

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 16-22

Deuteronomy 21:1-28:19, and Psalm 108:1-119:24

Where We Are In The Story (Deuteronomy)

Background of Deuteronomy: Deuteronomy picks up with Moses' word from the Lord to the Israelites at Mount Horeb at the end of their forty years of wilderness wanderings. Deuteronomy presents the Law (much of what is in Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers) in a preached format, and it contains three of Moses' sermons to the people of Israel that both rehearse their history and instruct them in how they are to live as God's people in the Land of Promise. While Moses wrote this book, the end of the Pentateuch (Genesis-Deuteronomy) has an unnamed author since Moses did not write about his own death in Deuteronomy 34.

Structure of Deuteronomy:

- Deuteronomy 1:1-4:49 reviews Israel's history from Mt. Sinai through their wilderness wanderings.
- Deuteronomy 5-28 rehearses God's covenant with Israel and exhorts the people to keep the covenant.
- Deuteronomy 29-30 records a renewal of the covenant between God and Israel.
- Deuteronomy 31-34 reports Joshua's succession of Moses, Joshua's commission, a song of Moses, and the death of Moses.

This Week in Deuteronomy: In this section of Deuteronomy, Moses continues to relay God's instructions for His covenant people as they prepare to enter the Promised Land. Deuteronomy 21 addresses an assortment of scenarios that are likely to occur as they live in Canaan – unsolved murderers, marrying female captives, inheritance issues when the husband has more than one wife, prodigal children, and the disposal of those who have received the death penalty. A common thread in this chapter has to do with purging the land of evil (vv. 9, 21, 23). Paul references Deuteronomy 21:22-23 in Galatians 3:13-14 in reference to Christ since He was hung on a tree and became a curse for us.

Deuteronomy 22-23 also contain miscellaneous instructions for the Israelites, and they all have to do with distinguishing the Israelites from the other inhabitants of the land and with them accurately representing God in their treatment of others and care for the land. God also regulates worship by stipulating who can participate. As an earthly representation of the heavenly sanctuary and as the place of God's presence on earth, those who entered the sanctuary had to be pure and whole. Those with deformities were still members of God's people, but they could not enter the tabernacle/Temple. For those who entered a forbidden union or who were Ammonites and Moabites were never allowed to worship in the sanctuary because they violated God's standard of purity and holiness. The Ammonites and Moabites were descendants from Lot's incestuous relationship with his daughters (Gen. 18-19), but they also mistreated God's people on their journey to Canaan (Num. 22-23), which is why they are judged in this way. Again, they could become part of God's

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people, but they were disqualified from entering the sanctuary grounds. While the Ammonites and Moabites were permanently barred from the sanctuary grounds, the Edomites (descendants of Jacob's brother, Esau) and the Egyptians were allowed to enter and participate in corporate worship after the third generation of natural citizens.

Deuteronomy 23:15-25:19 contain twenty-two case laws, which are representative types of rulings for things that the people would typically face. The regulations concerning levirate marriage in Deuteronomy 25 are the laws that affected Judah and Tamar in Genesis 38 and that influence Boaz and Ruth's situation.

Deuteronomy 26 contains regulations for the offering of firstfruits and tithes. By doing this, the people were recognizing God's blessings in giving them the land and providing for them as promised in His covenant with them.

When Israel entered the land, they were to erect stones on Mt. Ebal to remind them of God's promises and the nation's commitment to the covenant. God's commands were written on these stones as a memorial. Once in the land, half of the nation was to stand at Mt. Ebal while the Levites announced the covenant curses while the other half of the nation stood on Mt. Gerizim while the Levites proclaimed the covenant blessings. Mt. Ebal in its barrenness represented cursing while Mt. Gerizim was more fertile and represented blessing. To receive God's blessings, God urges the people to heed His commands.

Where We Are In The Story (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:

- **Psalm 108** contains portions of both Psalm 57 (vv. 7-11) and Psalm 60 (vv. 5-12) and is basically these two psalms spliced together. Either David or another psalmist took two previous psalms by David and combined them into this psalm, possibly to celebrate some military victory since Psalm 60 is repeated here.
- **Psalm 109** is the last imprecatory psalm in the book, and it petitions God to discipline one particular enemy of King David, although we do not know the identity of this person. Peter quotes part of verse eight in Acts 1:20 as he discusses replacing Judas Iscariot's position among the Twelve after Jesus' resurrection and Judas' suicide. In verse four, the psalmist provides a helpful example for how to respond to anyone who hates, accuses, or opposes you – turning to God in prayer.
- A Messianic psalm, **Psalm 110** contains many statements about the rule of King David that are also prophecies regarding Christ. In Matthew 22:41-46 and Mark 12:35-37, Jesus quotes this psalm in a conversation with the Pharisees about the Messiah's identity. In writing of his own descendant, King David calls him "lord," and David did so because He recognized that this descendant would be divine and an eternal priest. Hebrews 7 quotes Psalm 110 twice as it describes Jesus as the perfect and ultimate high priest who makes intercession forever for His people. It can be helpful to study Psalm 110 by examining what it says about the character and the rule of the Lord.
- Both **Psalm 111** and **Psalm 112** are alphabetical psalms in that there are twenty-two lines of three words with each line beginning with the following letter in the Hebrew alphabet. Both are praise

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psalms with Psalm 111 emphasizing His works and Psalm 112 focusing on the blessings that come to those who fear the Lord.

- Known as the Hallel Psalms, **Psalms 113-118** were sung at the three great festivals in Israel: the Passover, Pentecost, and the Feast of Tabernacles. They praise God for His sovereignty, for His deliverance of Israel from bondage in Egypt, for His power over all other gods, for His answer to prayer for deliverance, for His steadfast love, and for delivering His people from exile. These psalms were often sung before and after the Passover meal, and it is likely that Psalm 118 was what Jesus and His disciples sang in the upper room at the night of Jesus' arrest (see Matt. 26:30; Mk. 14:26).
- The longest psalm in the book, **Psalm 119** consists of 176 verses that are arranged in twenty-two stanzas of eight verses with the stanzas arranged in alphabetical order and with every line of the stanza starting with that letter of the Hebrew alphabet. The entire psalm focuses on the subject of God's law, and it includes many features of a wisdom psalm.
 - Stanza 1 (vv. 1-8) start with the Hebrew letter aleph (א), begin with a promised blessing for those who keep the Lord's commands, and include the psalmist's intent to praise God and obey His commands.
 - Stanza 2 (vv. 9-16) starts with the letter beth (ב) and teach God's people how they can remain pure – by adhering to God's Word.
 - Stanza 3 (vv. 17-24) start with the letter gimel (ג), and in it, the psalmist requests God's assistance in upholding God's Word and notes God's treatment of those who disobey Him.

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 love and faithfulness in all of our lives. Ask Him to continue to develop His righteousness in each of our lives. Pray for God's goodness and justice to be executed throughout the world. Pray for God's name to be exalted among all peoples on earth. Ask God to develop within each of us a heart for serving with gladness. Pray for us all to fulfill our role in seeing succeeding generations come to know God and worship Him forever.*

- *Pray for Our City: As we celebrate the fathers in our lives this week, we want to focus our prayers for them and for the other men in our church who are serving men outside Brook Hills in our city. Men from Brook Hills are serving men and boys alongside ministries such as WorkFaith Birmingham, Brother Bryan, Changed Lives Christian Center, Shepherd's Fold, Widows First, Hearts in Hands, Marks Village Bible Club, etc. Our men also support local men's prison ministries in the Birmingham and Thomasville areas and are seeking to reach men at work and internationals with the gospel. We are also praying for Dawson Memorial Baptist Church and Gary Fenton, Pastor.*
- *Pray for Our World: This week we are praying for Brook Hills Long-Term Missionary, Cassity H. serving in Southeast Asia. Cassity serves in an organization and works as a writer for a media team. Her main role is to tell stories of how God is working across Asia and how disciples are being formed in churches all across that area of the world. As she works, she shares the gospel where she lives and travels. Join us this week as we pray for Cassity. This week, we are also praying for our Short-Term team serving in New York City.*

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 just 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?

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- (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?
- (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?
- 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 and 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 one of the Psalms from Sunday's sermons.

- To begin this first week, ask the group to share how they currently approach reading and studying the Psalms.

MAIN TRUTH

- 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.
- 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 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 92

- Outline of the Psalm
 - A Description of Why it is Good to Give Thanks to God (vv. 1-4)
 - The Wicked Do Not Know the Works of the Lord or Their Impending Judgment (vv. 5-11)
 - God Blesses the Righteous (vv. 12-15)
- How do we persevere in faith?
- What truths does God give us in His Word, which act as preservatives for us during tough times? What truths are used by God to increase joy in Him and to sustain our perseverance in the faith?
- What implications does this psalm have for how we worship God?

Psalm 99

- In Psalm 99, the first five verses intermix describing God, talking directly to God, and addressing other believers, and the last four verses reflect back on God's interactions with Moses, Aaron, and

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Samuel as a basis for praise and as a call to worship. The overarching theme of this psalm is God's holiness, and this attribute is reiterated at the beginning (v. 3), middle (v. 5), and end of this psalm (v. 9).

- Define the word "holy." How is God holy? What sets Him apart from all other people, creatures, and beings? How does Psalm 99 describe His holiness?
- An implication of this psalm involves trusting and praising God as sovereign (see v. 3). How is God's sovereignty been a blessing in your life? Why should His sovereignty be a comfort to the believer?
- How should this psalm inform how you pray, how you praise God, and what you pray for?

Psalm 100

- Psalm 100 contains seven commands with regards to giving thanks to God: make (v. 1), serve (v. 2), come (v. 2), know (v. 3), enter (v. 4), give thanks (v. 4), and bless (v. 4). Verse five's description of God provides the reason why we should give thanks and obey these commands – the character of the Lord
- Verse two instructs us to "serve the LORD with gladness." The word "serve" can be used as a synonym for worship, and it can also refer to physical labor or work. In everything we do, we should worship the Lord and steward well the skills, resources, and relationships that He has given to us (1 Cor. 10:31; Col. 3:17, 23). If we believe that worship is the lifestyle of the believer, how should this change how you live as a Christ-follower? How you approach your job? How you interact with your family? How you make decisions?
- Read Micah 6:6-8 and Romans 12:1-2. What implications do these verses as well as Psalm 100 have with regards to worship? What does worship consist of according to these passages? How should this inform how you live? How is your life – your thoughts, emotions, will, relationships, and purpose – being transformed by Him?
- Worship is more than participation in corporate worship, but it's not less than that. Why do some believers avoid corporate worship? What are wrong motivations that believers can have for attending corporate worship gatherings? What motivation should we have (see Ps. 122:1)? How can we combat wrong motivations?
- Psalm 100:5 states that God is good and that His "steadfast love endures forever." What are examples of God's goodness and enduring, faithful love in Scripture? What are examples in your own life? Take time to praise God together as a small group for these attributes.

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.

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- 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.