

Use this resource as a tool to help Christ-followers move forward in their spiritual growth. To do this well requires that the Small Group Leader is building a relationship with the individuals in the small group and has identified where the people are in their relationship with God. Are they Christ-followers? Are they growing in Christ? If so, in what areas do they need to grow further? As disciplinarians, Small Group Leaders shepherd people to know the truth of Scripture, to understand why it matters, and to apply it to their lives. Small Group Leaders come alongside those whom they disciple to discover how loving God, loving each other, and loving those not yet in the Kingdom should shape how they live. The structure of this resource coincides with moving people from knowledge to understanding to application. Utilize this Small Group Guide as a flexible teaching tool to inform your time together and not as a rigid task list.

GETTING STARTED

Before Small Group

Readings for May 19-25

Numbers 28-34 and Psalms 72-78

Where We Are In The Story (Numbers)

Background of Numbers: Within two years of leaving Egypt, the Israelites arrive on the fringes of the Promised Land and enthusiastically send in twelve spies to scout the land, but instead of trusting in God's promises to give them the land, the people fearfully rebelled and made plans to return to Egypt (Num. 14:1-4). Written by Moses, this book contains the record of what happened to the Israelites during the forty years of wilderness wanderings that occurred because of their disobedience and doubt. The English title of Numbers refers to the prominent census accounts in the book that reflect the fulfillment of God's promise that none of the people who had experienced God's deliverance from Egypt would enter into the Promised Land, except for Caleb and Joshua (Num. 14:20-35).

Structure of Numbers:

- Numbers 1:1-10:10 occurs while Israel is still at Mt. Sinai, and it picks up where Exodus leaves off.
- Numbers 10:11-12:16 describes the Israelites' journey from Mt. Sinai to the outskirts of the Promised Land.
- Numbers 13:1-20:13 contains significant accounts of disobedience by the nation, a Sabbath-breaker, Korah, and Moses, and it includes God's response and instruction in light of those events.
- Numbers 20:14-22:1 tell of Israel's military victories against several hostile nations and emphasizes God's preservation of His people.
- Numbers 22:2-36:13 concludes the book with a census of the people, a reiteration of the laws and feasts given by God, and a transfer of leadership from Moses to Joshua as the people prepare to enter the Promised Land after their wilderness wanderings.

This Week in Numbers: Numbers 28-29 contains further instructions regarding what the Israelites were to offer each day, Sabbath, month, Passover, etc. God repeats these instructions to the younger generation because the previous generation that had been delivered out of Egypt and had originally heard the commands at Mt. Sinai were dead as a result of their unbelief (Num. 14). As the younger generation wandered in the wilderness while waiting to take the Promised Land, God instructed them in His ways.

Numbers 30 also relates to worship and vows to God, specifically when such a commitment conflicts with another obligation such as children honoring their parents or a wife whose husband disagrees with her vow. While the attention given to a woman's vow in Numbers 30 is greater than the focus on men's vows, this was because woman did not have the financial or the legal situation of women in modern Western culture. While in

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her father's household, a female was under her father's authority and protection. It would not be in the best interest of the family for a daughter or a wife to promise something to God that belonged to the family. As Roy Gane states in his commentary on Numbers, "An Israelite woman's vow or pledge could be a legal matter that involved her father or husband if she obligated herself to give something that belonged to him, such as an animal for a sacrifice. It would be unfair and generate resentment on his part if he were forced to relinquish something against his will. How would you feel if your child or spouse gave away something that was at least partly yours, which you seriously intended to keep?" While the vows could involve property such as animals for sacrifices, a wife's vow might also involve self-denial with regards to sexual relations, which is also why a vow of this sort would necessitate her husband's consent.

God's command for Israel to take arms against Midian fulfilled God's instructions from Numbers 25:16-18 and executed judgment on the Midianites as well as Balaam (v. 8). The tribes of Reuben and Gad wanted to settle the land of Gilead (Num. 32), but when they asked Moses not to take them across the Jordan River (v. 5), it created a mess until they clarified that their men would fight with their people for the rest of the Promised Land before settling in Gilead. Moses approved and granted the area to Gad, Reuben, and half the tribe of Manasseh (v. 33). Numbers 33 recounts the Israelites' journey from Egypt to the Promised Land, which transitions to the commands to fully drive out the inhabitants of the land (vv. 50-56) and to the boundary lines of the Promised Land (Num. 34). This description reminded the people where God had taken them and the purpose for their journey – to claim their inheritance.

Where We Are In The Story ~ Old Testament (Psalms)

Background & Structure of Psalms: God used many different writers to write Psalms: David, Moses, the sons of Korah, Asaph, etc. The book is arranged in five parts, and this arrangement occurred after the people of Israel returned to the land after the Babylonian exile. A doxology concludes each book or arrangement of psalms (Psalm 41:13 for Book 1, Psalm 72:18-19 for Book 2, Psalm 89:52 for Book 3, Psalm 106:48 for Book 4, and Psalm 150:6 for Book 5), and the entire book of Psalms climactically ends with a grand doxology of several psalms (Ps. 146-150).

- Book 1: Psalms 1-41
- Book 2: Psalms 42-72
- Book 3: Psalms 73-89
- Book 4: Psalms 90-106
- Book 5: Psalms 107-150

This Week in Psalms:

- A royal psalm, Psalm 72 serves as an intercessory prayer for the king and for his rule over the people, and as a royal psalm, the content of this psalm ultimately finds fulfillment in the Messiah, the only truly righteous king. The prayers of this psalm will be fully answered with the messianic kingdom after Christ's second coming. This psalm concludes Book Two within Psalms, and verses 18-29 contain the concluding doxology for Book Two.
- With Psalm 73, the psalmist sees the prosperity of the wicked and questions God for allowing them to thrive. The change in the psalmist's perspective comes in verses 16-17 when he entered God's sanctuary and considered their situation in light of eternity. This psalm presents an example of how one's thoughts and beliefs can either lead towards doubt or towards confidence in the Lord, and it demonstrates the importance of filtering the present with an eternal perspective.
- Because of the references to the ruins and the destruction of the sanctuary (vv. 3-8), Psalm 74 was either written when the people of Israel were in exile or after they returned to the land after their captivity as a communal lament. Their lament centered on two distressing issues – the destruction of the temple (v. 3) and the lack of a prophet in the land (v. 9). In the midst of their grief, the people earnestly petitioned God for the destruction of their oppressors, appealed to His power and sovereignty as Creator, and reminded Him of His covenant with them.

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- In Psalm 75, thanksgiving to God flows into an oracle from God regarding His promise to bring down the proud and to exalt the humble. The psalm calls the proud to humble themselves before the Lord, and it warns them of God's cup of wrath. The expression of one's cup signifies one's lot in life, and here, the expression refers to the cup of God's judgment that is to come.
- Psalm 76 serves as a Song of Zion (a.k.a. Jerusalem), and it can be divided into four sections (vv. 1-3, 4-6, 7-9, 10-12). The first section describes God and His dwelling place while the second section praises God and His ability to overcome armies with His word. The third section describes why people should revere the Lord, and the fourth section exhorts people to praise Him. This psalm forewarns those who oppose God by telling them of His great power, and in doing so, it is a warning to humbly turn from their ways and to fear God.
- Although suffering for a prolonged stretch of time, the psalmist of Psalm 77 appeals to God for favor and relief and reminds himself of God's character and of His past acts. In doing so, the psalmist bolsters his faith in the present. This psalm is instructful for believers in how to respond faithfully when suffering, for laments do not just contain a description of the trial, laments also contain petitions, declarations of trust, and promises to praise God as a response to God's actions.
- Because it rehearses God's relationship with His people and His actions on their behalf from the time of Exodus to the reign of David, Psalm 78 is a descriptive praise psalm. It begins with a call for the older generations to tell the younger generations about the Lord, for the people's rebellion and unbelief came when they forgot about all that God had done for them in the past and what He promised for the future. Our love for Him and our mindfulness of Him should lead to greater faith and obedience in our lives.

During Small Group

Welcome – Incorporate time for greeting one another, enjoying any refreshments, and making announcements. If guests are visiting, make introductions and help them feel welcomed. Ask for their contact information, so you can follow up with them.

Looking Back – Provide an opportunity for small group members to share what God is teaching them, how they are applying what they are learning, and how He has given them opportunities to share the gospel with others. This can be done as a whole group or in smaller groups. Do the people know each other well enough to share more than surface level information? How can time together be used to foster deeper relationships among those in the small group? Also, what are the struggles and needs of the people in the small group? How can the people in the small group sacrificially serve each other?

Looking Up – Hold prayer as fundamental to small group time rather than supplemental to it. Give adoration and thanksgiving to God in prayer. Submit yourself to Him, confessing sin. Petition God for personal needs and other requests. Pray for the disciple-making efforts of those in the group and for the salvation of the lost in each other's families, spheres of influence, and in the world. The Weekly Prayer Focus below can also be incorporated in the group's prayer time.

Weekly Prayer Focus (from Our Worship Guide)

- *Pray for Our Lives: Praise God for His awesome power and mighty works in your life and in the world. Pray we as a church will grow in our exuberant worship of God. Thank God for listening to and answering our prayers. Ask God to bless us and grant us great grace in order to make Him known to others throughout the world. Pray for the day when all peoples of the world will be reached with the gospel of*

Jesus Christ. Pray for God to lead us in the specific role He has for us to play in accomplishing that mission.

- *Pray for Our City: This week, we are praying for pastors and church leaders from all over the nation as well as six international groups (Dominican, Indian, Chinese, Russian, Irish, and Canadian) joining us for Radical Intensive, a four-day workshop for those interested in discussing how to infuse global disciple-making into the heart of their local church. We are also praying for Urban Hope Community Church, Fairfield, and Alton Hardy, Pastor.*
- *Pray for Our World: This week, we are praying for the people of Turkey. This was our highlight for Secret Church, and we as a faith family want to join the thousands around the world who are continuing to pray for Turkey. Join us this week as we pray for the Zaza of Turkey. This week, we are also praying for our Short-Term team serving in East Asia.*

MAIN TRUTH, WHY IT MATTERS, AND NOW WHAT DO WE DO?

From May 11-June 15, the preaching will focus on Psalms, and each Worship Gathering on Sunday will have a different psalm preached. All three sermons will be available on the website and on radical.net on the following Monday, but in light of the three sermons and the “psalms potluck” each Sunday, we have adopted a different Small Group Guide structure for these six weeks. Instead of the sermon outline, message summary, digging deeper, and group discussion questions that focus on the sermon, there are three options for Small Groups included below. As the leader, feel the freedom to take all or some of the content in this guide and do what is best for your group. Whichever option you choose for the week, avoid simply focusing on knowledge acquisition related to the various psalms. Direct the group to focus on how God wants to use what they have learned to transform their thinking, affections, will, relationships, purpose, and mission.

Option 1: REAP

Using the REAP (read, examine, apply, pray) outline for studying Scripture, the group can take one or both passages from that day’s readings and discuss them. So if the group meets on Monday, then you could pick one or both of the passages for Monday. This also helps those who are new to studying the Bible or who struggle with doing so learn how to study it.

READ

Read the psalm together slowly, carefully, prayerfully, thoughtfully, humbly, and joyfully.

EXAMINE

After you read the psalm, spend time reflecting on what it says and means. Ask the following questions and discuss some of your thoughts in response. You don’t necessarily have to answer every question. Just use them as a guide to help you examine what you have read.

- What is happening in this passage?
- What words, phrases, or ideas seem particularly important?
- What does this text teach you about the gospel?
 - (Character of God) What does this text teach you about God?
 - (Sinfulness of Man) What does this text teach you about man?

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- (Sufficiency of Christ) What does this text teach you about who Christ is and why we need Him?
- (Necessity of Faith) What does this text teach you about trusting and following Christ?
- (Urgency of Eternity) What does this text teach you about the hope of heaven or the horror of hell?

APPLY

After examining the Word, apply it to your life. Ask the following questions based upon the text(s) and discuss your thoughts in response. Again, you don't have to answer every question.

- What sin(s) do I need to repent of and/or avoid?
- What truth(s) do I need to believe?
- What command(s) do I need to obey (what do I need to give up, stop doing, start doing, or continue doing)?
- What principle(s) need to change the way I think, speak, and/or act, and how will I implement this change?
- What relationship(s) do I need to establish, strengthen, or change?
- By the power of God's Spirit, what can I do *today* to apply God's Word to my life?

PRAY

Pray together according to your examination and application of the text(s), asking God to change your heart, mind, attitudes, actions, and relationships based on the time you've spent in His Word. Let this specific praying lead you more generally to...

- Praise—Worship God for who He is.
- Repent—Confess your sin to God and acknowledging your need for Jesus.
- Ask—Intercede for particular needs in your life and other's lives.
- Yield—Surrender your life to following Jesus wherever and however He leads you.

Option 2: Discuss the Sermons & the Bible Readings for the Week

If you prefer to continue discussing the sermons and/or the Bible readings for the week, included below are general questions that you can use to guide your time together, especially if group members do not all attend the same Worship Gathering.

- What sermon did you hear preached on Sunday? What psalm did the sermon exposit?
- What was one thing you learned from that sermon? What was one takeaway you walked away with?
- How will you apply that takeaway to your life, beginning this week?
- How should that truth change how you think? How should it shape your desires? How should that truth influence your relationships? How should it affect what you say and how you act?
- What does that psalm teach you about God?
- How should that psalm influence your worship of God?
- How should the truth(s) gleaned affect how you pray and what you pray for?

Option 3: Read, Study, & Pray a Psalm Together

This option differs from REAP in that more attention is given to learning how to study Psalms based on the literary form of the selected psalm. There are different types of psalms: lament psalms, praise psalms, pilgrim psalms, songs of Zion, hallel psalms, enthronement psalms, royal psalms, and wisdom psalms. This guide will include what type of psalm each Worship Gathering walked through as well as how to study the psalm, how to take next steps with that psalm, and ways to pray through that psalm as a small group. With this structure, it might be helpful to choose only one of the Psalms from Sunday's sermons.

MAIN TRUTH

- Slowly read the selected psalm together. If the superscription (the introduction to the psalm that tells who wrote the psalm or gives other information related to the psalm) gives any information related to the events surrounding the psalm, read those related passages as well since they provide a context for the psalm. For example, 2 Samuel 11:1-12:15 is the backdrop for David's confession in Psalm 51.
- What key words do you see in this psalm?
- What themes are developed in this psalm?
- Based on the reading of the psalm, ask the group to identify the overarching message of the psalm. What is the main truth expressed by this psalm?
- As a group, identify the structure or the outline of the psalm. Some psalms, such as laments, have a clear outline of an introductory cry, the reason for the lament, a confession of trust in God, the psalmist's petition, and the psalmist's vow to praise God. With other psalms, you will trace the argument or the psalmist's thought process throughout the chapter. The portions below will provide some assistance with this, but it is important to equip group members to know how to do this on their own. Also, the outlines provided with the chapters below are not the only way to divide the chapter; they are simply one way to do so.
- Making an outline of the passage helps with summarizing each section. Based on the outlined structure you identified as a group, walk through each section and identify the main truth of that section. In that section, what is a universal truth or a general principle from that section? How would you summarize what that section says as well as its main idea? The point here is to identify timeless truths that fit both the original audience as well as believers today. For example, Psalm 51:1-2 demonstrates that believers can turn to God for forgiveness of sin because of His character.

WHY IT IS IMPORTANT

- As you discuss the main truth of each section, discuss why that truth is important. What are the implications of this truth and the theology that the psalm is communicating?

WHAT DO I DO NOW?

- How can you apply the truths gleaned from this section? Be specific in your application.
- What needs to change in your life based on what this psalm is saying? How will you take steps this week to grow and to change?
- Psalms were originally used in the sanctuary for both individuals and Levitical choirs to use both in prayer and in song. In light of this purpose for the Psalms, how can this psalm or this one section of a psalm guide how you pray and/or what you pray for?

Psalm 66

- Psalm 66 is a declarative praise psalm because it begins with a proclamation of praise (vv. 1-4), a report of what God had done (vv. 5-12), a renewed vow of praise (vv. 13-15), and a description of what God has done (vv. 16-20). Ultimately, this psalm exalts God because He has delivered His people from bondage, and because of what He has done, the people of God offer their sacrifice and praise for delivering them from their oppressors
- Outline of the Psalm
 - Invitation to Praise (vv.1-12)
 - Address to the People to Praise God (vv. 1-9)
 - Address to God for Delivering Israel from their Oppressors (vv. 10-12)
 - Sacrifice of Praise (vv.13-20)
 - Address to God to fulfill the Vow of Praise (vv. 13-15)
 - Address to People that God Answers Prayer (vv. 16-20)

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- This psalm provides a clear demonstration of the cycle of prayer and praise. God works, and His people praise Him for Who He is and what He has done. What does this psalm teach us about worship? What fuels your worship?
- Passionate worship of God always leads to personal witness, so if we are not witnessing to others about God, then there is a problem with our worship. Why should our worship lead to personal evangelism? How is a lack of personal evangelism a worship problem? How would you describe your both your worship of God and your witness? In what ways can you take steps to grow this week both in your private worship of God and in sharing with others about Him?
- What invitations and admonitions does the psalmist give in Psalm 66? What implications do these invitations and admonitions have for your life?
- The psalmist's response to God involves both verbal praise as well as sacrifice (vv. 13-17). Worship certainly involves singing and praise, but it also involves surrender, personal sacrifice. Why should we lay down our lives before the Lord? What hinders us from doing so? Be specific in your description of what sins prevent us from wholehearted worship. Worship costs the worshipper. Is there anything that you are not willing to yield to God? Are you willing to give God a "blank check" with your life? What is God calling you to surrender to Him?
- How should you live in light of this psalm? What needs to change in your life? How should this psalm affect your worship of God?

Psalm 67

- Psalm 67 serves as a prayer, and while a specific comment is made regarding the harvest of the land (v. 6), the psalmist's focus centers on asking God to bless His people for the spread of His glory among the nations. The opening verse of the psalm stems from the high priestly prayer in Numbers 6:24-26.
- Outline of the Psalm
 - The psalmist's petition for God's favor and for the world to know His salvation (vv. 1-2)
 - The psalmist's call for all people to praise God for His justice and guidance (vv. 3-4)
 - The psalmist's call for all people to praise God for His provision (vv. 5-6a)
 - The psalmist's petition for God's blessing and for the earth to worship Him (vv. 6b-7)
- What is the motivation behind our prayers? God urges us to come to Him with our requests (Matt. 7:7-14; Lk. 11:1-13; Phil. 4:6), for He cares about us. While there may not be anything wrong with the substance of our petitions, how can our motivations taint our prayers? Do you even consider why you ask God for things? Why is it important to consider our motivations for our prayers? How does this relate to the psalmist's petitions in Psalm 67? If you shared the psalmist's motivation, how would that affect how you pray and what you pray for? What are the dangers of disconnecting God's blessings in our lives from God's purpose for our lives?
- What does Psalm 67 teach us about Who God is? How should this realization affect how we view the blessings God has given to us and the purpose that He has for us?
- Why does God bless His people? What does salvation history teach us about the purpose of God's blessings? God aims to be known among all peoples and enjoyed by all peoples. What hinders these two things from happening our lives? What does it even look like to enjoy God? Reflecting on your own relationship with God, would you say that you enjoy Him? Why or why not? How can you take steps towards delighting in Him?
- What implications does this psalm have for how you live? What in your life needs to change as a result of this psalm?

Psalm 68

- Psalm 68 focuses on the Lord's triumphant entry into His sanctuary, and it traces His leadership of the people from Egypt to the wilderness to the land of Canaan and, ultimately, to Mt. Zion, which was

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the site of the sanctuary in Jerusalem. God chose Zion as the site of His sanctuary over all other mountains and places (vv. 15-16), and the image of Him ascending that mount is one of a conquering King with other kings and nations submitting to Him and bringing tribute to Him. The psalmist celebrates the Lord's power and victory and calls others to join him in praising God (vv. 32-35). What is described in Psalm 68 was a literal reality for Israel, and Ephesians 1:20-23 and 4:7-10 presents the reality for believers in Christ who has conquered sin, death, and Satan and has ascended on high.

- Outline of the Psalm
 - The psalmist calls the righteous to praise the triumphant Lord and describes declares God's judgment on the wicked (vv. 1-6).
 - The psalmist recalls God's provision for His people in the wilderness years and in the conquest of the Promised Land, and he rehearses God's selection of Mt. Zion (Jerusalem) as the place of His sanctuary (vv. 7-18).
 - The psalmist describes how the Lord's selection of Mt. Zion affected Israel's enemies, the nation of Israel, and the nations of the world (vv. 19-31).
 - The psalmist calls the nations to praise the Victorious One (vv. 32-35).
- What does this psalm teach us about Who God is? What does it teach us about the activities of God?
- What implications does this psalm have for how we live as Christ-followers?
- How should Psalm 68 influence our worship of God?

Psalms Resources

As we study Psalms, listed below are helpful resources that can assist you in further study of this book.

- *A Commentary on Psalms* (Vol. 1 & 2) by Allen P. Ross
- *Psalms 1-72* by A.A. Anderson
- *Psalm 73-150* by A.A. Anderson
- *Commentary on the Psalms* by J.J. Stewart Perowne
- *Psalms 1-50* by Peter C. Craigie
- *Psalms 1-72* by Derek Kidner
- *Psalms 73-150* by Derek Kidner
- *Reflections on the Psalms* by C.S. Lewis
- *An Introduction to the Old Testament* by Tremper Longman III & Raymond B. Dillard
- *Old Testament Theology* by Paul R. House
- Radical (radical.net) – Listen to previous Brook Hills sermons, and search by Scripture, date, or topic.
- Ligonier Ministries (ligonier.org) – This site provides a helpful list of top commentaries for each book of the Bible.
- The Gospel Coalition (thegospelcoalition.org) – Use their Scripture index to download sermons from trusted pastors on almost every chapter in the Bible.
- Desiring God (desiringgod.org) – Listen to or read sermons by Pastor John Piper.