

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**

*Where We Are In The Story (Numbers)*

*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:**

### *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?

## Small Group Guide PSALMS 82, 84, & 85

The Church at Brook Hills

June 1, 2014

Psalms 82, 84, & 85

---

*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 being the one Who enacts both justice and salvation. Pray for the weak and needy in our world to hear and embrace the gospel and ask God to deliver them from all evil and wickedness. Thank God for our opportunity and freedom to gather together with other Christ-followers for worship and service. Pray for our brothers and sisters around the world who do not have the same freedom to boldly seek encouragement and support in their own biblical communities. Ask for God's continued restoration and revival in both our personal lives and corporate life as a church. Pray we will all live in obedient trust of god's guidance and direction regardless of what we encounter in life.*
- *Pray for Our City: This week we are praying for Brook Hills' summer Rock the Block emphasis that begins this week all across Birmingham. Rock the Blocks are weeklong neighborhood backyard Bible clubs that help our families build relationships with their neighbors in order to make disciples where they live. We are also praying for Divine Faith Baptist Church and Chris Steward, Pastor.*
- *Pray for Our World: This week we are praying for Brook Hills long-term missionary Kristina Ogren Jaggi, serving in India. Kristina is the director of Bright Star education, a Pre-Primary school that provides disadvantaged children with a quality and gospel-centered education. Join us this week as we pray for Kristina and those she serves. For more information and ways to pray visit Kristina's blog at [mountainsintothesea.blogspot.com](http://mountainsintothesea.blogspot.com). This week we are also praying for our short-term team serving in Mexico and our student teams serving in the Middle East and in Atlanta.*

## **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.*

## Small Group Guide PSALMS 82, 84, & 85

The Church at Brook Hills

June 1, 2014

Psalms 82, 84, & 85

---

### 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?
  - (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 82*

- Many scholars label this psalm as one of communal or national lament, calling on God to judge the unjust rulers who do not abide by His commands to care for the needy. Others may prefer to consider the psalm a hymn, which would have been comforting for those who had experienced injustice and depended upon God for help. Nevertheless, the psalm clearly depicts God as the sovereign judge of all humankind and the King who demands justice and care for the oppressed. According to the superscription, Asaph is the writer.
- Outline of the Psalm:
  - God is the righteous Judge of all (v. 1)
  - God commands justice and deliverance for the oppressed (vv. 2-4).
  - God will judge injustice (vv. 5-7).
  - Prayer for God to bring His justice to earth (v. 8).
- This psalm highlights God's sovereign rule over all people and kingdoms. How does that affect the way that we pray for leaders? For justice? For those in need?
- What does this psalm indicate about God's character and expectations for all people, particularly those in authority? What does it tell us about our need, the world's shortcomings, and the true source of redemption?
- How does this psalm drive us to desire Christ's return and God's kingdom on earth? How do we pray for that? How do we ready ourselves for His return as we live daily in a world that needs to see His justice?
- The psalmist calls out God's judgment upon those who neglect to provide justice and care for those who are most vulnerable. Discuss how we can practically take steps to seek justice and effective care for the people who are vulnerable around us and around the world. Why is it important to seek physical justice and care as well as spiritual care?
- Consider making a calendar of how you can pray for social justice needs for those in poverty, orphans and vulnerable children, foster families, victims of slavery and trafficking, and unreached peoples throughout a week or month.

*Psalm 84*

- This psalm is a song of pilgrimage to Jerusalem. It celebrates the joy of worshiping at the Lord's temple and in His presence.
- Outline of the Psalm:
  - The blessing of God's presence in His temple (vv. 1-4)
  - The blessing of the journey to the temple (vv. 5-9)
  - The blessing of trusting God in life (vv. 10-12)
- At the time of this psalm God's presence dwelled in His temple. Therefore, to be near the presence of God, one had to be in the physical proximity of the temple. How could this have impacted those who worked in the temple on a consistent basis? Today the presence of God lives within us. How do we often forget the magnitude of that truth as one who takes the proximity of God in the temple for granted?
- The pilgrimage to Jerusalem was a duty for the Jewish people. Yet, even for those who lived far, this psalm beckons to the joyful heart of those who see the travel ahead as a blessing. Why was it a desirable trip? How/why do we often view God's call to obedience in our lives as a burden or trial instead of a joy to dwell with and depend upon Him as we journey?
- Why was the psalmist so blessed by the presence and character of God?
- The psalmist noted that the Lord's dwelling place was a blessing to those who followed God and trusted in Him. Doing God's will leads to a life of joy in His presence. Discuss how we can find delight and joy in the struggle that comes with following Christ in this world. What kind of a perspective allows us to live that way?
- How do we pray for God's Spirit to renew our joy in following God?

### *Psalm 85*

- This psalm is a community or national lament, pleading with God to show His merciful character and forgive the nation for their sin against Him. Exodus 34:6-7 records God's revelation of Himself to Moses; at this time, the Lord proclaimed his steadfast love, unending mercy, faithfulness, and slowness to anger. The singers of this psalm appealed to God's revealed character from Exodus as they asked Him to forgive based on His unchanging character and ability to save.
- Outline of the Psalm:
  - God has worked in the lives of His people (vv. 1-3).
  - God's character is just but longs to show love to a repentant people (vv. 4-7).
  - God's people can trust in His character as they live a life of obedience (vv. 8-13).
- Israel often repeated a pattern of sin, repentance, forgiveness, and worship. How does this pattern appear in our lives? How does our forgetfulness of God's work in the past contribute to sinful disobedience?
- The psalmist calls attention to God's action on behalf of His people in the past. What does this indicate about God's personal relationship with His people? How did that past relationship influence how the people called out to God in prayer? How does our relationship with Him and our intimacy with His Word impact the way that we pray and relate with God?
- The psalmist appeals to God's character as revealed in His past actions and in His past revelation in word. What do we know about God's character from this passage? How does this passage inform our thoughts as to God's disposition toward forgiveness and showing love?
- God will judge but is eager to show kindness. How does this truth inform our idea of God's wrath and His patience with us and the world?
- What does the predominant focus of God's character in this passage indicate about our reliance upon Him in seeking forgiveness, restoration, and obedience?
- The psalm notes that God's people can have faith in Him and expect Him to act. However, they are not to "turn back to folly". What does this tell us about our responsibility before God?
- The psalmist prays with boldness based on God's character and claims that trust in God is not unfounded. How does this inform the way that we pray with boldness before Him? How do we often pray in a way that feels "safe"—that leaves room for neither God nor us to be "embarrassed" by what happens? How can we pray boldly but biblically, asking God for what is within His will?

### ***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](http://radical.net)) – Listen to previous Brook Hills sermons, and search by Scripture, date, or topic.
- Ligonier Ministries ([ligonier.org](http://ligonier.org)) – This site provides a helpful list of top commentaries for each book of the Bible.

## **Small Group Guide**

### **PSALMS 82, 84, & 85**

*The Church at Brook Hills*

*June 1, 2014*

*Psalms 82, 84, & 85*

---

- The Gospel Coalition ([thegospelcoalition.org](http://thegospelcoalition.org)) – Use their Scripture index to download sermons from trusted pastors on almost every chapter in the Bible.
- Desiring God ([desiringgod.org](http://desiringgod.org)) – Listen to or read sermons by Pastor John Piper.