



Talk to Me

PSALMS

STUDY GUIDE



TALK TO ME

a study of the Psalms

late autumn 2025

Contents

daily bible reading plan6
1) my helper	<i>Psalm 121</i>8
2) the living one	<i>Psalm 84:1-7</i>13
3) my healer	<i>Psalm 32:1-7</i>18
4) my savior	<i>Psalm 17:1-9</i>23
5) my refuge	<i>Psalm 98</i>28
suggested further reading33
a place for prayer requests34

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Welcome to our five-week series on the Psalms. I've heard from many of you that you love this book. The Psalms are your favorite! But I've heard from just as many others (perhaps more!) that you aren't sure what to do with the Psalms. They don't tell you what to do. They don't describe the life of Jesus. You find the Psalms confusing, if not off-putting.

Good news.

No matter where you find yourself today: excited, uncertain, or somewhere in between, have no fear. The Psalms are a deep delight, a conversation between God and God's people (that's us!). They teach us to trust, to pray, to celebrate, and to grieve. But not by telling us how.

Instead of being prescriptive (here's how!), the Psalms are primarily descriptive. They show us how to pray and invite us into a beautiful, conversational relationship with God. That's why we're calling this series:

talk to me

The Psalms are an invitation to us to bring our whole selves to God. To pray through our fears and anxieties, our joys and sorrows, even our anger and rage. God welcomes all of us—the messy and ugly parts, the things we are proudest of, and those we'd rather forget.

Picture a loving parent with arms outstretched, beckoning you to come closer, to be enfolded in a safe, warm, divine embrace.

"Tell me all about it," God says to us. "I'm listening."

If prayer has been difficult for you in the past, if you're not sure where to begin or what to say, or if you feel your prayers have grown stale and are in need of fresh inspiration, the Psalms are the perfect guide.

Let's walk through them together! *Pastor Courtney*

TALK TO ME: PSALMS

Daily Bible Reading Plan

Dates: October 19 - November 16

Memory Verses: Psalms 1:1-6

Reading and Praying the Psalms

- As we dive into the Psalms in this series, our reading plan will reflect an ancient Christian practice: the goal of reading and praying through the entire Book of Psalms regularly. Indeed, many monasteries and daily prayer guides still aim to read all 150 Psalms in 30 or 60 days! The goal of this reading is to engage the Psalms as a “school of prayer,” a “training ground” for praying through the entire spectrum of human experience and emotions.
- Accordingly, in this daily reading plan we’ll recovery this practice! The first 5 weeks parallel the sermon series (which ends on Nov. 16), but we’ve provided below resources for a full reading of the Psalms in 60 days!

Introductory Stuff:

- **Video:** *How to Read the Bible: Poetry*
- **Video:** *The Psalms: Introduction*
- **Reading:** *The School of the Psalms*, Eugene Peterson
- **Reading:** *The Psalms as a Tool*, Eugene Peterson

Week 1

- ☐ 10/19: Psalms 1, 2, 3
- ☐ • **Reading:** *Way*
- ☐ 10/20: Psalms 4, 5, 6
- ☐ 10/21: Psalms 7, 8, 9
- ☐ • **Podcast:** *Praying Fear*
- ☐ 10/22: Psalms 10, 11, 12, 13
- ☐ 10/23: Psalms 14, 15, 16, 17
- ☐ 10/24: Psalm 18
- ☐ 10/25: Psalm 19, 20, 21

Week 2

- ☐ 10/26: Psalms 22, 23, 24
- ☐ • **Podcast:** *Praying Pain*
- ☐ 10/27: Psalms 25, 26, 27
- ☐ 10/28: Psalms 28, 29, 30, 31
- ☐ 10/29: Psalms 32, 33, 34
- ☐ • **Podcast:** *Praying Confession*
- ☐ 10/30: Psalms 35, 36
- ☐ 10/31: Psalm 37
- ☐ 11/1: Psalms 38, 39

Week 3

- ☐ 11/2: Psalms 40, 41, 42
- ☐ • **Podcast: David and the Psalms**
- ☐ 11/3: Psalms 43, 44, 45
- ☐ 11/4: Psalms 46, 47, 48
- ☐ 11/5: Psalms 49, 50
- ☐ 11/6: Psalms 51, 52, 53, 54
- ☐ 11/7: Psalms 55, 56
- ☐ 11/8: Psalms 57, 58, 59

Week 5

- ☐ 11/16: Psalms 76, 77
- ☐ 11/17: Psalm 78
- ☐ 11/18: Psalms 79, 80
- ☐ 11/19: Psalms 81, 82, 83
- ☐ 11/20: Psalms 84, 85, 86
- ☐ 11/21: Psalms 87, 88
- ☐ 11/22: Psalm 89
- ☐ • **Podcast: The Dragon Slayer**

Week 7

- ☐ 11/30: Psalm 106
- ☐ 12/1: Psalm 107
- ☐ 12/2: Psalms 108, 109
- ☐ 12/3: Psalms 110, 111, 112, 113
- ☐ • **Reading: Unself-Centered**
- ☐ 12/4: Psalms 114, 115, 116
- ☐ 12/5: Psalms 117, 118
- ☐ • **Podcast: Passover Psalms**
- ☐ 12/6: Psalm 119:1-48

Week 9

- ☐ 12/14: Psalms 139, 140
- ☐ 12/15: Psalms 141, 142, 143
- ☐ 12/16: Psalms 144, 145, 146
- ☐ 12/17: Psalms 147, 148, 149, 150
- ☐ • **Reading: End**

Week 4

- ☐ 11/9: Psalms 60, 61, 62, 63
- ☐ 11/10: Psalms 64, 65, 66
- ☐ 11/11: Psalms 67, 68
- ☐ 11/12: Psalm 69
- ☐ 11/13: Psalms 70, 71
- ☐ 11/14: Psalms 72, 73
- ☐ • **Podcast: Praying Doubt**
- ☐ 11/15: Psalms 74, 75

Week 6

- ☐ 11/23: Psalms 90, 91, 92
- ☐ 11/24: Psalms 93, 94, 95
- ☐ 11/25: Psalms 96, 97
- ☐ 11/26: Psalms 98, 99, 100, 101
- ☐ 11/27: Psalms 102, 103
- ☐ • **Reading: Unself-Government**
- ☐ 11/28: Psalm 104
- ☐ 11/29: Psalm 105

Week 8

- ☐ 12/7: Psalm 119:49-88
- ☐ 12/8: Psalm 119:89-136
- ☐ 12/9: Psalm 119:137-176
- ☐ 12/10: Psalms 120-124
- ☐ 12/11: Psalms 125-131
- ☐ 12/12: Psalms 132-135
- ☐ 12/13: Psalms 136, 137, 138
- ☐ • **Reading: Enemies**

1

my helper

PSALM 121

MEMORY VERSE

“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..”

– PSALM 1:1

AN INVITATION TO SPIRITUAL PRACTICE:

A BEGINNER’S PRAYER

Prayer is easier for some of us than others. We may enjoy it or we may find it boring, confusing, or even scary sometimes. We may wonder why we need to tell God things when God already knows everything anyway!

Take a moment or two and reflect upon your prayer life and any experiences (positive, negative, or in between) related to prayer. Then tell God how you feel about prayer. You may wish to use the following outline, or you may prefer to pray freely on your own.

*Dear God,
Prayer feels very _____ to me. Often when I pray, I find myself _____. I wish my prayer life was more/less _____. My favorite part of talking to you is _____. During this study, I’d like to learn how to pray with greater _____. Amen.*

Then reflect: What did you learn about how you view prayer? About God’s willingness to connect with you in your prayers?

AN INVITATION TO STUDY:

Psalms 120-134 are “Psalms of ascents,” as are all the Psalms from 120-134. Scholars believe these Psalms were classified in this way for two possible reasons: 1) Jewish worshipers sang them on their way up the steep road to Jerusalem for the Three Pilgrimage Festivals or 2) Levites sang them as they ascended the fifteen steps to the temple in Jerusalem.

Each Psalm of ascents is well-suited for singing. In the original Hebrew language, they are comprised of short, easy syllables and poetic form. In any translation, their joy and hopefulness resounds.

Read Psalm 121:1-2 aloud.

Q1. Where does our help come from? What does the Psalmist tell us about the Lord in these verses?

At the time this Psalm was written, there were many pagan altars set atop the hills near Jerusalem. These “high places” had been a scourge to King David and he repeatedly destroyed them. Then, when his son Solomon ascended to the throne, he dabbled in allowing them back (partly to please some of his unbelieving wives). God consistently speaks against idols, but even at Israel’s most obedient, signs of idolatry dotted the hilltops all around.

Q2. When the Psalmist looked up to the mountains, what might he have been looking for? What might he have seen that reminded him of God’s help?

Read Psalm 121:3-6 aloud.

Q3. What will *not* happen to us while we are in God's care? What two things does the Psalmist say the Lord will do for us?

Read Psalm 121:7-8 aloud.

Q4. What harm will the Lord protect us from? How long will the Lord watch over us?

AN INVITATION TO REFLECTION:

Q1. The Psalmist looks up to the mountains for help (v.1). Describe a few places you tend to look for help. What are some of the 'high places' in our culture? How often do you go to the Lord first, when you are in need of help? Why do you think this is?

Q2. This Psalm describes the tender, constant care of God, but it also raises the question: where is God when harm occurs? When Pastor Courtney was a high school student,

her foot literally slipped at soccer practice (v.3) resulting in a broken ankle, surgery, and an entire year out of sports. How do we understand this Psalm's assurances in light of a world filled with harms?

Q3. Many things can make sleep difficult, from anxiety to injury to aging. The great novelist Victor Hugo is believed to have written, "Have courage for the great sorrows of life and patience for the small ones; and when you have laboriously accomplished your daily task, go to sleep in peace. God is awake." How might it affect your sleep to remember that God is awake (v.3-4)?

Q4. The Middle East is no stranger to the dangers of the scorching sun, but many ancient near-eastern cultures also harbored suspicions about the moon's power to bring madness. (The North American legend of the werewolf is in a similar vein.) As such, v.5-6 may also be read to mean, "The Lord will watch over your physical health and your mental health." What does it mean to you that God doesn't just care about your soul, but your body and spirit as well?

AN INVITATION TO ACTION:

You're invited to choose one or more of the following to do on your own over the next week as a way of deepening the lesson of the Bible study through action. For our series on the Psalms, each will be related to a practice of prayer. Choose one today and make a plan to undertake it before next week's study.

1. Memorize!

Commit Psalm 121 to memory. If music might help in your learning, there's a beautiful interpretation of it by Kristyn Getty here: <https://tinyurl.com/2vz7enwn>

2. Download a prayer app

A guide to prayer can be just the thing to help you focus throughout the day. The free Venite app was designed by a Canadian Anglican priest, and it offers several options for daily prayer that weaves together Scripture, "collects" (a noun, not a verb: prayers written by pastors and faith leaders over the years), and opportunities for meditation. Pastor Courtney uses it frequently to guide her in midday prayer and finds it really useful and gentle.

3. Recite this Psalm while walking

The Psalms of ascent were designed to be spoken or sung while on the move! Print out the Psalm or find it on your phone, and then walk while speaking it. How does it change your experience of the Psalm to recite it while in motion?

2

the living one

PSALM 84:1-7

MEMORY VERSE

“...but whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and who meditates on his law day and night.”

– PSALM 1:2

AN INVITATION TO SPIRITUAL PRACTICE:

IMAGINATIVE PRAYER

The Psalms love word pictures. From “God is my rock” to “the righteous person is like a tree,” they invite us to use our own imaginations in prayer. We can draw parallels between the created world and the spiritual one.

For today’s exercise, take a moment and think about a beautiful place that you love. Maybe it’s your garden, a favorite beach, a window overlooking a park, or a mountain vista. Picture it in your mind and think about how it sounds, feels, smells, and looks. Then think about how that beautiful place reflects God’s glory. Pray this reflection back to God. You may wish to use the following prayer, or to come up with your own:

O God, I love __[place name]__. When I am there, I feel _____. I see _____. I hear _____. [Place name] reminds me of your _____ and your _____. Give me eyes to see your love and truth everywhere I go. Amen.

Then reflect: How might using your memory and imagination add color and vitality to your prayer life?

AN INVITATION TO STUDY:

This Psalm is attributed to the “Sons of Korah,” people who scholars believe were temple musicians. (The other group mentioned in the Psalms are the “Sons of Asaph.”) These temple musicians have 24 of our 150 Psalms attributed to them. The majority of the remaining Psalms are attributed to David, one to Solomon, and the final third are sometimes referred to as “orphan Psalms” because they have no author listed.

Read Psalm 84:1-2 aloud.

Q1. Where does the Psalmist want to go? Who does he want to be near?

Read Psalm 84:3-4 aloud.

Q2. The authors of the Psalms were keen observers of the natural world. What two birds are mentioned here? Contrary to popular belief, the vast majority of birds don’t live in nests. They only build and use them to lay eggs and raise their nestlings. What do you think it means that even birds— including fragile baby birds!—are welcomed near God’s altar?

Read Psalm 84:5-6 aloud.

Q3. What do you think it means to have strength in God (v.5)? How are those people blessed?

Q4. The Valley of Baka was a desert wasteland, but as those who find their strength in God passed through the desolate valley, it became green and alive. What might this imaginative description mean? (Hint: It doesn't mean that literal deserts will turn into lush paradises. It's getting at something else!)

AN INVITATION TO REFLECTION:

In *The Psalms and the Life of Faith*, Walter Brueggemann writes, "Two movements in human life are important: (a) deep reluctance to let loose of a world that has passed away, and (b) capacity to embrace a new world being given." This Psalm paints a picture of the good, beautiful world God promises to us—not just someday in heaven, but right now as we walk according to his ways.

Q1. What do you long for (v.1-2)? Think first of something small (a brownie, a good night's sleep, a new pair of sunglasses, etc.) and then think of something huge (peace in your family, an end to war, justice for an oppressed group, etc.). Imagine what it would be like to see each of these longings fulfilled. How might these longings echo a deeper longing for God to make things right?

Q2. Think of a place where you have felt very safe. Perhaps a grandparent's house when you were a child, a favorite tree fort, or a bed covered in pillows. Now imagine: what would it feel like to "dwell in the house of the Lord"?

Q3. What does it mean to you to be spiritually strong (v.5)? How can we stay connected to the strength that comes from God?

Q4. A pilgrimage is a spiritual journey. Some people make a pilgrimage to a holy site or city—Muslims to Mecca, for example, or Christians to Jerusalem. Others make spiritual pilgrimages—journeys closer to God through spiritual practices. What do you think it means to have your heart "set on pilgrimage" (v.5)? What pilgrimage, big or small, is your heart set on today?

AN INVITATION TO ACTION:

1. Go birding as a spiritual practice

Set aside half an hour and go to a place where birds are likely to be (birds love plants and water, so anywhere from a backyard to the beach to a local park will work!). Find a comfortable spot and sit quietly, watching and listening. What do you see? What do you hear? What do you notice happening in your own mind and heart as you sit quietly? Where is God?

2. Draw a prayer

What is your heart set on? Artistically depict it this week through drawing, paint, collage, sculpture, song, or dance. How does expressing that longing to God through creative means change your understanding of prayer? Of God?

3. Make a pilgrimage—to the grocery store!

A journey of any kind can be a spiritual one. This week, when you have to run a usual errand (I suggest the grocery store, but any errand will do!), undertake it with your spiritual senses honed. Go with God's strength and your eyes and heart open. Who do you see that Jesus loves? How might you offer a silent prayer in their behalf? Who do you notice who might need a hand? How can you gently offer to help? What do you notice about your own heart and mind as you tune in to the work of God on a simple errand?

3

my healer

PSALM 32:1-7

MEMORY VERSE

“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.”

– PSALM 1:3

AN INVITATION TO SPIRITUAL PRACTICE: *CONFESSION*

The practice of confessing our sins is a deeply Christian one. While it can be scary to admit our sins, it is the first step in turning from them.

In *Life Together*, Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote, “One who confesses his sins in the presence of a brother knows that he is no longer alone with himself; he experiences the presence of God in the reality of the other person.” Today we will pray a simple prayer of confession.

Most merciful God, I/we confess that I/we have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, both by what we have done and by what we have left undone. Specifically, this week [Name specifics here.] We have not loved you with our whole heart. We have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We are truly sorry and we humbly repent. For the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ, have mercy on us and forgive us, that we may delight in your will and walk in your ways, to the glory of your name. Amen.

Then reflect: how might engaging in regular confession help you walk away from your sin and into God’s light?

AN INVITATION TO STUDY:

Read Psalm 32:1-2 aloud.

Q1. Who is blessed, according to the Psalmist? Who has sins that don't count against them?

Read Psalm 32:3-4 aloud.

In *God's Prayer Book*, Ben Patterson writes, "No one knows what David's unspecified ailment was. But a lot of things can go wrong with the rest of us when something as toxic as sin is left untended."

This is not to say that any physical ailment is a direct result of sin. (Jesus dispels that notion quite thoroughly in John 9:1-3!) It does mean, however, that our sin can have actual physical consequences. Can you think of a time you ate too much candy and then got a stomachache? What about a time that you told a lie and then got a stomachache? The first example is a physical reaction to a physical reality (too much sugar!). The second is a physical reaction to a spiritual problem (feeling guilty about your deceit!).

Q2. What caused David's suffering? How did he feel? What role do you think sin had in his pain?

Read Psalm 32:5-7 aloud.

Q3. What began David's healing journey (v.5)? Why do you think his confession was so important?

Q4. Who does David say should pray to God (v.6)? What do you think the "mighty waters" might represent?

AN INVITATION TO REFLECTION:

Q1. When we stumble into sin, it can be very tempting to hide, deny, or double down on it. Can you think of any example of this from pop culture, songs, or literature? Can you think of an example from your own life?

Q2. Confession is a way of coming clean to God. We stop hiding and step into the light, receiving God's grace, mercy, and forgiveness. God will never shame us. Has someone ever forgiven you like this? Share (or write) the story.

Q3. After his confession, David goes from despair to joy. Reconciled to God, he encourages everyone to do the same (v.6). How can joy like this be contagious? Have you ever felt joy so deep you just had to share it? Share (or write) the story.

Q4. Search your heart and prayerfully ask God if there are any sins that come to light. Sometimes we are very aware of our sin; other times patterns of sin may be hidden from us. (But these are often very obvious to others! If you're brave, you can ask a close friend or family member if they've noticed any areas of impatience, unlove, or a lack of self-control or other sin in your life.) Go back to our opening prayer of confession and pray the prayer with these new details, either alone or with a trusted friend, group, or pastor.

AN INVITATION TO ACTION:

1. Confess daily

Nothing makes a spiritual practice easier than... practice! Confess your sins to God each day this week, either alone or with a trusted friend or family member. Then reflect: does this process help you draw closer to God? Does it make you more mindful of your sin and quicker to step away from it? What other things do you notice about the effects of this spiritual practice?

2. Share the joy of forgiveness

Pastor Rich Villodas was once told by a friend that Christianity was “like a crutch for the weak.” Rich responded that it wasn’t a crutch, it was more like a gurney or a morgue! “We are dead in our sins,” he told his friend. “Jesus brings us new life.” If you feel joy in the forgiveness that Jesus offers, find a way to share that joy with a friend, family member, or neighbor this week. Maybe it’s just the joy they’ve been looking for!

3. Meditate to music

Psalms 32 describes God as a “hiding place.” Look up Jars of Clay’s song, “Hiding Place,” by Daniel Herbert and give it a listen. (You can find one version here: <https://tinyurl.com/2evdf47f>) As you listen to it, close your eyes and picture the way God cares for, protects, and shields you. Let the music wash over you and thank God for his loving care. (You may wish to listen to the song more than once!)

4

my savior

PSALM 17:1-9

MEMORY VERSE

“Not so the wicked! They are like chaff that the wind blows away.
Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment,
nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous.”

– PSALM 1:4-5

AN INVITATION TO SPIRITUAL PRACTICE:

PRAYERS FOR HELP

Anne Lamott once wrote that the two prayers she prays most often are, “Help me, help me, help me,” and “thank you, thank you, thank you.” Seeking God’s assistance isn’t selfish—God invites it! We can ask for help for others, but we are also welcome to ask for help for ourselves.

Take a moment to ponder: Where do you need help in your life today? Where are you feeling discouraged, in need of practical assistance, or ready for fresh inspiration? Pray to God for help, either in your own words, or with the following prayer:

*Dear God, I could really use your help with _____.
Help me to trust that you see me and love me, that nothing
in my life is outside of your concern. Give me eyes to see your
hand at work, and a heart of trust in your love. Amen.*

Then reflect: How did it feel to ask God for help? Do you often pray for help or almost never? Why do you think this is?

AN INVITATION TO STUDY:

Read Psalm 17:1-2 aloud.

Q1. What three things is David asking God for?

While in Psalm 32 (last week's Scripture), David is confessing his sin, in Psalm 17 he is sure of his faithfulness before God. There will be times in our lives for both types of prayer—confessing and turning from sin when we've erred, and asking God for vindication when we have sought to do the right thing.

Read Psalm 17:3-5 aloud.

Q2. In what ways has David kept to the paths God commands? What evidence does David offer?

Read Psalm 17:6-9 aloud.

Q3. What is David certain of (v.6)? Where do you think this certainty comes from?

This Psalm was likely written when David was on the run from a bloodthirsty King Saul. His enemies were real. He truly was surrounded.

It can be hard to find ourselves in a prayer like this. Few of us are on the run from mortal enemies. Few of us are surrounded by bloodthirsty warriors. And yet, we do have very real enemies in our lives. Cancer is an enemy. Loneliness can be an enemy. While Jesus commands us to love our human enemies, this does not mean we are called to welcome illness or celebrate pain.

Q4. What is David asking God for now? Who is David afraid of? Who is he surrounded by?

AN INVITATION TO REFLECTION:

Q1. David is very certain that his cause is just. How can we discern whether or not we are right? What danger is there in assuming we are always on the side of goodness or justice?

Q2. Who can help us discern whether we are right or wrong? List at least three people. How might v. 3 help guide us in our discernment?

Q3. What enemies do you face in your life? Which are you called to love (hint: any human ones!)? Which “enemy” might God be encouraging you to overcome through prayer, community, or another avenue for healing? Which “enemy” might be part of your life for its whole length? (Pastor Daryl’s mom is suffering from a cancer that her doctors tell her won’t kill her, but can’t be cured. She will live with it until she dies.)

Q4. David is very certain that God will answer him (v. 6). Do you feel a similar certainty? Why or why not? Can you think of a time when God answered your prayer? What about a time when it seemed like your prayer went unanswered?

AN INVITATION TO ACTION:

1. Ask for (and accept!) help

It can be much easier to give help than to receive it. But in our lives as Christians, we are always receivers first. We receive the love and grace and salvation of Jesus without earning or deserving it.

This week, think of an area of your life where you could use some help. Maybe your yard is overgrown and you're facing health issues that make it hard to mow. Perhaps you have a paper due at school that just won't come together. Maybe you're overwhelmed and could use a meal that you didn't have to prepare yourself (or drive thru to get!).

Think of someone you know who loves you. Perhaps a friend, family member, neighbor, or even your deacon. Reach out this week and ask for practical, short-term help.

2. Love your enemies

One of the hardest commands in all of Scripture is Jesus's instruction to us to love our enemies (Matt. 5:44). Take a few moments and reflect: who do you struggle to love? Maybe it's a single irritating person at your lunch table. Perhaps it's an entire group of people you struggle not to stereotype or look down upon. Take this difficulty into your prayers: tell God all about who you find difficult to love, and ask for God's help in loving them like he does.

Then, find one practical way to show God's love to the person or group you have felt enmity toward or who bug you.

3. Refresh your memorization

We are near to the end of our study! If you've committed to memorizing Scripture, either the daily verses or Psalm 121, take some time this week to go back over them.

5

my refuge

PSALM 98

MEMORY VERSE

“For the Lord watches over the way of the righteous,
but the way of the wicked leads to destruction.”

– PSALM 1:6

AN INVITATION TO SPIRITUAL PRACTICE: *MUSIC*

In *The Dangerous Act of Worship*, Mark Labberton writes, “Something happens when God’s people sing. This is a time in our culture when music is so often about public performance and watching others sing. But something extraordinary can happen in our lives when we use our own voices to reach up to God through music.”

The Psalms were meant to be prayed, but they were also meant to be sung! Whether or not you’re musical, today we’re going to brave a sung Psalm. Shane and Shane’s Psalm 98 (Sing Unto the Lord) sets today’s Psalm to music. You can find it here: <https://tinyurl.com/yfutfjzj>

As you listen to it (and sing along, if you like!), close your eyes and raise your hands. Let the words wash over you and imagine what it may have been like for early believers to sing this song together in worship.

Then reflect: How does music affect our experience of God? Of prayer? What role does music have in your life of worship and in your connection with God?

AN INVITATION TO STUDY:

Read Psalm 98: 1-3 aloud.

Q1. What type of song are we asked to sing to the Lord? Why are we to sing it to him? Why do you think the Psalmist asks us to sing a *new* song?

Read Psalm 98: 4-6 aloud.

Q2. What instruments are we to use in our praise to God, according to the Psalmist? Which ones do we use today? Are there any that would you want to add to this list?

Read Psalm 98: 7-9 aloud.

Q3. All of creation gets in on the action in these verses, praising God together. What do you think it means that even the natural world joins in the praise to God?

Q4. At this Psalm's end, the Lord's judgment is viewed in a positive, even joyful light. Does this resonate with you, or does the judgment of God strike a different chord in your heart? Describe your response.

AN INVITATION TO REFLECTION:

Q1. It can be easy to fall into a rut in our spiritual lives, singing the same old songs (both literally and metaphorically!). How can you heed the Psalmist's call to "sing to the Lord a new song" (v.1) this week? In what ways might it benefit us to worship the Lord with new words or in new ways?

Q2. Have you ever shouted for joy? Share (or write) the story.

Q3. Have you ever experienced deep joy in God? If you have, share (or write) the story. If you haven't, spend a few moments thinking about why that might be. Where else in your life do you find deep joy? Might there be any connection between that joy and the love of God?

Q4. Many Psalms are very personal (forgive my sin, heal my affliction, help me in my time of need, vindicate me from my enemies, etc). In contrast, this one is very broad. It calls us to lift our eyes to all of creation, to the nations of the world, and to the entire earth. How might this type of perspective enliven our faith and broaden our horizons?

AN INVITATION TO ACTION:

1. Sing to the Lord

Set aside time this week to sing to the Lord. Maybe you're naturally musical and want to get out a guitar or sit at a piano and belt out worship songs. Perhaps you're shyer or don't consider yourself a musical person. That's okay! Load up a worship song or two and sing along in your car or in your shower. Don't judge your talent—this isn't a performance; it's one more way to express your love for God.

2. Rejoice with God in nature

Many Psalms focus on creation as a way of noticing and rejoicing in the love and care of God. This week, set aside time to go on a nature walk in a beautiful place. As you walk, thank God for what you see. You may wish to read Psalm 98 as part of your time outdoors, putting ancient words to the beauty that sits right before your eyes.

3. Prepare for Advent

Our Advent study will begin next week! (Advent starts in two weeks, on Sunday, November 30th, but we like to give you a little head start on the Advent study, since many people take a few weeks off around Christmas.) Pick up your copy on the patio or at the church office and prepare to dive in deeper with Jesus this Advent.

Bibliography & Suggestions for Further Reading:

Anthony Bloom, *Beginning to Pray*

Walter Bruggemann, *The Psalms and the Life of Faith*

Mark Labberton, *The Dangerous Act of Worship*

Anne Lamott, *Help, Thanks, Wow*

James L. Mays, *Psalms: Interpretation Commentary*

Emily McGowin, *Households of Faith*

Ben Patterson, *God's Prayer Book*

A Place for Prayer Requests



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STUDY GUIDE