

STUDY

Psalms Bible Study Questions and Answers (Free PDF)

Leader's Edition — with Answers

A 12-session walk through the Psalms, from the blessed man of Psalm 1 to the last hallelujah of Psalm 150, with open questions for your own answers. Free to print, no sign-up.

A 12-session study of the Psalms for groups or solo reading.

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

Psalms 1:1-2 (NIV)

The LORD is my shepherd, I lack nothing.

Psalms 23:1 (NIV)

He says, "Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth."

Psalms 46:10 (NIV)

The study guide

SESSION 1 • PSALM 1:1-6

Two Ways: The Blessed Life

The book opens with a picture of two ways. The blessed one delights in the law of the Lord and is like a tree by the water, while the wicked have no root.

1. What three things does the blessed person avoid in Psalm 1:1, and what do they delight in and meditate on in Psalm 1:2?

Psalm 1:1 says, "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 1:2 says their "delight is in the law of the LORD, and who meditates on his law day and night."

2. Why does the psalm picture the righteous as a tree planted by streams of water (Psalm 1:3)?

Psalm 1:3 says such a person is "like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither." A planted tree draws life from a source outside itself. The blessed life is a rooted life, fed by God's word. Readers take "whatever they do prospers" as the fruit of a life rooted in God, not a promise of ease. Psalm 1:6 closes with the deeper comfort, that the Lord watches over the way of the righteous.

3. What are you giving your attention and delight to each day, and what is it growing in you?

Leader's note: Invite honest answers, not polished ones. Most of us delight in many things, and some of them dry us out. Ask each person to name one small habit that would put their roots nearer to the water this week.

SESSION 2 • PSALM 8:1-9

Majesty and Our Place

David looks at the night sky and wonders at God's majesty. He asks why the Maker of the stars would care for human beings, and marvels at the honor God has given them.

1. How does Psalm 8:1 begin and end, and what does David see when he considers the heavens in Psalm 8:3?

Psalm 8:1 says, "Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory in the heavens." In Psalm 8:3-4 David asks, "When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is mankind that you are mindful of them, human beings that you care for them?"

2. What does David's question in Psalm 8:4 reveal, and how does Psalm 8:5 answer it?

The question is a cry of wonder. The stars are vast, and people are small, yet God is mindful of us. Psalm 8:5 says, "You have made them a little lower than the angels and crowned them with glory and honor." Human worth is a gift from the Maker, not something we earn. The letter to the Hebrews applies this psalm to Jesus, who became human and is crowned with glory.

3. When did you last stop and let creation lead you to praise, and what keeps you from doing it more?

Leader's note: Keep this one light and open. Let people share a moment under a night sky, or by the sea, or with a newborn. Praise often begins when we slow down enough to look. Encourage one act of looking up this week.

SESSION 3 • PSALM 23:1-6

The Lord Is My Shepherd

David, once a shepherd himself, calls the Lord his shepherd. The psalm walks from green pastures through the darkest valley to the house of the Lord.

1. What does the shepherd do for his sheep in Psalm 23:1-3, and what does David say about the darkest valley in Psalm 23:4?

Psalm 23:1-3 says the Lord is my shepherd, so "I lack nothing." He makes me lie down in green pastures, leads me beside quiet waters, and refreshes my soul. In Psalm 23:4 David says, "Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me."

2. Why is the shepherd's presence, more than a safe road, the comfort of Psalm 23:4?

The psalm never says the valley is skipped. It says we walk through it, and that we are not alone. The rod and the staff were the shepherd's tools for guarding and guiding. Many readers hear in this the promise of Jesus, who said, "I am the good shepherd" (John 10:11). Psalm 23:6 ends with goodness and love following us, and dwelling in the house of the Lord forever.

3. Where are you walking through a dark valley now, and how might you let the shepherd lead you there?

Leader's note: Some in the room may be in a valley right now, so go gently and do not hurry to fix. Invite people to name it if they wish. Read the psalm aloud together as a prayer, and let silence do some of the work. To meet the young shepherd who wrote it, see [David the shepherd](/character/david-the-shepherd).

SESSION 4 • PSALM 13:1-6

How Long, O Lord? The Lament

David cries out in real distress and asks God four times how long. The psalm turns at the end from complaint to trust and song.

1. What does David ask in Psalm 13:1-2, and what does he ask God to do in Psalm 13:3?

Psalm 13:1-2 says, "How long, Lord? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me?" and it goes on to ask how long he must wrestle with his thoughts and how long his enemy will triumph. In Psalm 13:3 he asks God to look on him, answer him, and give light to his eyes.

2. Why does Scripture give us prayers of complaint, and what turns the psalm in Psalm 13:5-6?

Laments teach us that honest sorrow is a kind of faith, since we only cry out to someone we believe hears. The turn comes with "But I trust in your unfailing love; my heart rejoices in your salvation" (Psalm 13:5). The trouble has not changed yet. David's trust has. Psalm 13:6 says, "I will sing the LORD's praise, for he has been good to me."

3. What is a "how long" you have not brought to God, and what has kept you quiet?

Leader's note: Give permission for plain speech before God. Many believers were taught to hide their pain, and this psalm says otherwise. Invite each person to write their own "how long" and, if they are willing, to read it aloud or pray it in silence.

SESSION 5 • PSALM 22:1-31

My God, Why Have You Forsaken Me?

This psalm begins in agony and ends in praise that reaches the ends of the earth. Jesus prayed its first line from the cross.

1. What does Psalm 22:1 cry out, and what images of suffering does David use in Psalm 22:16-18?

Psalm 22:1 says, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, so far from my cries of anguish?" Psalm 22:16 says, "Dogs surround me, a pack of villains encircles me; they pierce my hands and my feet," and Psalm 22:18 says, "They divide my clothes among them and cast lots for my garment."

2. How do the Gospels use this psalm at the cross (Matthew 27:46), and what does Psalm 22:24 say God has not done?

Matthew 27:46 records Jesus crying out these opening words on the cross. Historic Christian teaching sees in this psalm both David's own suffering and a picture that Christ fulfilled. Psalm 22:24 says the Lord "has not despised or scorned the suffering of the afflicted one; he has not hidden his face from him but has listened to his cry for help." The psalm ends with the nations turning to the Lord (Psalm 22:27) and the words "He has done it!" (Psalm 22:31).

3. How does it change your view of your own sorrow to know that Jesus prayed this psalm?

Leader's note: Let the weight of this psalm sit before moving on. Many people feel forsaken at some point, and it comforts them to know Jesus went into that place. Invite the group to name someone who feels far from God, and to pray for that person by name.

SESSION 6 • PSALM 51:1-19

Create in Me a Pure Heart

This is David's prayer of repentance, prayed after the Lord sent the prophet Nathan to confront him over his sin with Bathsheba. It asks for mercy, cleansing, and a new heart.

1. On what basis does David ask for mercy in Psalm 51:1, and what does he confess in Psalm 51:4?

Psalm 51:1 says, "Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions." In Psalm 51:4 he says, "Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight."

2. What does David ask God to do in Psalm 51:10-12, and what does God want according to Psalm 51:17?

David asks, "Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me" (Psalm 51:10), and he asks God to restore the joy of his salvation (Psalm 51:12). He sees that no offering can buy pardon. Psalm 51:17 says, "My sacrifice, O God, is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart you, God, will not despise." When Nathan confronted him, David confessed, and Nathan said the Lord had taken away his sin (2 Samuel 12:13).

3. What have you been carrying that you have not confessed, and what keeps you from bringing it to God?

Leader's note: Guard this question, since it touches shame. Do not ask anyone to name a sin aloud. Invite the group to pray this psalm quietly, line by line, and remind them that God's mercy is greater than what they carry. See also what the Bible says about [\[forgiveness\]](/what-bible-says/forgiveness)(/what-bible-says/forgiveness).

SESSION 7 · PSALM 46:1-11

God Is Our Refuge

A song of trust for hard days, when the earth itself seems to shake. It ends with God's own voice calling his people to be still.

1. What does Psalm 46:1-2 say God is to us, and what does Psalm 46:7 say about who is with us?

Psalm 46:1-2 says, "God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea." Psalm 46:7 says, "The LORD Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress."

2. What does it mean to "be still" in Psalm 46:10, and why is it linked to knowing that God is God?

In Psalm 46:10 God says, "Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth." Being still is not laziness. It is a stopping, a letting go of the grip that says we must hold everything together. We can rest because God is God and is at work. The psalm is a song of trust for the shaken, and it does not promise an untroubled world.

3. What feels shaken in your life right now, and what would it mean to be still before God there?

Leader's note: Some will hear "be still" as a burden if their mind races. Keep it kind. Try two minutes of silence together, and then invite a word about what surfaced. See also what the Bible says about [\[anxiety\]](/what-bible-says/anxiety)(/what-bible-says/anxiety).

SESSION 8 · PSALM 90:1-17**Teach Us to Number Our Days**

The only psalm attributed to Moses. It sets God's eternity beside our short lives and asks for wisdom and steadfast love.

1. How does Psalm 90:2 describe God, and how does Psalm 90:10 describe the length of our days?

Psalm 90:2 says, "Before the mountains were born or you brought forth the whole world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God." Psalm 90:10 says, "Our days may come to seventy years, or eighty, if our strength endures; yet the best of them are but trouble and sorrow, for they quickly pass, and we fly away."

2. Why does Psalm 90:12 ask God to teach us to number our days, and what does this have to do with wisdom?

The prayer of Psalm 90:12 is "Teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom." Facing that our days are few is not meant to make us gloomy. It teaches us what matters. The psalm goes on to ask for God's unfailing love in the morning, that we may sing for joy all our days (Psalm 90:14).

3. How would you live differently this year if you took the shortness of your days seriously?

Leader's note: This question can stir grief over lost time or lost people. Leave room for it. Invite each person to name one thing they want to give their days to, and to pray for each other to be faithful to it.

SESSION 9 · PSALM 103:1-22**Praise the Lord, My Soul**

David preaches to his own soul, telling it not to forget God's benefits. He rests on the Lord's compassion and forgiveness.

1. What does David tell his soul to do in Psalm 103:2, and what benefits does he name in Psalm 103:3?

Psalm 103:2-3 says, "Praise the LORD, my soul, and forget not all his benefits, who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases."

2. How does Psalm 103:8-13 describe the Lord's character, and what does Psalm 103:12 say about our sins?

Psalm 103:8 says, "The LORD is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love." Psalm 103:12 says, "as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us." Psalm 103:13 adds, "As a father has compassion on his children, so the LORD has compassion on those who fear him." Readers differ on whether the healing of verse 3 is chiefly bodily or spiritual. Most see God's care for the whole person, while knowing that not every illness is healed in this life.

3. What benefits of God have you forgotten, and how could you remember them this week?

Leader's note: Try a shared act of remembering. Let each person name one benefit they have received this year, big or small. Thanks trains the soul to see what forgetfulness hides.

SESSION 10 · PSALM 121:1-8**I Lift Up My Eyes: Songs of Ascent**

One of the songs pilgrims sang while climbing up to Jerusalem. It asks where help comes from, and answers with the Lord who never sleeps.

1. What question does Psalm 121:1 ask, and how does Psalm 121:2 answer it?

Psalm 121:1-2 says, "I lift up my eyes to the mountains, where does my help come from? My help comes from the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth."

2. What does Psalm 121:3-4 say about the Lord who watches over us, and what does Psalm 121:7-8 promise?

Psalm 121:3-4 says he will not let your foot slip, and that "he who watches over Israel will neither slumber nor sleep." Psalm 121:7-8 says, "The LORD will keep you from all harm, he will watch over your life; the LORD will watch over your coming and going both now and forevermore." Faithful readers take "harm" as the deepest harm, since believers still suffer in this life. The promise is that God keeps his people and never leaves the watch.

3. Where do you tend to look for help first, and what would it mean to look to the Lord first?

Leader's note: Invite the group to name what they often reach for first, such as work, savings, other people, or worry. Do not shame it. Ask them to turn each into a short prayer, and end by praying Psalm 121 aloud together.

SESSION 11 · PSALM 139:1-24**Searched and Known**

David marvels that God knows him completely, is present everywhere, and formed him before birth. He ends with a prayer to be searched and led.

1. What does Psalm 139:1 say about how God knows David, and what does Psalm 139:7-8 ask about going away from God?

Psalm 139:1 says, "You have searched me, LORD, and you know me." In Psalm 139:7-8 David asks, "Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there."

2. What does Psalm 139:13-14 say about how each person is made, and why does David end by asking to be searched in Psalm 139:23-24?

Psalm 139:13-14 says, "For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made." Every life is made with care. David closes with the prayer, "Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting" (Psalm 139:23-24). To be known this deeply is both humbling and safe.

3. What does it feel like to be fully known by God, and what part of you have you tried to hide from him?

Leader's note: Some carry deep shame and will find this psalm frightening before they find it comforting. Go slowly. Point to the direction of the prayer, since David asks to be led, not condemned. Close with a silent version of Psalm 139:23-24.

SESSION 12 · PSALM 150:1-6

Let Everything Praise the Lord

The Psalms end with a shout of praise. Every place, every instrument, and every breath is called to join.

1. Where is God to be praised in Psalm 150:1, and which instruments are named in Psalm 150:3-5?

Psalm 150:1 says, "Praise the LORD. Praise God in his sanctuary; praise him in his mighty heavens." Psalm 150:3-5 calls for the trumpet, the harp and lyre, timbrel and dancing, strings and pipe, and cymbals.

2. Why do the Psalms, which hold so much sorrow, end in praise, and what does Psalm 150:6 say about who should join in?

The book begins with the two ways and moves through joy, lament, repentance, and trust, and it ends here. Praise is where the whole journey leads. Psalm 150:6 says, "Let everything that has breath praise the LORD. Praise the LORD." No one who breathes is left out.

3. How could praise become a steady habit in your life, even on hard days?

Leader's note: End on joy and let it be simple. Invite the group to name one reason for praise, and to say it aloud as a short prayer. Suggest a habit, such as one psalm a day, to carry the study forward.