moses ask of God in his prayer? (vv. 12-17)

13. How has God answered Moses prayer in Christ? (Jn. 15:9-17)

14. Given what we have learned about who God is and who man is, why do you think the Psalmist concludes by asking God to confirm or establish the work of his hands? (1 Sam. 2:6-10) Pray and ask God to do this in your life.

Heart to Heart with the Living God

Psalm 40

"Do not withhold your mercy from me, O LORD." Psalm 40:11a

Day 1: Read Psalm 40.

1. What image does the Psalmist, David, use to describe his past trouble? (v. 2)
2. List all of the things God did for him at that time. (vv. 1-3)
3. Throughout this psalm, David uses the special covenant name for God—the LORD, or Yahweh. What do we learn from Psalm 40 about this covenant God?
4. What do you think it means to "fear" the Lord (v. 3)? (Deut. 6:1-2; 10:12-15)

Day 2: Read Psalm 40.

5. How does the Psalmist describe himself?
6. What is his current situation? (vv. 12-15, 17)
7. What is David beseeching God to do?
 - a. (vv. 11, 13, 17)
 - b. (vv. 14-15)

Day 3: Read Psalm 40:6-8.

8. The line translated "my ears you have pierced" in the NIV (v. 6) seems in fact to mean "my ears you have opened."
 - a. What do you think it means to have opened ears? (Jer. 9:20a; Zech. 7:11-12)
 - b. How does the Psalmist, with his opened ears, respond to God? (vv. 7a, 8)

9. God clearly commanded the Israelites to make regular sacrifices and offerings. Then what leads the Psalmist to make the statements in verse 6 regarding sacrifice? (1 Sam. 15:22; Mic. 6:6-8; * Is. 1:11-17)
10. Read Hebrews 10:1-10, noticing the writer's quotation of a version of Psalm 40:6-8.
- What problems with Old Testament sacrifices does the writer of Hebrews lay out? (Heb. 10:1, 4)
 - Into whose mouth does the writer of Hebrews place Psalm 40:6-8? (Heb. 10:5)
11. How are the problems with sacrifices noted in questions 9 and 10a solved by the one who came to do God's will? (Heb. 10:10; 9:26b-28)

Day 4: Read Psalm 40.

12. Some commentators see Jesus and his work all through this psalm. Fill in the chart below to see how the first three verses of this psalm could have been spoken by Jesus.

Psalm 40	Jesus and His Work
v. 1a: "I waited patiently for the LORD"	1 Pet. 2:23
v. 2: "He lifted me out of the slimy pit, out of the mud and mire; he set my feet on a rock"	Acts 2:23-24, 31
v. 3a: "He put a new song in my mouth, a hymn of praise to our God."	Heb. 2:11-13a

13. How do verses 1-3 reflect our own experiences as well? (Eph. 2:1-7; * Job 33:27-28)

Day 5: Read Psalm 40.

14. Throughout this psalm, what does experiencing the Lord's goodness result in? (vv. 3, 9-10, 16)

15. To whom does the Psalmist proclaim the goodness of God? (vv. 9a, 10b)

How do we do that now? (Eph. 5:19-20; Heb. 10:24-25)

16. We have experienced God's gracious deliverance. Consider how you can encourage others in your group with the way you have seen God's righteousness, faithfulness, salvation, love, truth, and mercy at work in their lives, or your own (vv. 9-11).

*The  symbol indicates verses for further study.

Heart to Heart with the Living God

Psalm 107

"Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his love endures forever." Psalm 107:1 (NIV)

While some attribute this psalm to David, others believe it was written following Israel's return from exile in Babylon. It is unclear whether the four vignettes record actual events or are pictures illustrating Israel's distress. Either way, this psalm, which is noted for its poetic beauty, has proven both instructive and encouraging to saints throughout the ages.

Day 1: Read Psalm 107.

1. Re-read these sections looking for the following:

Verses	Distressing situation	Israel's Action	God's Intervention	Appropriate response
4-9				
10-16				
17-22				
23-32				

2. As you look over the chart, how would you describe humans?

As you look over the chart, how would you describe God?

Day 2: Read Psalm 107 ALOUD.

3. What exhortation do you hear repeated throughout the psalm? (vv. 1, 8, 15, 21, 31)

4. What point do you think the Psalmist is making by repeating this phrase?
5. If we are not thankful, what are some of the alternatives?
6. What instruction does the Apostle Paul give us regarding thanksgiving in these passages? (Eph. 5:19-20; 1 Thes. 5:18)

How does this prove challenging?

7. What are some practical things you can do that would help you become a more thankful person?

Day 3: Read Psalm 107.

8. How does the Psalmist here describe the Lord's love? (Look for specific words and ways he demonstrates his love.)
9. What do these passages that resound with (or echo) the language of Psalm 107, tell us about Jesus? (Lk. 4:16-21; 5:31-32; 8:22-25; 9:10-17)

Day 4: Read Psalm 107 especially focusing on vv. 33-43.

The final section of the psalm breaks from the pattern of the previous verses in order to focus on God's supreme power.

10. Over what things does God have control? (vv. 33-41)
11. What is the Psalmist's purpose in cataloguing these examples of God's power? (vv. 42-43)

Day 5: Read Psalm 107.

Verse 43 encourages the wise to "heed these things and consider the great love of the LORD".

12. Write your own psalm using the following statements as a guide.
 - a. Describe a distressing situation you've experienced.
 - b. Tell how Jesus has delivered you.
 - c. Give thanks to Jesus.

Heart to Heart with the Living God

Psalm 103

"Praise the LORD, O my soul". Psalm 103: 22b (NIV)

Day 1: Read Psalm 103.

1. Why do you think David wrote this psalm?

2. This psalm is not a prayer directed toward God like many psalms we've studied, but rather a call to praise him. Whom does David exhort to do this?
 vv. 1, 22b

 vv. 20-21

 v. 22a

3. In Hebrew poetry, an idea is often expressed in the first line and then reiterated in different words in the second line. With this in mind, what do verses 1 and 2 tell us about what it looks like to praise the Lord?

4. David spends this whole psalm taking his own counsel to "praise the LORD...and forget not all his benefits" (v. 2).
 - a. How does David do this?

 - b. Why is it so important to do this?

Days 2 and 3: Read Psalm 103.

5. In verses 3-5, David focuses on remembering and praising the Lord for the benefits he has received personally. In verses 6-19, he praises God for the benefits he has shown to his people. Use the chart below to record David's reasons for praise and worship.

Verse	Reason(s) for praise and worship
3	
4	
5	
6	
7	
8	

9	
10	
11	
12	
13	
17	
19	

6. Look back over the chart.

Which one do you find especially comforting or encouraging? Why?

Which one challenges an area of unbelief in your life? Why?

Which one fills you with praise? Why?

Day 4: Read Psalm 103.

7. What are the two realities that David recognizes about himself and all of humanity?

a. vv. 3a, 10

b. vv. 14-16

How does God respond to these? (vv. 10-14, 17)

8. In his compassion God sent Jesus to rescue us from sin and death. How has he done this?

a. Rom. 3:21-26

b. John 3:16

9. Have you believed in Jesus? Are you sure your sins are forgiven and that you have eternal life?

Day 5: Psalm 103:19-22.

10. Although David is the King of Israel, whom does he recognize as the ultimate ruler? (v. 19)

What is the appropriate response to God as king? (vv. 20-22)

As we worship God, whose praise are we joining? (vv. 20-21)

11. Read Rev. 4:9-13. How can this vision of our future worship in heaven, inform our worship now?

Heart to Heart with the Living God

Psalm 69

"Scorn has broken my heart and left me helpless; I looked for sympathy, but there was none, for comforters, but I found none." Psalm 69:20 (NIV)

Day 1: Read Psalm 69.

1. David is crying out to God. What does he want God to do? (vv. 1, 13-18)
2. David's cry is insistent and desperate. Why is he in such a state? (vv. 3, 17-18)
3. What is his complaint? (vv. 4, 7-12, 19-21)
4. What does David compare his situation to? (vv. 1-2, 14-15)

Day 2: Read Psalm 69.

5. David is experiencing two types of suffering: punishment and religious persecution.
 - a. Punishment from God (v. 26) Why? (v. 5)
 - b. Persecution from those around him (vv. 7-12) Why? (vv. 7, 9-11)
6. The word "scorn" is repeated four times (vv. 7, 10, 19-20).

The American Dictionary of the English Language defines scorn as: "Extreme contempt; that disdain which springs from a person's [low] opinion of [another] of a...belief in his own superiority or worth...to despise, condemn, disdain, to think unworthy, to slight, disregard, neglect."

- a. What kind of words and behavior does that word make you think of?
 - b. David says, "Scorn has broken my heart and left me helpless" (v. 20). Why do you think scorn is so destructive?
 - c. Think of someone you have scorned. What kind of words could counteract the destructive effects of scorn?
7. David might be tempted to give up and stop crying out to God for help. What is the one thing about God that he can be absolutely sure of? (vv. 13, 16, Ps. 86:5; 103:17-18)

Day 3: Read Psalm 69.

This psalm is one of the most quoted psalms in the New Testament. It helped the early Christians understand how the Messiah, Jesus, was both the returning King—the "Son of David"—and the Suffering Servant. It helped the Apostles realize that it was in the midst of unjust and horrific suffering that Jesus became the conquering King.

8. Look up the New Testament verses below and see how Jesus' suffering is described. Then, in column 3, list verses in Psalm 69 that describe how David suffered in the same way.

	What happened to Jesus?	Parallel verses in Psalm 69
Jn. 1:11		
Jn. 2:13-17		
Mt. 26:36-39		
Mt.27:27-31		
Mt. 27:33-34		
Mt. 27:45-46		

9. Jesus suffers on the cross, bearing all of God's wrath against sin. But he also suffers in another way. When the crowds mock, insult and humiliate Jesus, who are they really scorning and rejecting? (vv. 7; 9b; Jn.15: 23-25)

Day 4: Read Psalm 69.

10. David doesn't hold back when he talks about his enemies. What does he think God should do to them concerning their:

- a. plotting and plans (vv. 22, 27)
- b. bodies (v. 23)
- c. relationship to God (v. 24)
- d. families and heritage (v. 25)
- e. eternal destiny (vv. 27-28)

11. How does Jesus respond to his enemies? (Mt. 27:12-14; Lk. 23:33-34; *Isa. 53: 7)

12. How should we respond to our enemies? (Rom. 12:14, 17-21)

13. How should we respond to unjust suffering? (1 Pet. 2:19-23; 4:19) Why?

Day 5: Read Psalm 69.

14. Knowing the way to respond to our enemies and unjust suffering is not always easy. Sometimes like David we feel impatient with God and filled with anger and revenge.

- a. When have you ever felt this way?
- b. Have you found it hard to pray while you are in the midst of this kind of emotional and spiritual turmoil? Why?
- c. Why can you confidently pour out all your raw emotions to Jesus? (Heb. 2:17-18; 5:7-10)

*The  symbol indicates verses for further study.

Heart to Heart with the Living God

Psalm 91

"I will say of the LORD, 'He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.'" Psalm 91:2 (NIV)

In this psalm the writer begins by confessing his faith and calling other believers to do likewise.

Day 1: Read Psalm 91. (Note the following definitions.)

Fowler: a person who hunts for wild birds

Rampart: a defensive wall around a city

1. This psalm is full of wonderful promises. List some that stand out to you.
2. What phrases tell us who these promises are for? (vv. 1, 9, 14-15)
3. What four covenantal names for God are used by the Psalmist? (vv. 1-2)

How do these names convey the power behind the promises?

Day 2: Read Psalm 91.

4. What types of danger does the Psalmist mention? (vv. 3, 5-6)

How are these dangers similar to the ones you face?

5. What images does the Psalmist use to describe God's protection? (v. 4)

What different aspects of protection do these images show us?

6. At what times is the protection of the Lord promised? (vv. 5-6)

7. While the battle may be raging around you, what final outcomes are sure? (vv. 7-10;  * Ps. 37:34, 40)

Day 3: Read Psalm 91.

8. What confession of the Psalmist are you encouraged to make your own? (vv. 2, 9)
9. If we follow the Psalmist's exhortation in verse 9, what does he say the results will be? (vv. 10-13)
10. We know from experience and elsewhere in scripture that believers experience harm and disaster.
- How do John 16:33 and Romans 8:28, 31-39 help us understand God's deliverance of believers? (Psalm 91:15 gives us a hint of this.)
 - What will be the ultimate deliverance for believers? (v. 16; Rom. 8:11, 17-18)

Day 4: Read Psalm 91.

11. How is verse 13 prophetic of the work Jesus was sent to do? (Gen. 3:13-15; 1 Jn. 3:8)
12. Read Luke 4:9-12.
- In this passage who quotes Ps. 91:11-12?
 - Why doesn't Jesus follow Satan's suggestion? (Lk. 4:12)

Day 5: Read Psalm 91.

13. List the promises God Himself makes. (vv. 14-16) To whom does he make these promises?
14. In the midst of the danger you fear most right now, how has this psalm renewed your confidence in Him who is faithful?

*The  symbol indicates verses for further study.

Heart to Heart with the Living God

Psalm 139

"O LORD, you have searched me and you know me." Psalm 139: 1

Day 1: Read Psalm 139.

1. What are your first impressions of this psalm?

2. Now re-read the psalm emphasizing the personal pronouns (I, me, my). Does this give you a different second impression? If so, how is it different?

3. What are some broad ways to summarize these sections?
 - vv. 1-6

 - vv. 7-12

 - vv. 13-16

4. David says that God is "familiar with all his ways" (v. 3).
 - a. What specific examples does he give? (vv. 2-4)

 - b. What do you find interesting about his choice of examples?

Day 2: Read Psalm 139.

5. Write out verses 1-5 and take them along with you today. Rehearse these truths as you go about your routine. Record any impact this exercise has on you.

Day 3: Read Psalm 139.

6. How does the Psalmist express his reaction to God's intimate knowledge of him? (v. 6, 17-18; Ps. 8:3-5)

7. David's two questions in verse 7 make it clear that it is impossible to escape from the presence of God.
 - a. Why is it futile to run and hide from God? (vv. 7-16; Ps. 33:13-15; Heb. 4:13)

 - b. The fact that it is futile to hide from God could produce anger and frustration or bring hope and comfort. What would make the difference?

*The  symbol indicates verses for further study.

8. How does the imagery of God's hand in verses 5 and 10 bring you comfort or freedom from fear? (Isa. 41:13)
9. Recognizing God's presence everywhere, David now muses on the fact that God was even at work in his mother's womb creating him. How does he describe God's work? (vv. 13-16a)
10. In Psalm 56 we saw that God recorded David's lament and tears. What else does God record? (v. 16b)

Day 4: Read Psalm 139.

11. How does this psalm dismiss the notion that God is distant and uninterested in mankind? (Write out the verbs in verses 1-16 for a clue.)
12. In verses 19-22 David makes an abrupt shift to express his hatred for the wicked.
 - a. What are the wicked doing?
 - b. How does this help us understand why David speaks so forcefully?

Day 5: Read Psalm 139.

13. Look at David's specific requests in verses 23-24.
 - a. Why is he unafraid to have God expose what is in his heart? (📖* Ps. 103:10-12; 130:3-4)
 - b. Have you ever made the request in verses 23 and 24 your request?
 - c. What reservations did or would you have?
14. How can knowing what Jesus has done and is doing for you make this request easier to make? (Jn. 3:17; Heb. 7:25; 1 Jn. 1:9)
15. Use what you have learned in this week's lesson to courageously pray this prayer.

Heart to Heart with the Living God

Psalms 130 and 131

“O Israel, put your hope in the LORD, for with the LORD is unfailing love and with him is full redemption.” Psalm 130:7

Day 1: Read Psalm 130.

1. What is the tone or mood of each pair of verses?
 - vv. 1-2:
 - vv. 3-4:
 - vv. 5-6:
2. What is it that has plunged the Psalmist into the depths? (v. 3a)
3. James Sire writes, “The psalm arises out of the psalmist’s agony, but it focuses quickly and with determination on God...” List some ways you see the Psalmist’s determination to focus on God.
4. In this psalm God is called both “LORD” (Yahweh, written in small caps) and “Lord.”
 - a. What aspects of God’s character lie behind the name Yahweh (“LORD”)? (Ex. 34:6-7; Deut. 7:6-9)
 - b. What quality of God lies behind the title “Lord”? (Hint: What does the word “lord” mean? Feel free to check a dictionary.)
 - c. Why would the character of God as revealed by these names be tremendously comforting to a person suffering the consequences of his sin?

Day 2: Read Psalm 130.

5. What does it mean to “stand” (v. 3)? (Ps. 1:5; 24:3-4)
6. What is the answer to the question the Psalmist poses in verse 3? (Ps. 14:1b-3)
7. Why should the Lord’s forgiveness cause him to be feared (v. 4)? (Remember that “fear” here doesn’t mean to be afraid of, but to revere, “to walk in all [God’s] ways, to love him, to serve [him]..., and to observe [his] commands and decrees” [Deut. 10:12-13].)

Day 3: Read Psalm 130.

8. What “action” does the Psalmist take in the midst of his trouble? (vv. 5a, 6)

9. In what does the Psalmist put his hope as he waits? (v. 5)

10. Through whom does God keep the promise that “He himself will redeem Israel from all their sins” (v. 8)? (Mt. 1:20-23; * Lk. 1:67-79)

Why doesn’t God hold against us any “record of sins” (v. 3a)? (Col. 2:13-14)

Day 4: Read Psalm 131.

11. What is the central image of this psalm? (v. 2b)

What does this image convey? (v. 2a)

12. What image would you use to describe your soul right now?

What does this image convey?

13. Unlike a fussy baby demanding her mother’s milk, a weaned child rests in her mother’s care and provision. How can we be like that? (vv. 1-3; Phil. 4:11-13)

Day 5: Read Psalm 130–131 and Luke 18:9-14.

14. This parable in Luke gives us a concrete example of what these two psalms are talking about.

a. How does the Pharisee exemplify the negative attitudes the Psalmist rejects in Psalm 131:1?

b. How is the tax collector like the speaker in Psalm 130?

c. What verdict does Jesus make upon these two men?

15. Examine your heart. How are you proud and haughty like the Pharisee?

How have you shown humility and repentance like the tax collector?

Ask God to align your heart with the truth and to give you rest in him through Jesus.

*The  symbol indicates verses for further study.

Heart to Heart with the Living God

Psalm 62

"My soul finds rest in God alone; my salvation comes from him". Psalm 62:1 (NIV)

This psalm can be read as a prayer of David or as a prayer of Jesus. The questions seek to draw out the meaning behind both readings.

Day 1: Read Psalm 62.

Below are three translations of verse 1.

My soul finds rest in God alone;
my salvation comes from him. *New International Version*

For God alone my soul waits in silence;
from him comes my salvation. *English Standard Version*

I wait quietly before God,
for my victory comes from him. *New Living Translation*

1. For what does the Psalmist wait? What characterizes his waiting?

How did Jesus model the kind of waiting the Psalmist refers to? (1 Pet. 2:21-23)

2. What does verse 2 tell us about the God the Psalmist is resting in and waiting upon?

Day 2: Read Psalm 62.

3. What do you think David's description of himself as a "leaning wall" and "tottering fence" (v. 3) implies?

When might Jesus have spoken these words about his own experience? (Mt. 4:1-3; Lk. 22:41-44, 63-65; Lk. 23:33-34)

4. The intention of David's enemies' is to kick him when he is down (v.4). What does David believe God is committed to doing for him? (vv. 5-7)

What was God committed to doing for Jesus? (Acts 2:22-33)

Day 3: Read Psalm 62.

5. The silence and rest the Psalmist finds in God stand in stark contrast to the noise and pressure he is experiencing from the people in his life. What are his enemies doing and saying that threaten to shake him up? (vv. 3-4)

What were Jesus' enemies doing to try to shake him up? (Mt. 22:15; 26:59; Lk. 4:28-29)

6. What practical things does the Psalmist exhort himself and us to do? (vv. 5, 8; Ps. 142:1-7)

How do we see Jesus doing this? (Lk. 5:16; Lk. 23:46; Heb. 5:7-8)

7. We're sometimes tempted to think that because Jesus was God, he was not deeply affected by his circumstances (like Superman being hit by bullets that just bounce off). How does thinking about this prayer in the mouth of Jesus change your conception of him? (Consider also Heb. 2:14-18; 4:15.)

Days 4 and 5: Read Psalm 62.

8. The Psalmist has reminded us over and over again that God is trustworthy. What things does the Psalmist say are not trustworthy? (vv. 9-10)

Why are these things not worthy of our trust? (vv. 4, 9-10; Mt. 6:19-21, 24)

9. David sums up the character of God by saying that he is both strong and loving. (vv. 11-12) Why would it be difficult to trust God if he possessed either one of these characteristics, but not both?

If God loved us but was not powerful enough to save us, what would be our fate? (1 Cor. 15:17)

If God were all powerful, but didn't love us, what fate would we surely face? (Eph. 2:1-3)

But because God is both powerful and loving, what can we be assured of? (Eph. 2:4-8)

10. Read verse 12. How has God rewarded Jesus for what he has done? (Phil. 2:5-11)

*The  symbol indicates verses for further study.

Heart to Heart with the Living God

Psalm 73

"...God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever." Psalm 73:26b (NIV)

Day 1: Read Psalm 73.

This psalm is written "after the fact"; it contains the Psalmist's reflections on the ways he has responded to the circumstances in his life.

1. What does the Psalmist affirm in verse 1?

How does that set the tone for understanding the psalm?

2. What caused the Psalmist to almost slip and fall? (v. 3)

3. In what ways were the wicked prospering?

v. 4

v. 5

v. 9

v. 10

v. 12

4. What ungodly actions and attitudes does it appear they are "getting away with" ?

v. 6

v. 7

v. 8

v. 11

Days 2 and 3: Read Psalm 73.

5. What words would you use to describe the Psalmist's emotions as he observed the wicked?

6. How does the Psalmist describe himself when his focus was on the wicked? (vv. 21, 22)

7. What erroneous conclusion did the Psalmist come to about his personal commitment to godliness and purity? (v. 13)

8. Why does the Psalmist determine not to speak freely about the frustration he feels? (v. 15)

9. Fill in the chart below to compare the two ways the Psalmist seeks to solve his problem.

Reference	Action taken to solve problem	Result
v. 16		
v. 17		

10. When the Psalmist “went into the sanctuary of God” he went to worship. When we think of worship we must remember that it is much more than singing songs or hymns in church. William Temple wonderfully described worship as:

- the submission of all our nature to God
- the quickening of conscience by His holiness
- the nourishment of mind with His truth
- the purifying of imagination by His beauty
- the opening of the heart to His love;
- the surrender of will to His purpose
- and all of this gathered up in adoration...

How does this understanding of worship explain the dramatic reorientation of the Psalmist’s thinking?

Day 4: Read Psalm 73.

11. With a reoriented heart, how does the Psalmist understand the final destiny of the wicked?

- v. 18
- v. 19
- v. 20
- v. 27

12. Reread verses 23-28 and describe how the Psalmist’s worship experience has brought clarity to the way he thinks about:

- a. himself and his relationship with God

- b. his final destiny

13. The Psalmist was filled with envy before he “entered the sanctuary of God” (v. 17). What fills you with envy?

How does this reveal what you’re hoping in?

14. Describe how worshipping God transforms your attitudes and perspectives? (v. 26)

Heart to Heart with the Living God

Psalm 119

*"Blessed are they whose ways are blameless,
who walk according to the law of the LORD." Psalm 119:1 (NIV)*

Challenge yourself to sit down and read this entire chapter before you begin this lesson.

Day 1: Read Psalm 119:1-32. (God's Law)

The Law was God's covenantal directive; encompassing all the statutes in the torah that reflect God's character and what he requires of his people.

1. Several synonyms for "law" are used throughout the psalm.
 - a. List all the ones you find in today's reading.
 - b. How does the Psalmist's use of these synonyms add to your understanding of the law?
2. Why is the law so important to an Israelite? (Deut. 4:5-8; * Deut. 30:11-20)

Pick a few verses from the psalm that you think illustrate this.

Day 2: Read Psalm 119:33-72. (Life of the Psalmist)

3. The Psalmist is living in a world that does not value or obey God's laws. How does he respond? (vv. 51, 61, 69; * Ps. 119:126-128, 136)
4. What benefit has come from the Psalmist's affliction? (vv. 67, 71)

Think of a time when you strayed from obeying the Lord. How did God bring you back?

5. What attitudes and actions mark the one who loves God's law? (vv. 36-37, 44-45, 58-63)

Day 3: Read Psalm 119:73-104. (Response to the Law)

6. Why is God's law so awesome? (vv. 89-91, 98-99, 103-104)

*The  symbol indicates verses for further study.

7. What are some phrases that the Psalmist uses to describe his feelings towards the law? (vv. 14, 20, 24, 52, 97, 103;  Ps. 119:120, 127, 131)

How does the Psalmist's passion for the Old Testament law compare with the way you feel about God's fuller revelation of himself in Jesus? (Jn. 1:14; Heb. 1:1-3)

Day 4: Read Psalm 119:105-144. (Benefits of the Law)

8. Sometimes we think of God's law as restrictive and oppressive; instead, what is the truth? (vv. 32, 45; Jn. 8:32; Jas. 1:23-25)

9. What are some reasons that the Psalmist wants to obey God's law? (vv. 2, 6-9, 11, 105, 129-130, 140;  Ps. 119:165)

Day 5: Read Psalm 119:145-176. (Longings Expressed)

10. The Psalmist wants to be like the blessed man of verses 1-3 who is obedient to God's law. How does he discipline himself towards that goal? (vv. 9, 11, 15, 16, 24, 147, 164, 166)

11. Even in his desire to be obedient the Psalmist knows he often fails. What does he ask God to do for him? (vv. 10, 12, 18, 156, 169-173)

12. As wonderful as the law is, it is not intended to be an end in itself. Even after the Psalmist's lengthy meditation on God's law, what is he still left longing for? (v.176)

How has the "good Shepherd" sought and found you? (Isa. 53:6; Lk. 15:3-7; 1 Pet. 2:24-25)

Heart to Heart with the Living God

Psalm 45

*"I will perpetuate your memory through all generations;
therefore the nations will praise you for ever and ever."* Psalm 45:17 (NIV)

Day 1: Read Psalm 45.

This psalm was composed for the wedding of a royal son of David.

1. How does the Psalmist describe the king? (v.2)

2. What blessings has God bestowed upon the king, who belongs to the line of David? (v. 2c; Ps. 89:3-4; 20-29)

Days 2 and 3: Read Psalm 45.

3. What kind of warrior is the king? (vv. 3-5)

4. What characterizes the king and his kingdom? (vv. 6b-7)

5. Try to imagine the groom and bride as they prepare for their wedding and the joining of their lives.
 - a. What is the king thinking about? (v. 11)

 - b. How is the bride described? (vv. 9b, 13-14)

 - c. What counsel does the Psalmist give to the bride? (vv. 10-11) Why do you think this counsel would be important for a new wife and queen?

 - d. What words are used to describe the bridal procession? (v. 15)

6. As the bride and groom rejoice in their wedding day, they also look to the future. As they look forward, what do they see? (vv. 16-17)

Days 4 and 5: Read Psalm 45.

7. In what surprising way does the psalmist address the king in verse 6?

This language reflects either that the Davidic king is sitting on God's throne or that he has a very special relationship with God because he is God's representative on earth.

8. How does the writer of Hebrews show that Jesus is the fulfillment of verse 6? (Heb 1:1-9)

9. How does Jesus fit Psalm 45's description of the king in deeper and fuller ways in the following verses:

a. (vv. 2, 6b, 7b; Col. 1: 15-18)

b. (vv. 3-5; Rev. 19:11-16)

c. (v. 6; Lk. 1:26-33)

d. (v. 7b; Phil. 2:9-11)

10. The Israelite king was ordained by God to fight and protect God's people from their enemies.

a. What does Jesus fight against as the divine warrior? (1 Cor. 15:24-26)

b. What has his triumph secured for us? (Eph. 1:18-21; Col. 1:13-14)

11. Who is the bride of the great king Jesus and how is her relationship with him described? (Eph. 5:25-32; *Rev. 19:6-9).

12. The end of this psalm promises great things for the king and his heirs. How do we see the promise of reigning sons play out? (v. 16; Rev. 3:21; Rev. 22:3-5)

13. What does the promise of v. 17 look like in the future? (Rev. 5:9-14)

14. How have you seen Jesus in a new, fresh way while doing this study? Write your answer as a prayer of worship.

*The 📖 symbol indicates verses for further study.

Heart to Heart with the Living God

Psalm 145

"I will exalt you, my God the King; I will praise your name for ever and ever." Psalm 145:1 (NIV)

Day 1: Read Psalm 145.

- David, the writer of this psalm, is the King of Israel, but to whom does he address his praise?

What does this say about David's relationship to God in his role as king? (Ps. 2:4-8; 132:11-18)

- The "I" in this Psalm is David. Who is the "they" (vv. 4-7, 11)? (vv. 4, 10b)

Who else is called upon to praise God? (vv. 10a, 21)

Day 2: Read Psalm 145.

- Fill out the chart listing each separate characteristic of God that is worthy of praise.

The Lord is:

v. 3		v. 8b	
vv. 7a, 9a		vv. 11a, 12b	
vv. 7b, 17		vv. 11b, 12b	
v. 8a		vv. 11b, 12a	
vv. 8a, 9b		v. 13c	
v. 8b		vv. 13d, 17b	

- Think back over the last year and list two or three things for which you can specifically praise God. What aspects of his character do they point to?
- Think of someone from another "generation" (v. 4) to whom you could tell these praises. Pray for an opportunity to tell them. Why is this kind of "telling" so important? (Ps. 78:1-7)

Day 3: Read Psalm 145.

- How does David describe God's works? (vv. 4-6)
 - What are some of the "wonderful works" that David might be referring to? (Ps. 95:3-5; 105:7-11, 37-45; 139:13-14)

b. As Christians, we praise God for how he has done “mighty acts” in Christ. What are they?
(Col. 2:9-14)

7. How has Jesus already begun to fulfill verse 20b? (Col. 2:15; 2 Tim. 1:10)

How will verse 20b finally be fulfilled? (1 Cor. 15:24-27; Rev. 20:7-10, 14)

8. When David describes God as righteous (vv. 7, 17) he is referring to the way that God always does what is right. In verses 14-20a, list all the ways that God shows that he is the righteous King.

Why are these the right things for a good king to do?

9. How does Jesus behave in the same way? (Mt. 9:35-36; 19:13-15; Lk. 6:17-22)

Day 4: Read Psalm 145.

10. Find the many action words in verses 1-7 that describe the act of praise.

Apart from “meditate,” what do they all have in common? (v. 21a)

11. How would you define the difference between the following types of praise?
(Feel free to refer to a dictionary.)

exalt (v. 1)

extol (vv. 2, 10)

proclaim (v. 6)

12. Sometimes it’s hard to genuinely praise God. Why do you think public (corporate) praise is important, especially when you are going through tough times?

Day 5: Read Psalm 145.

13. In our study this year we have seen the Psalmist constantly crying out to God in desperation, asking for help and rescue. What is the promise in verse 18?

How has God been faithful and kept this promise to you this year?

“Speak of it” in your group and prepare to “proclaim it” publicly at the sharing time next week.