

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 disciple-makers, 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 June 9-15

Deuteronomy 13-20 and Psalms 99-107

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 security and deliverance even in the midst of life's troubles. Ask God to grow our trust in Him and reliance upon Him. Pray for God's kingdom to come and for His sovereign will to be done here on earth as it is in heaven. Pray we will all find hope in God's sovereignty even when the circumstances of life challenge our trust in it. Worship God as our all-powerful Creator and loving Shepherd. Pray we will all rest in God's will for our lives and strive to live in obedience to Him.*

- *Pray for Our City: This week we are praying for our middle school students as they attend Mission Camp in Shocco Springs and engage others locally in mission teams each day. We are also praying for Greater Shiloh Baptist Church and Dr. Michael Wesley, Pastor.*
- *Pray for Our World: This week we want to rejoice as we welcome back and pray for Brook Hills Long-Term missionaries, Doug and Nancy Turman. Doug and Nancy served for three years among Burmese refugees living in Thailand. God was faithful to provide indigenous partners who are now taking up the work that Doug and Nancy started. We praise God for how He used the Turman family in Thailand and now how He has transitioned them back to Alabama. Join us this week as we welcome home and pray for Doug, Nancy, and their family. This week we are also praying for our Short-Term team serving in Ecuador.*

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?
 - (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?

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- (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.

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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 91

- This psalm teaches that God watches over the safety of His people and never fails them. Some of its language of strongholds and shields reminds us of David's writings and other parts echo the song of Moses in Deuteronomy 32. It expresses confidence in the Lord in various types of difficult circumstances such as traps set by others, pestilence, attacks, and battles.
- Outline of the Psalm 91
 - God as a place of shelter (vv. 1-2)
 - God's promise of deliverance (v. 3)
 - God's people have peace through faith (vv. 4-6)
 - God's protection during adversity (vv. 7-14)
 - God's perseverance for His people (vv. 15-16)

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- Psalm 91 describes God as both Protector and Deliverer for those who trust in Him. The first thirteen verses of the psalm are in the voice of the psalmist, then the speaker transitions from being the psalmist to God in verse 14.
- What types of situations currently cause you fear or anxiety? How can we as believers respond to fear with faith? What does this practically look like in daily life?
- The protection God brings does not mean a trouble-free life. How can Psalm 91 be true when Christ-followers around the world experience pain and tragedy?
- In the Gospels, Satan quotes Psalm 91:11-13 to Jesus when tempting Him to throw Himself down from the temple (Matt. 4:5-6; Lk. 4:9-11). What can we learn from how Jesus responds to Satan?
- Read Romans 8:35-38. What does it look like to live as though we believe that God is with us through every trial?

Psalm 93

- An enthronement psalm, Psalm 93 celebrates God everlasting reign over the earth and exalts His might, decrees, and holiness as Lord of all.
- Outline of the Psalm 93
 - The Lord reigns (vv. 1-2)
 - The floods roar (v. 3)
 - The Lord is mightier (vv. 4-5)
- What does it mean for God to be sovereign? How does His sovereignty affect your daily life? How is the sovereignty of God a hope-giving doctrine?
- The sovereignty of God is not usually challenged by Christians when all is well, but how can we affirm this doctrine and respond faithfully to trials when they come?
- Read Psalms 89:19-37; 93:5; Revelation 4:5-6 and discuss how God vindicates the truthfulness of His promise through the resurrection of Jesus. Jesus has all authority both in Heaven and on earth. What does it look like for Christians to live in light of this truth?

Psalm 95

- The first six verses call the people to praise God for His superiority and sovereignty while the remaining five verses exhort the people to listen to the Lord and to avoid the unbelief and disobedience they demonstrated at Meribah and Massah (see Num. 20). In the psalm, the basis for faithfulness and obedience is the greatness of the Lord, and it demonstrates the severity of the consequences for hard-heartedness since the Israelites at Meribah and Massah died before entering the Promise Land.
- Outline of the Psalm 95
 - The invitation to give God glory (vv.1-7a)
 - The exhortation to reach God's rest (vv. 7b-11)
- How does the psalmist describe God in this psalm? What does the psalmist invite worshippers to do? According to this psalm, why is God worthy of worship? What does worship look like according to Scripture? What implications does this psalm have for how you worship God?
- While the rest described in Psalm 95:11 is the Promised Land, the rest of Hebrews 3-4 refers to eternity with God in the heavenly sanctuary. How can we "work" towards fulfilling the Great Commission while still "resting" in the presence of God?
- Read through Hebrews 3-4 and discuss the parallels that it has with Psalm 95, especially in the areas of Sabbath rest and the admonition that those who do not follow God will not enter His rest.
- Discuss how you can apply the truths in the REST acrostic below. Be specific with application. What does obedience look like in each of these areas?
 - **R**eceive God's call to live out his mission (Heb. 3:7-11).
 - **E**xhort one another to participate in it (Heb. 3:12-19).
 - **S**eize your opportunity for rest right now (Heb. 4:1-10).

- Trust God both to enable and to discipline (Heb. 4:11-13).

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
- *Psalms 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.