

The *Psalms* of David



*"Taste and see that the LORD is good;
blessed is the man who takes refuge in him."
Psalm 34:8*

WALKING WITH GOD

(11 BIBLE STUDIES)

EXAMINATION

BIBLE STUDIES

CONTENTS

Contents	page 03
Getting the most out of these studies	page 04
Introducing the Psalms of David	pages 05-07
Study 1: Psalm 23 – Shepherd King	pages 08-09
Study 2: Psalm 139 – Fearfully and Wonderfully made	pages 10-11
Study 3: Psalm 27 – Seeking God with Confidence	pages 12-13
Study 4: Psalm 19 – A Revelation of God	pages 14-15
Study 5: Psalm 51 – Undeserved Forgiveness	pages 16-17
Study 6: Psalm 40 – Rescued from the pit	pages 18-19
Study 7: Psalm 103 – Praise the Lord O My Soul	pages 20-21
Study 8: Psalm 18 – A Song of Praise	pages 22-23
Study 9: Psalm 34 – The Goodness of God	pages 24-25
Study 10: Psalm 145 – From Generation to Generation	pages 26-27
Study 11: Psalm 42-43 – A Downcast Soul	pages 28-29
Additional Quotations	page 30
Memory Verses	page 32

THE SMALL PRINT

THE HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION®, NIV® Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.™ Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide. "New International Version" and "NIV" are registered trademarks of Biblica, Inc.™
Used with permission under fair usage.

Studies © Steve McClure 2018 & 2019

Front Cover Graphic © Stephen Hartwell 2020 and (image: mojtaba-hoseini-amAw0jciK1s-unsplash)

Not to be copied for commercial purposes. Permission is granted to use unaltered and attributed for non-commercial purposes.

GETTING THE MOST OUT OF THESE STUDIES

Your Commitment

I would encourage you to make a commitment to attending your group regularly. I realise that sometimes there are things that get in the way, but do prioritise studying the Bible with other. This will involve sacrifice, and effective use of your time, but I really believe that in doing so you will get the most out of studying the Bible and praying together in your small group.

Your Contribution

What you put into the group is going to determine what you get out of the group. I encourage you to contribute honestly to the discussion and workings of the group. I understand people come from different backgrounds with unique personalities & life experiences. But, we all have a big part to play, so I encourage you to be fully present and take ownership of your group.

Your Preparation

These materials are primarily for use in preparing and/or leading group discussions, but they will also be useful in keeping your thoughts together in one place. The materials provide you with the passage so that you can identify and highlight recurring themes and note down your own thoughts and questions. Also, the materials include questions designed to provoke thought, and help you reflect on what the passage meant, both at the time it was written, and also what it means for us now.

I would encourage you to make good use of these materials, as doing so will help you contribute and get the most out of the group discussions. The materials are, however, only “tools” – they are there to help you, and not to restrict you, or force you to think in a certain manner. I want to see God speaking to you through these passages, and if the questions or notes don't help you, simply don't use them!

I have also included within these materials an introduction to the book. Make of this what you will, but I hope that it is helpful in getting you started with these studies!

Your Leadership

Here are some useful pointers in how to lead your Bible study group. Be aware that included in this study guide are more questions than you can possibly ask and/or answer in one session. They are not designed to be used rigidly, and there will rarely be a need to ask every question! Make sure that you spend some time praying at the start and ensure you read & re-read the passages as much as possible. In relation to the passages, then consider the suggested questions with an open mind. There is rarely “a single right answer” and I would encourage you to share your thoughts with your group.

I have also included a number of quotations from relevant Christian literature, most of which are readily available online if you want to do further thinking or study. My prayer is that as you study together you would grow to love Jesus and experience Him more deeply.

I would appreciate your feedback and suggestions on how to make these materials even better!

*Steve McClure
Spring 2019*

INTRODUCING THE PSALMS OF DAVID

Of the 150 Psalms, David wrote 75 of them. He is mentioned as the author in the titles of 73 psalms (3-3-9; 11-41; 51-65; 68-70; 86; 101; 103; 108-110; 122; 124; 131; 133 and 138-145. Additionally David is referenced as the author of two further Psalms which are quoted in the New Testament: specifically Psalm 2 (see Acts 4:25) and Psalm 95 (Hebrews 4:7).

Included is a list from www.blueletterbible.org of the Psalms from David's era (not all are written by David) along with their *probable* date and occasion. Make of this what you will. While many of David's Psalms lack clear context or background (and therefore are very hard to place in a timeline) there are fourteen which do state their setting clearly in their introductions:

Psalm 3: *A Psalm of David, when he fled from Absalom his son*

Psalm 7: *A Shiggaion of David, which he sang to the Lord concerning the words of Cush, a Benjaminite.*

Psalm 18: *A Psalm of David when he sang to the Lord after the Lord delivered him from the hand of all his enemies and from the hand of Saul.*

Psalm 30: *A Psalm of David. A song at the dedication of the temple.*

Psalm 34: *Of David, when he changed his behaviour before Ahimelech, so that he drove him out, and he went away.*

Psalm 51: *A Psalm of David, when Nathan the prophet went to him, after he had gone in to Bathsheba*

Psalm 52: *A Maskil/Maschil of David, when Doeg, the Edomite, came and told Saul, "David has come to the house of Ahimelech."*

Psalm 54: *A Maskil of David, when the Ziphites went and told Saul, "Is not David hiding among us?"*

Psalm 56: *A Miktam of David, when the Philistines seized him in Gath.*

Psalm 57: *A Miktam of David, when he fled from Saul, in the cave.*

Psalm 59: *A Miktam of David, when Saul sent men to watch his house in order to kill him.*

Psalm 60: *A Miktam of David; for instruction; when he strove with Aram-naharaim and with Aram-zobah, and when Joab on his return struck down twelve thousand of Edom in the Valley of Salt.*

Psalm 63: *A Psalm of David, when he was in the wilderness of Judah.*

Psalm 142: *A Maskil of David, when he was in the cave. A Prayer.*

For the purpose of this series we have selected some of the best known Psalms which also hit upon some key themes. The aim would be to study these Psalms in conjunction with some of the history recorded in 1&2 Samuel, 1 Chronicles and 1 Kings 1-2. A separate study guide on the Life of David is also available and includes a further 10 studies.

David's psalms express a heart devoted to God. In them we see the depth of David's relationship with God throughout the highs and lows of his life. We see the inner life of David who was described as a man of God's own heart. His music comforted King Saul, influenced his nation, and continues to have an impact through our lives today.

Every blessing,

Steve McClure, September 2018

CHRONOLOGY: PSALMS FROM THE LIFE OF DAVID

Psalms	After What Scripture	Probable Occasion on Which Each Psalm was Composed	B.C.
9	1Sa 17:4, or 1Ch 16:43	On the victory over Goliath	1063
11	1Sa 19:3	When David was advised to flee to the mountains	1062
59	1Sa 19:17	On Saul surrounding the town of David	1061
17	1Sa 22:19	On the murder of the priests by Doeg	1060
31	1Sa 23:12	On David's persecution by Saul	1060
34	1Sa 21:15	On David's leaving the city of Gath	1060
35, 52	1Sa 22:19	On David's persecution by Doeg	1060
54	1Sa 23:23	On the treachery of the Ziphims to David	1060
56	1Sa 21:15	When David was with the Philistines in Gath	1060
64	1Sa 22:19	On David's persecution by Saul	1060
109, 140	1Sa 22:19	On David's persecution by Doeg	1060
142	1Sa 22:1	Prayer of David in the cave of Adullam	1060
57	1Sa 24:22	On David's refusal to kill Saul in the cave	1058
58	1Sa 24:22	Continuation of Ps. 57	1058
63	1Sa 24:22	Prayer of David in the wilderness of Engedi	1058
141	1Sa 27:1	Prayer of David when driven from Judea	1055
143	2Sa 17:29	During the war with Absalom	1053
144	2Sa 17:29	On the victory over Absalom	1053
96, 105, 106	1Ch 16:43	On the removal of the ark from Obed-Edom's house	1051
132	1Ch 15:14	On the second removal of the ark	1051
139	1Ch 13:4	Prayer of David when made king over all Israel	1048
68	2Sa 6:11	On the first removal of the ark	1045
2	1Ch 17:27	On the delivery of the promise by Nathan to David-a prophecy of Christ's kingdom	1044
16	1Ch 17:27, or 1Sa 27	On the delivery of the promise by Nathan to David	1044
22	1Ch 17:27	On the delivery of the promise by Nathan; or in sever persecution	1044
45, 110, 118	1Ch 17:27	On the promise by Nathan to David	1044
60, 108	1Ki 11:20	On the conquest of Edom by Joab	1040
20, 21	2Sa 10:19	On the war with the Ammonites and Syrians	1036
32, 33, 103	2Sa 12:15	On the pardon of David's adultery	1034

51	2Sa 12:15	Confession of David after his adultery	1034
3	2Sa 15:29	On David's flight from Absalom	1023
4, 5	2Sa 17:29	During the flight from Absalom	1023
7	2Sa 16:14	On the reproaches of Shimei	1023
42, 43 & 55	2Sa 17:29	On David's flight from Absalom	1023
62	2Sa 17:29	In David's persecution by Absalom	1023
70, 71	2Sa 17:29	On Absalom's rebellion	1023
18	2Sa 22:51	On the conclusion of David's wars	1019
30	1Ch 21:30	On the dedication of the threshing-floor of Araunah	1017
6, 8, 19	1Ch 28:21	Inserted toward the end of David's life	1015
12	1Ch 28:1	Inserted toward the end of David's life	1015
23, 24, 25, 26 & 27	1Ch 28:21, or 1Ch 16:43	Inserted toward the end of David's life	1015
28, 29, 38, 39, 40, 41	1Ch 28:21	Inserted toward the end of David's life	1015
61, 65, 69	1Ch 28:21	Inserted toward the end of David's life	1015
72	1Ch 29:19	On Solomon being made king by his father	1015
78	1Ch 28:21, or 2Ch 19:56	Inserted toward the end of David's life	1015
86	1Ch 28:21	Inserted toward the end of David's life	1015
91	1Ch 28:10	After the advice of David to Solomon	1015
95, 101, 104	1Ch 28:21	Inserted toward the end of David's life	1015
120, 121, 122, 124, 131, 133	1Ch 28:21	Inserted toward the end of David's life	1015
145	1Ch 28:10	David, when old, reviewing his past life	1015
1	Neh 13:3	Written by David or Ezra, and placed as a preface to the Psalms	444

Sourced from www.blueletterbible.org

“Psalms, then, are not just a matchless primer of teaching but a medicine chest for the heart and the best possible guide for practical living.”

Tim Keller, The Songs of Jesus: A Year of Daily Devotions in the Psalms

“The most valuable thing the Psalms do for me is to express the same delight in God which made David dance.” **C.S. Lewis**

“Whenever I read the psalms, I feel like I am eavesdropping on a saint having a personal conversation with God. Psalms, then, are not just a matchless primer of teaching but a medicine chest for the heart and the best possible guide for practical living.” **R.C. Sproul**

STUDY 1 – PSALMS 23 – SHEPHERD KING

INTRODUCTION: This is arguably the best known of any of the Psalms. It is a mere 6 verses but packed with truth learned through experience. Most think this Psalm was written in his later years when David was King but reflecting back upon his years as a shepherd.

SETTING THE SCENE: If you think about an older person who has had a significant impact on your life (e.g. parent, teacher, sibling) how would you describe their care, concern and blessing to you?

.....

.....

THE SHEEP AND THE SHEPHERD (v1-3): What do you think David (a shepherd himself see 1 Sam 16:13) has in mind when he says the LORD is *his* shepherd? To what extent do you identify as a sheep? What light does Psalm 78:70-72 shed on this metaphor (See also 2 Sam. 5:2; 7:7; Mic. 5:4)?

.....

.....

THE GOOD SHEPHERD (EZEKIEL 34:11-16, 23-24, JOHN 10:11-15): What do these passages have to say about the Lord as our Shepherd? Why do you think God chooses to describe Himself in this way (NB: Shepherds were seen as the lowest of all)? How have you experienced God as Shepherd?

.....

.....

.....

THE SHEPHERD’S PROVISION (v1b-3a): What kind of shepherd would give his sheep reason to lack nothing? What has been your experience of the all sufficient provision of the Good Shepherd? David highlights the rest and restoration that the Shepherd provides: what might this look like for us today?

.....

.....

THE SHEPHERD’S LEADING (v2b, 3b): Where and why does David say that the Lord leads? What has your experience been of the Good Shepherd leading and guiding you along “right paths”? To what extent would you say that this has been a challenge and a comfort?

.....

.....

THE TRAVELLER AND HIS COMPANION (v4): What do you imagine David has in mind when he talks of the darkest valley (consider also the characteristics of a valley)? How do you respond to the implication that the Shepherd might lead you through such places?

.....

.....

THE LORD'S PRESENCE: Why does the presence of his Lord and Shepherd cause David to say that he will fear no evil (notice the change from 'He' to 'You' here)? What do the rod and staff (a Shepherd's instruments for guiding their sheep) symbolise and why were they such a comfort to David?

.....

.....

THE GUEST AND THE HOSPITABLE HOST (v5-6): The final metaphor focuses on God as our host pouring out His blessings on us both here in midst of difficulties and for the future:

.....

.....

BLESSING IN THE STORM (v5): What is implied by the imagery David uses here (think about the words David uses)? Why is it so significant that this table is set in the presence of his enemies?

.....

.....

BLESSING FOR THE FUTURE (v6): Why has David's experience of God's goodness and love made him so confident about the future? How much do you long to dwell in the God's presence forever?

.....

.....

DRAWING IT TOGETHER: In what ways has studying this very familiar Psalm helped you to greater appreciate the care that God has for us? What are you taking away that will encourage you this week?

.....

.....

IDEAS FOR PRAYER: Commit one another to God, praying through these verses together and asking God to imprint them on your hearts. Pray together that God will give you this same kind of simple trust in God that we see displayed in the words of David's Psalm.

MEMORISE PSALM 23

STUDY 2 – PSALM 139 – FEARFULLY AND WONDERFULLY MADE

INTRODUCTION: Psalm 139 is an intensely personal Psalm between David and God. It was set to music and designed to be used in public worship. The Psalm points us towards living a holy life through its celebration of the awesomeness of God who knows us, surrounds us and made us.

SETTING THE SCENE: Before getting into the Psalm, how would you distinguish the relationships we have with others from the relationship we have with God? Though we don't know much of the background of this Psalm what do you think might have motivated David to write it?

.....

.....

GOD KNOWS ME (v1-6): What does David say here about how God knows us (the theological word for this is God's Omniscience)? How do you respond to the comprehensiveness of this knowledge and how might it contrast with how we know either ourselves or others?

.....

.....

.....

To what extent can you identify with David's comments that *God hems him in* and that *such knowledge is too wonderful for him* (v5-6)? Would you say that this feels like a threat or a comfort?

.....

.....

GOD SURROUNDS ME (v7-12): Why would God's knowledge of us cause us to want to run (v7)? What does God say here about how God surrounds us (the theological word for this is God's Omnipresence)? How does David's apprehension about this gradually turn to appreciation?

.....

.....

Can you think of times when you (like Adam & Eve or Jonah) have tried to run or hide from God? How does the truth that God is omnipresent motivate us to live differently?

.....

.....

GOD MADE ME (v13-18): What does David say here about God's power and Sovereignty (His Omnipotence) in how He made us and why is it so mind blowing? What do you think it means to be fearfully and wonderfully made? What are the implications of the fact that God new us in the womb (v13) and ordained all our days before we even existed (v16)?

.....

.....

Why do you think David describes God's thoughts (possibly God's thoughts about David – see footnote) as so precious and vast (v17-18)? How does (or should) this motivate us to fill our own minds with thoughts about God (see also Colossians 3:1-2)?

.....

.....

GOD TESTS ME (v19-24): How does all that we have seen in v1-18 shape our thoughts about those who David describes here as the wicked? In the context of what we have read how would you respond to David's comments in v19-22 (see also the Spurgeon Quote)? How do you feel about exposing your inner life to God in this way?

.....

.....

.....

How does all that we have seen in v1-18 shape our thoughts about how we live before God? Specifically how do you understand David's request that God search him and test him in v23-24?

.....

.....

DRAWING IT TOGETHER: If God really does know us so thoroughly, how do you explain the fact that He wants a relationship with us and has gone to such lengths to make such a relationship possible? As you consider the message of the whole Psalm how will you (and/or should you) respond?

.....

.....

IDEAS FOR PRAYER: Thank God for the comprehensive and intimate way that He knows us. Praise Him for some of the aspects of God we see in this Psalm. Ask God to use these mind blowing truths to motivate you towards holiness.

MEMORY VERSES: PSALM 139:13-14

STUDY 3 – PSALM 27 – SEEKING GOD WITH CONFIDENCE

INTRODUCTION: Another Psalm which is difficult to pinpoint in which period of David's life it originates from. Enemies, foes, false witnesses, the wicked and even a besieging army are all mentioned but when it comes to David that is pretty standard throughout most of his life!

SETTING THE SCENE: How would you describe the things you fear in your own lives? Who are the enemies who oppose you, the giants you encounter and those who seek to cause you to stumble?

.....

.....

CONFIDENCE IN GOD (v1-3): How do you explain how David oozes with such confidence in the verses given the backdrop of the challenges he mentions here? What exactly do you think David means when he describes God as his 'light', 'Salvation' and 'the Stronghold of his life'?

.....

.....

.....

SEEKING GOD'S PRESENCE (v4-6): Why do you think David uses so many different descriptions for the place where God dwells in these verses? How, when and where can we meet with God today? What difference does being in God's presence make for David (v5-6)?

.....

.....

.....

How do you respond to the idea that the one thing David seeks most is to be in God's presence? What do you think it means to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD? What steps could we take in order to seek God more intentionally? When has being in God's presence turned a situation around for you?

.....

.....

.....

SEEKING GOD'S FAITHFULNESS (v7-10): This prayer makes clear that there is trouble on the horizon for David. To what extent can you identify with David's clear anxiety to be heard and answered by God? How do you get your head around the reality of unanswered prayers?

.....
.....
.....
Do you think that God ever hides his face from us (v9)? How does this situation motivate David to seek God all the harder rather than become discouraged? What do you think makes David so sure that though his mother and father might forsake him, the LORD will always receive him?

.....
.....
SEEKING GOD’S GUIDANCE (v11-13): What is the essence of David’s prayer for guidance in these verses? What helps David regain his confidence that he will once again see God’s goodness in the land of the living? How often do you ask God to lead and guide you? How confident in Him are you?

.....
.....
WAITING IN EXPECTANCY (v14): The Psalm ends with an exhortation from David himself that we his readers would wait on the LORD, be strong and take heart. What do you think this waiting looks like? Is this waiting passive or active? Why? What steps can we take to do this in the days ahead?

.....
.....
DRAWING IT TOGETHER: The key words in this Psalm are ‘confidence’ (v1, 14) and ‘seek’ (v4, 8). In what ways has studying this Psalm made you more confident in God and more eager to wait upon, seek and gaze upon the beauty of the LORD?

.....
.....
IDEAS FOR PRAYER: Talk together about your reaction to this Psalm about seeking God with confidence. Spend some time doing just that – seeking God for what He has for you and meditating on His goodness to you just now. Bring to Him any situations that you are struggling with just now.

MEMORY VERSE: PSALM 27:4

INTRODUCTION: How do we know anything about God? This famous Psalm of David focuses on this question: specifically how does God reveal Himself through nature and through His Word? It is an inspiring read which some even rate as the best poetry in the whole of the Psalms!

SETTING THE SCENE: A friend asks you how you know anything about God: what would you say to them in response? What is your story of how God has revealed Himself to you?

.....

.....

GOD'S REVELATION THROUGH NATURE (v1-6): David writes "The fool says in his heart, 'There is no God.' They are corrupt, their deeds are vile; there is no one who does good." (Psalm 14:1, 53:1). Why do you think the Bible makes no attempt to prove God's existence?

.....

.....

.....

THE HEAVEN'S DECLARATION (v1-4a): How do you think that the heavens declare the glory of God? How do they show God's handiwork? Is there a time when you have been particularly struck by their soundless voice which David says goes out into all of the earth?

.....

.....

.....

THE RISING SON (v4b-6): What do the Psalms see the sun as a picture of (See also Psalm 84:11, 89:35-37)? How do you respond to this idea of the sun being likened to a "bridegroom coming out of his chamber" or a "champion rejoicing to run his course" (v5)?

.....

.....

The New Testament uses the symbolism of bride & groom to represent Christ and His church (Eph 5:27 & Rev 21:2). How does the sun (which many in David's time worshipped) point us to the Son? How is the sun in the sky a reminder to us that Christ is eager to be united to His church?

.....

.....

NO EXCUSE (ROMANS 1:18-20): Paul expands on this theme in his letter to the Romans: to what extent do you agree with him that God's revelation through creation leaves us with no excuse?

.....

.....

GOD'S REVELATION THROUGH THE LAW (v7-11): How should we distinguish between the descriptive terms David uses about God's Word: i.e. law, statutes, precepts, commands and decrees? What do you think makes David so confident that they are trustworthy, right and firm?

.....

.....

.....

David says God's Word refreshes our souls, makes us wise, gives joy to our hearts and gives light to our eyes. In what ways do you see the impact of God's Word in your own lives? How would you define the fear of the LORD and why does it endure forever?

.....

.....

In how high a regard do you hold God's Word? To what extent can you relate to the idea that it is more precious than gold and sweeter than honey? What is the great reward mentioned in v11?

.....

.....

RESPONDING TO GOD'S REVELATION (v12-14): How do these final verses show us how to respond to these awesome revelations of God? What would it take in order for you to imitate David's desire for purity (both in respect of wilful and hidden sin) and his desire to be pleasing to God (v14)?

.....

.....

IDEAS FOR PRAYER: Share together about how this Psalm has helped you grow in your appreciation of how God has revealed Himself to us. Pray together that God would give you a deeper love for His Word and ask God to help each of you respond appropriately to this revelation.

MEMORY VERSES: PSALM 19:7-9

STUDY 5 – PSALM 51 – UNDESERVED FORGIVENESS

INTRODUCTION: Coming off the back of a very specific context (David's adultery with Bathsheba) this Psalm speaks to all of us as we wrestle with sin and failure. It shows us the wonderful depths of God's love in forgiving the sinner. We also learn what is involved for our part – heart felt repentance.

SETTING THE SCENE: Think of a time in your own lives that you have messed up: what was the process by which you made amends either with others or with God? Look briefly at 2 Samuel 11-12: what light does the context shed on the Psalm itself?

.....

.....

.....

CONFESSION (v1-5): On what basis does David appeal to God? When dealing with our guilt, what do we need to acknowledge and realise? David had a deep sense of his sin and felt great conviction; is that our experience when we sin or do we try to ignore our shortcomings and failings?

.....

.....

.....

SIN AND ITS CONSEQUENCES: How would you distinguish between sin, iniquity and transgressions? How does God feel about these things? How did David's sin affect his relationship with God? How does our sin affect our relationship with God? How do you respond to what v4-5 teach us about our sin? Why is it so important to be honest with yourself and with others in this process?

.....

.....

.....

CONFIDENCE (v6-8): Once we have acknowledged and confessed our sin to God what should be our next step (v6-8)? Why can we be confident that we are forgiven and can then let go of our guilt (see also 1 John 1:9, Psalm 103:8-12)? Can you think of times in your own life when you have experienced this kind of confident assurance?

.....

.....

.....

RENEWAL (v9-12): How do you understand the various longings in these verses to *blot out his iniquity* (v9), to *create a pure heart* and to *renew a steadfast spirit* (v10)? Why is David fearful about being cast from God's presence and for the Holy Spirit to not be taken away (v11, 1 Samuel 16:14)? What might it mean to have the joy of God's salvation restored to us?

.....

.....

.....

RESPONSE (v13-19): How does the focus change in v13? How can we 'sing of God's righteousness' (v14) and 'declare His praise' (v15)? What is meant by a 'broken and contrite heart' and in what sense does God 'not delight in sacrifice' (v16-17)? What should our response be to God's complete undeserved forgiveness?

.....

.....

.....

DRAWING IT TOGETHER: What are the key challenges that you face in this area of holiness? How do we get a healthy balance between understanding the seriousness of our sin and clinging to grace of God? Would you say our confidence should be more or less than David's (see Colossians 1:25-26)?

.....

.....

.....

IDEAS FOR PRAYER: Share some of the things that you have struggled with in recent times and pray together asking God for forgiveness. Ask God to help you take steps to initiate reconciliation with others who have been affected by your sin.

MEMORY VERSE: PSALM 51:10

STUDY 6 – PSALM 40 – RESCUED FROM THE PIT

INTRODUCTION: This is a Psalm of rescue from the slimy pit. In v1-10 David celebrates how God lifted him out of the pit but it's clear from v11-17 that he now finds himself in another. David learns from his troubles and pleads for help. The final section (v13-17) is reproduced separately as Psalm 70.

SETTING THE SCENE: David focuses here on a time when he was stuck in the slimy pit: what kind of trouble do you think this analogy indicates? What has been your experience of finding yourself in such a place? What was it that made it so difficult to get out and what was it that helped you get free?

.....

.....

CELEBRATING DELIVERANCE (v1-5): How often do you celebrate God's goodness: times when God has lifted you from the pit and placed you on the rock? What are the characteristics of both places: the pit and the rock? Why do we so easily forget?

.....

.....

.....

WAITING EXPECTANTLY (v1-3): How would you describe waiting patiently? Is this something that comes naturally to you? Why or why not? How does David describe the fruit of his time of waiting? In what ways might God be at work in our waiting? What impact do such times have on others?

.....

.....

TRUSTING GOD (v4-5): Why does David say that it is blessed to trust in God rather than alternative (ultimately fallible) sources of help? Would you describe the things God has done as wondrous and say that His deeds are too many to declare (See also John 21:25)?

.....

.....

PRAISING GOD (v6-12): How much do your friends and family know of your story of deliverance? What holds you back from sharing it? What could help motivate you to do so more?

.....

.....

.....

SACRIFICE AND OFFERING (v6-8): Why does David say that God did not desire sacrifice and offerings (See also 1 Samuel 15:22-23 and Acts 13:22-23)? What is it that God requires instead (See also Exodus 21:5-6 & Deut 17:14-20)?

.....

.....

FORESHADOWING JESUS (HEBREWS 10:5-10): In what ways do these verses (which quote v6-8 from the Septuagint) help us see that David's surrender foreshadowed that of another? If we read these verses (esp v5-7) as the word of Jesus what light does this shed about his obedience?

.....

.....

SHARING GOOD NEWS (v9-11): What do these verses tell us about how and where David shared this good news? Why would anyone want to hide or conceal such a great story of God's goodness and faithfulness? What can we learn from the fact that David is presuming further troubles ahead (v11)?

.....

.....

A PLEA FOR HELP (v12-17): How much does it surprise you that a Psalm about such amazing deliverance should end with a pressing plea for help (contrast v5 with v12)? How does David describe himself here and what does he ask for those who oppose him? How has David learned from the past?

.....

.....

DRAWING IT TOGETHER: Reflect on the relevance of this ancient Psalm: firstly to the story of salvation that we have in Christ and secondly to the urgent need to share God's goodness and faithfulness to us with those around us.

.....

.....

IDEAS FOR PRAYER: Pray together that sharing your faith would be the natural overflow of understanding what God has done in your lives. Pray together that like David you would be so surrendered to God that you would each be available to be used by Him.

MEMORY VERSE: PSALM 40:2

STUDY 7 – PSALM 103 – PRAISE THE LORD O MY SOUL

INTRODUCTION: This Psalm is about worship. Jesus says He is seeking true worshippers who would worship Him in Spirit and in Truth (John 4:23-24). True worship arises from an appreciation of who God is and an understanding of who we are. This is Psalm focuses solely on God and His blessings.

SETTING THE SCENE: What kind of things do people worship other than God and how can we tell? If someone tried to evaluate your life what might they conclude about what you worship?

.....

.....

CHIASTIC STRUCTURE: This Psalm loosely follows a chiastic structure: a literary pattern that weaves together key ideas symmetrically. What are the repeated themes in this Psalm which is printed here in one possible structure (e.g. contrast v1 & 22b, v8 & 17c, v6 & 17b)?

.....

.....

.....

FORGET NOT ALL HIS BENEFITS (v1-5): How do you respond to the indication that David is addressing his soul and “all his inmost being” here (v1-2)? Why does David need to tell himself not to forget all God’s benefits (forgiveness, healing, redemption, love, compassion, satisfaction & renewal)? What are the consequences if we do forget His benefits?

.....

.....

.....

Praise and worship God for all of these things and ask God to help you not to forget His benefits.

GRACE AND COMPASSION (v6-10): What amazes you from these verses about how God deals with His people? How does this contrast with what we actually deserve? How do we see these things worked out in the examples given of the life of Moses and God’s people Israel?

.....

.....

.....

Praise God that He is gracious and compassionate: that He does not treat us as our sins deserve.

LOVE AND COMPASSION (v11-14): What is David trying to communicate with the following descriptions: “as high as the heavens are above the earth” and “as far as the east from the west”? How does God take the initiative to act in compassion as a Father to His children?

.....

.....

.....

Praise God for His boundless love, that He takes away our sins and that He treats us as a Father.

FLOWERS IN THE FIELD (v15-18): How do these verses highlight the discrepancy between our weakness (v15-16) and the extraordinary nature of God’s love and righteousness (v17-18)? To what extent are these things conditional upon our obedience?

.....

.....

.....

Praise God for His everlasting love and righteousness to us in spite of our weakness.

SOVEREIGN RULE (v19-22): How does what you see and experience tally with God’s Sovereign rule? In what ways is the Sovereignty and rule of God both a comfort and a challenge to us?

.....

.....

.....

Praise God for His Sovereign rule over all of heaven and Earth.

DRAWING IT TOGETHER: When you consider yourself to what extent would you regard yourself as a true worshipper? How can you grow in this and increasingly worship God through your whole life?

.....

.....

IDEAS FOR PRAYER: Continue to pray together about God’s goodness. Share some of the things that have been challenging for you over the past week and pray into them using some of the truth contained within this incredible Psalm.

MEMORY VERSE: PSALM 103:10-12

STUDY 8 – PSALM 18 – A SONG OF PRAISE

INTRODUCTION: David reflects back on how God had watched over him; such knowledge helps him to live in the present and glorify God. As we finish our series the challenge for is to ask ourselves to what extent we know this 'awesome God' who as we have seen David truly knew.

IMAGES OF GOD (v1-19): What are the different images David uses to describe God? How does each image help us to understand God better? What was David's first port of call in his time of distress? What are the ways that David says that God has saved him (v16-19)?

.....

.....

.....

UNDERSTANDING GOD'S CHARACTER (v8-19): What do these verses teach us about David's understanding of God and His character? Are there any hints from these verses as to where David's understanding of God came from (Compare with Exodus 19v18)?

.....

.....

.....

What things can prevent us from praying, as David did (v6) when we are in difficulty? How will praying help us in difficult situations? How would an understanding of God, like David's, help us to live as Christians? How can we help ourselves to develop this kind of understanding and experience of God?

.....

.....

.....

DAVID'S HEART AND DESIRES (v20-30): What do these verses tell us about David's desires and heart? How is David able to win victory over his enemies? How are David's victories over his enemies described, and what impression does this give of them?

.....

.....

.....

LESSONS FROM THE LIFE OF DAVID: What qualities have you seen in the life of David, which, as a Christian you would like to imitate in your own life? From looking at the life of God's own king, David, what have you learned about God's true King, Jesus? And how will this affect your life?

.....

.....

.....

FULFILMENT IN JESUS: How does Jesus fulfil these verses? For example consider *His victory* (compare v31-42 with Heb 2v14-15 & Col 2v13-15), *His rule over the nations* (compare v43-45 with Matt 25v31-46 & Rev 19v11-16) and *His final exaltation* (compare v47-52 with Philipians 2v9-11)

.....

.....

.....

IDEAS FOR PRAYER: Praise God for all that He has done in the past, for how He has made you righteous, how He helps you day by day and for what He is going to do in the future. Ask God to help you to put into practice particular lessons that you have learned from the life of David over this series.

MEMORY VERSES: PROVERBS 3:5-6

STUDY 9 – PSALM 34 – THE GOODNESS OF GOD

INTRODUCTION: The title suggests the Psalm was written after David feigned insanity before Abimelek (possibly another name for King Achish). The Psalm is an alphabetic acrostic so each verse begins with a different letter of the Hebrew Alphabet. What is interesting here is that when David wrote about what happened, it was the LORD and not his play-acting which brought his deliverance.

SETTING THE SCENE (1 SAMUEL 21:10-15): How does the context (see title) help us to understand what has led David to write this Psalm? Can you think of times in your life when God has brought deliverance through unlikely means or circumstances?

.....

.....

.....

PRAISE THE LORD (v1-3): When do you *most* feel like rejoicing: when things are going well or when they are a struggle? David describes praising God as a choice that he has made (v1-2) and also wants us to make (v3): to what extent can you relate to David's desire to worship even amidst affliction?

.....

.....

.....

LORD OF ALL (v4-7): These verses help us to see David's perspective on God's deliverance in what he has been through: what is your experience of seeking God and finding both His answer and His deliverance? What do you think it looks like to truly fear God (v7)?

.....

.....

.....

DEPENDABLE (v8-10): What might it look like to take up the invitation to *taste and see that the LORD is good* (v8 & 1 Peter 2:3) and to *Fear the Lord* (v9)? How do you respond to the Psalmists declaration that those who fear God *lack nothing* and those who seek God *lack no good thing* (v9-10)?

.....

.....

.....

LIVING FOR GOD (v11-14): How does the style and content of this section contrast with that of v1-10 (akin to wisdom literature)? What kind of picture does David build here about how we should live for God? How does Peter develop these things in 1 Peter 3:8-12 which quotes v12-16?

.....

.....

.....

GOD'S DEALINGS WITH US (v15-18): What do these verses have to teach us about how God deals with His people (specifically God's eyes, God's face, God's ears and God's closeness)? To what extent are these verses both an encouragement and a challenge?

.....

.....

.....

GOD'S PROMISES (v19-22): David makes clear that the righteous will have many troubles (v19) but He trusts in God's deliverance from them (v20-22): what is your experience of trusting in the promises of God? To what extent do you agree with David that God will deliver us from ALL our troubles?

.....

.....

.....

DRAWING IT TOGETHER: How would you summarise this Psalms message about (a) how God deals with His people, (b) the reality of the struggles we face and (c) the choices we are encouraged to make? In response what has been most encouraging and what choices do we need to begin to take?

.....

.....

.....

IDEAS FOR PRAYER: Pray through this Psalm thanking God for His repeated deliverance in your lives. Ask God to help you to make the difficult choices you have identified through this Psalm which will help you to grow in your experience of God.

MEMORY VERSES: PSALM 34:8-9

STUDY 10 – PSALM 145 – FROM GENERATION TO GENERATION

INTRODUCTION: Psalm 145 is the final acrostic Psalm (see footnote on v1) and it is the final attributed to David of the Psalms. The Psalm is entitled a Psalm of praise and it is a fitting summary of all that God had taught David during his lifetime.

SETTING THE SCENE: What are the things that people in our society praise and worship? How can you tell? How might those same people respond to the idea of praising God? To what extent does He demand, deserve and/or delight in our praise?

.....

.....

.....

LEARNING TO PRAISE GOD (v1-3): What impresses you about David's eagerness to praise, exalt and extol His God and King? In what ways have you experienced that God is *great* and *most worthy* of praise? What motivate David (and what would motivate you) to praise God's name for ever and ever?

.....

.....

.....

GENERATION TO GENERATION (v4-7): Why was it (and why still is it) so important for one generation to *commend God's works* to the next? In what ways do you see that happening in and through your own lives? What is it about what you have seen about *who God is* and *what He has done* that makes you want to praise? What do you most want to pass onto the next generation?

.....

.....

.....

THE GOODNESS OF GOD (v8-9): The words of v8 are repeated 10 times in the Old Testament (first occurrence is in Exodus 34:6); how do you understand the way that these attributes interact together? In what way is God good to *all* and has compassion on *all* He has made? To what extent can you relate to the truths of these verses? Is this the God you worship: why or why not?

.....

.....

.....

ALL OF CREATION (v10-13): In what ways do you understand David's comment that *all God's works* praise Him and tell of the *glory of His Kingdom* (v10)? What is your experience of finding that this is a natural inclination of being a follower of Christ? How does this praise lead to others hearing about God and what He has done? To what extent have you seen that God is trustworthy and faithful (v13c)?

.....

.....

.....

THE KINDNESS OF GOD (v14-16): How does God uphold the fallen and lift up the bowed down (v14)? What might it look like for you to set your eyes on God (v15) and trust Him to provide for you and satisfy your desires (v16)? In what ways is God worthy of our trust?

.....

.....

.....

LOVE & RIGHTEOUSNESS (v17-20): What impresses you about the consistency with which God acts in line with His character (righteous, faithful)? How do you understand what it means to *call on* or *cry out* to God, to *love Him* and to *fear Him*? What is promised for those who do so?

.....

.....

.....

DRAWING IT TOGETHER (v21): What is your response to this great Psalm? How much can you identify with David's declaration in v21 that his *mouth will speak in praise of the LORD*?

.....

.....

.....

IDEAS FOR PRAYER: Spend some time praising God together for some of the things that we have been talking about in this study. Ask God to consume you more by who He is and what He has done. Pray that God would help you to declare His praises to the next generation.

MEMORY VERSES: PSALM 145:4-5

STUDY 11 – PSALM 42-43 – A DOWNCAST SOUL

INTRODUCTION: The sons of Kora were musicians serving in the temple during the time of David (2 Chron 20:19). These Psalms are connected in theme if not originally one Psalm (see footnote). The main theme is discouragement or depression of the soul (see repeated refrain in Ps 42:6, 11 & 43:5?)

SETTING THE SCENE: Can you think of a period of time when you would have described yourself as downcast, disturbed or depressed? What was it that caused such a low period and what was it that lifted you out of that place? What kind of answers do people in our society look to for this area?

.....

.....

SEARCHING FOR SATISFACTION (PSALM 42:1-4): How do you respond to the picture of the deer longing after water as a direct metaphor for how the Psalmist longs for God (v1)? The question at the end of v2 is in reference to them not being able to access the Temple – what difference does it make for us that we have access to the Spirit at all times?

.....

.....

.....

Can you identify with the desperation expressed by the Psalmist (v3)? In what ways does the Psalmist use his recollections in v4 to lift his Spirits?

.....

.....

HOLDING ON TO HOPE (PSALM 42:5-8): When have you felt downcast/anxious/worried about something, and then suddenly remember that God is there for you? In the Psalmist's case, do you get the sense that he is almost berating himself for his lament? How does the Hope we have in Jesus affect us when we reach moments in life of turmoil?

.....

.....

.....

Why do you think the Psalmist repeats the refrain *my soul is cast down within me* in v5, v11 and 43:5)? What do you make of the repeated imagery of water in this Psalm (e.g. Flowing streams (v1),

thirsts (v2), tears (v3), pour out (v4) and deep, waterfalls, breakers, waves in v7), and why do you think they come to a crescendo in v7? Does the conclusion that the Psalmist comes to in vs. 8 fill us joy?

.....

.....

WHY HAVE YOU FORGOTTEN ME? (PSALM 42:9-11): How do you respond to the Psalmists question about whether God had forgotten him? Can you relate to the taunts of his adversaries in v10? How should we respond at those times?

.....

.....

.....

ASCENDING TO THE ALTAR IN AWE (PSALM 43:1-5): What is the response of the Psalmist to the troubles from the tail end of the previous section? Again, is there a reason for the repeated questioning: *Why do I go about mourning because of the oppression of my enemies?*

.....

.....

.....

What resonates with you about the two images of light and truth working together in v3? How has the Psalmist's outlook on the situation changed from where we began at the start of Psalm 42? How often do we get to the first step of desiring to have our needs met by God, but buckle because our circumstances cause us to be downcast, and we forget to lift our eyes to the heavens?

.....

.....

DRAWING IT TOGETHER: What do you think God has been saying to you from these Psalms either about yourself and your struggles or about God and how He meets you in those times?

.....

.....

IDEAS FOR PRAYER: Share and pray together about the things that are currently getting you (or your friends) down at the moment. Ask God to help you to set your hope on Him and that He would satisfy your longing and thirst for Him.

MEMORY VERSES: PSALM 42:1-2

ADDITIONAL QUOTATIONS

QUOTE 1 (from STUDY 1): "It has charmed more griefs to rest than all the philosophy of the world. It has remanded to their dungeon more felon thoughts, more black doubts, more thieving sorrows, than there are sands on the sea-shore. It has comforted the noble host of the poor. It has sung courage to the army of the disappointed. It has poured balm and consolation into the heart of the sick, of captives in dungeons, of widows in their pinching griefs, of orphans in their loneliness. Dying soldiers have died easier as it was read to them; ghastly hospitals have been illuminated; it has visited the prisoner, and broken his chains, and, like Peter's angel, led him forth in imagination, and sung him back to his home again. It has made the dying Christian slave freer than his master, and consoled those whom, dying, he left behind mourning, not so much that he was gone, as because they were left behind, and could not go too."

Beecher, cited in Spurgeon

QUOTE 2 (from STUDY 2): To love all men with benevolence is our duty; but to love any wicked man with complacency would be a crime. To hate a man for his own sake, or for any evil done to us, would be wrong; but to hate a man because he is the foe of all goodness and the enemy of all righteousness, is nothing more nor less than an obligation. The more we love God the more indignant shall we grow with those who refuse him their affection."

C.H. Spurgeon, *The Treasury of David [Baker], VII: 229*

QUOTE 3 (from STUDY 4): "Why do mountains and oceans, the sun and stars move us as deeply as great art? The answer is because they *are* great art. Nature speaks to all without audible words (v2-3). It is nonverbal communication that there is a God, that the world is not an accidental collocation of molecules but the meaningful work of an artist's hands. We should be reverent before our environment. It also means that all people know, at some level, about God, truth, meaning, wisdom, and beauty even if they suppress that knowledge (Rom 1:18-21). Nevertheless, good, nonverbal communication is easily misinterpreted. We need something more. Nature tells us about God's reality and power but not about His saving grace. Only the Bible can enlighten the spiritually blind (v8) and 'refresh the soul' (v7)."

Tim & Kathy Keller, *My Rock, My refuge*, pages 32-33

QUOTE 4 (from STUDY 6): "David leads us through six stages of his experience, and I want us to follow him closely. First, David is in a muddy pit; second, he cries to God for help; third, he waits for the Lord; fourth, God draws him out of the pit to safety; fifth, God gives David a new song to sing (probably the one we are reading); sixth, many others come to trust God when they see this pattern of life. The king's pit, the king's cry, the king's patience, the king's rescue, the king's song, and the king's influence. Here is King David, a man after God's own heart. Let us see if we can make his pattern part of our life."

John Piper, www.desiringgod.org

QUOTE 5 (from STUDY 8): "Worship is our innermost being responding with praise for all that God is, through our attitudes, actions, thoughts, and words, based on the truth of God as He has revealed Himself." **John Macarthur, *The Ultimate Priority [Moody Press], p. 127.***

MEMORY VERSES

STUDY 1: PSALM 23 – SHEPHERD KING

¹ The LORD is my shepherd, I lack nothing. ² He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, ³ he refreshes my soul. **Psalm 23:1-3a**

STUDY 2: PSALM 139 – FEARFULLY AND WONDERFULLY MADE

¹³ For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. ¹⁴ I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.

Psalm 139:13-14

STUDY 3: PSALM 27 – SEEKING GOD WITH CONFIDENCE

"One thing I ask from the LORD, this only do I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze on the beauty of the LORD and to seek him in his temple." **Psalm 27:4**

STUDY 4: PSALM 19 – A REVELATION OF GOD

⁷ The law of the LORD is perfect, refreshing the soul. The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy, making wise the simple. ⁸ The precepts of the LORD are right, giving joy to the heart. The commands of the LORD are radiant, giving light to the eyes. ⁹ The fear of the LORD is pure, enduring for ever. The decrees of the LORD are firm, and all of them are righteous. **Psalm 19:7-9**

STUDY 5: PSALM 51 – UNDESERVED FORGIVENESS

¹⁰ Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. **Psalm 51:10**

STUDY 6: PSALM 40 – RESCUED FROM THE PIT

² He lifted me out of the slimy pit, out of the mud and mire; he set my feet on a rock and gave me a firm place to stand. **Psalm 40:2**

STUDY 7: PSALM 103 – PRAISE THE LORD O MY SOUL

¹¹ For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him; ¹² as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us.

Psalm 103:11-12

STUDY 8: PSALM 18 – A SONG OF PRAISE

⁵ Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding;

⁶ in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight. **Proverbs 3:5-6**

STUDY 9: PSALM 34 – THE GOODNESS OF GOD

⁸ Taste and see that the LORD is good; blessed is the one who takes refuge in him.

⁹ Fear the LORD, you his holy people, for those who fear him lack nothing. **Psalm 34:8-9**

STUDY 10: PSALM 145 – GENERATION TO GENERATION

⁴ One generation commends your works to another; they tell of your mighty acts.

⁵ They speak of the glorious splendour of your majesty – and I will meditate on your wonderful works.

STUDY 11: PSALM 42-43 – A DOWNCAST SOUL

¹ As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, my God. ² My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God? **Psalm 42:1-2**