



# HOW TO READ THE PSALMS

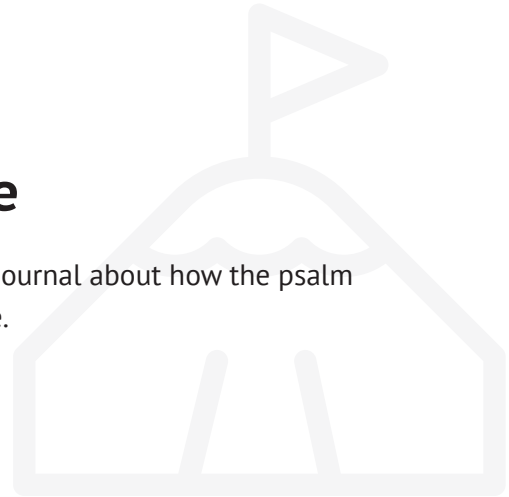
**SUMMARY** | Psalms, the poetic book of the Bible, can sometimes be challenging to understand. Who wrote the psalms and why? Oftentimes they're simply considered a random collection of ancient poems in the Old Testament. Yet the psalms are not a random collection but an intentionally organized testimony of a faithful God who hears all who cry out to Him in praise or pain, wisdom or confusion, confidence or doubt. The story told through this anthology is not only about past movements of God in Israel. It also offers future promises about where all of creation is headed—toward a new reality where we dwell with God, and He with us, forever.

## This Week's Discussion Questions

1. Have you ever noticed that the book of Psalms is broken into five books? Why is that important? What are the textual hints that this collection of prayers was intentional?
2. What is the overarching narrative of each book of Psalms (Book 1, Book 2, etc.)?
3. The book of Psalms was considered the prayer book of Israel and shows us we can be honest with God about the way we feel. What do you need to express to God today?
4. Who wrote the psalms? Look through the book and list the different names you find.

## Challenge

Choose and read a psalm each day this week. Journal about how the psalm applies to your life.



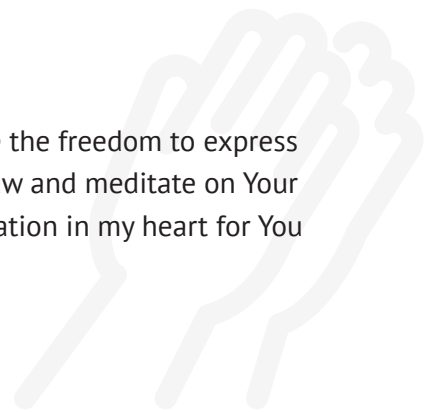
## Commit To Memory

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.

Psalm 1:1-2

## Prayer

God, thank You for illuminating the psalms and giving me the freedom to express myself to You in new ways. I will delight myself in Your law and meditate on Your Word. Help me to always have praise on my lips and adoration in my heart for You at all times. Amen.







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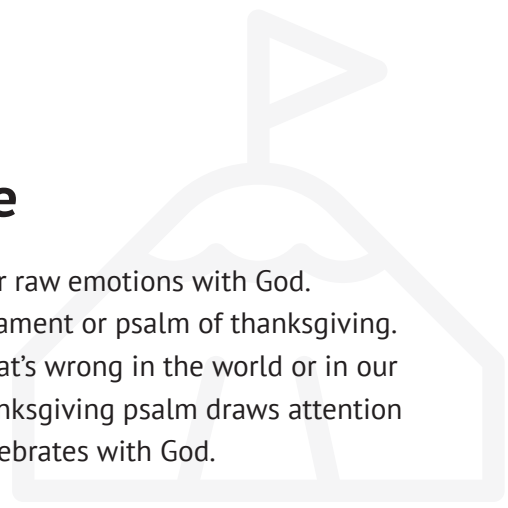
**SUMMARY** | The book of Psalms is an intentionally organized testimony of a faithful God who hears all who cry out to Him in praise or pain, wisdom or confusion, confidence or doubt. A variety of psalms fill this collection of five books (e.g., lament, praise, wisdom, and royal psalms). This week on Discover the Word, the team considers a few of these types and explores how understanding the different psalms can influence how we understand the author's message, as well as give us a vehicle for our own prayers of thanks or cries of the heart.

## This Week's Discussion Questions

1. How would you define wisdom? How would you define wisdom in the Bible? What is the point of a wisdom psalm (e.g., Psalm 1)?
2. How do royal psalms help us understand the story of the Bible (e.g., Psalm 2)?
3. What are lament psalms, and why are they so important (e.g., Psalm 22)?
4. What are liturgical psalms, and how might they help us worship God (e.g., Psalm 100)?
5. What is parallelism, and why is it a helpful device in Hebrew poetry (e.g., Psalm 131)?

## Challenge

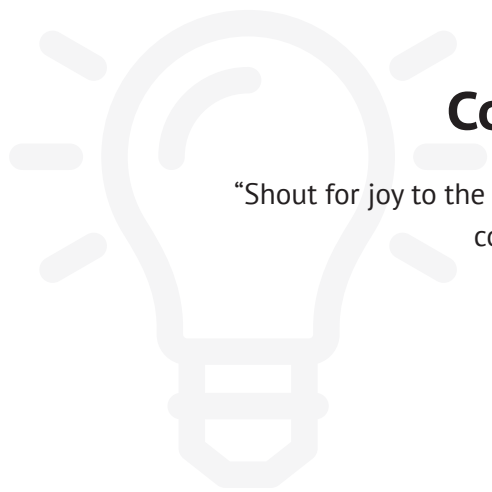
The psalms give us permission to share our raw emotions with God. Take a few moments to write your own psalm of lament or psalm of thanksgiving. Remember, a lament psalm draws attention to what's wrong in the world or in our lives and asks God to do something about it. A thanksgiving psalm draws attention to what's right in the world and celebrates with God.



## Commit To Memory

“Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth. Worship the LORD with gladness; come before him with joyful songs.”

Psalm 100:1-2

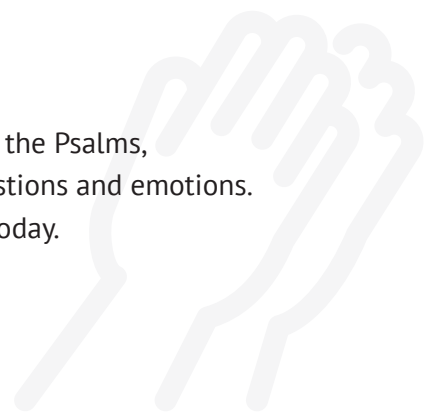


## Prayer

Thank you, Lord, for giving us the example of the Psalms, which show us we can come before you with our questions and emotions.

Here's what I need to express to you today.

Amen.







# HOW TO READ THE PSALMS

**SUMMARY** | Books 1 and 2 of Psalms tell the story of King David and end with Psalm 72:20, “The prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended” (NASB). Through these two books, we discover that the man after God’s own heart experienced more pain and trouble than he did joy and blessing. In fact, the majority of David’s prayers are lament psalms, where he draws attention to what’s wrong in the world and asks God to do something about it. And through David’s words, we discover that we too are invited to be honest with God and that there’s nothing too big or too small to bring before our Father who loves us.

## This Week’s Discussion Questions

1. In Psalm 2 (Book 1 of Psalms), the author writes about God as the true King.  
How is this encouraging for our lives today?
2. In Psalm 6 (Book 1 of Psalms), David cries out in pain and lament.  
How might David’s honesty with God open the door for us to be honest with God?
3. In Psalm 42 (Book 2 of Psalms), the Korahites describe feeling forgotten by God.  
Describe a time when you felt forgotten by God.
4. Psalm 72 (Book 2 of Psalms) is a prayer for the leader of Israel.  
What are some concepts in this psalm that might be helpful to pray for our leaders?

## Challenge

What is going on in your life right now that you need to talk to God about? Perhaps you don't know how to express the depths of your heart, or maybe you're afraid to be real. Think about the Psalms and how they reveal ugly truths in a way that still honors God. You can do that too.

Take a few moments to pray and be honest with your good and loving Father who cares for you.

## Commit To Memory

“By day the LORD directs his love, at night his song is with me—  
a prayer to the God of my life.”

Psalm 42:8

## Prayer

Thank You, Lord, for Your steadfast love that never leaves me  
and invites me to be honest with You.

Amen.







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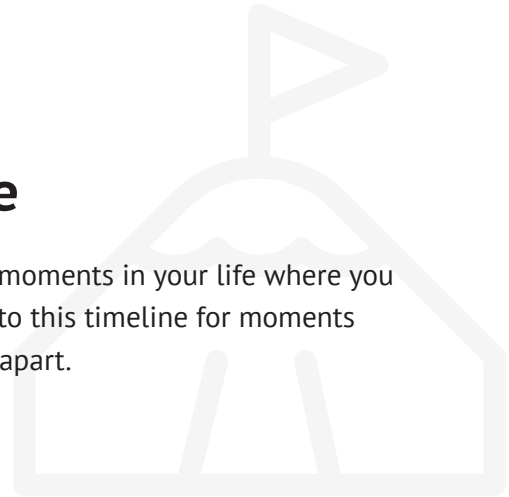
**SUMMARY** | The kingdom of Israel fell apart after Solomon left the throne. Books 3 and 4 of Psalms follow the theme of the crumbling kingdom and include a collection of prayers Israel prayed while exiled to Babylon. As the prayer book of God's people, these prayers and songs illustrate how men and women cried out to God when everything fell apart, and they invite us to do the same. This week on Discover the Word, we will take an in-depth look at these psalms and how they relate to our everyday lives.

## This Week's Discussion Questions

1. Book 3: Read Psalm 89:1–37 and think about a time when your faith felt real and God's love felt close. Describe that time in your life.
2. Book 3: Read the rest of Psalm 89 and think about a time in your life when you felt abandoned by God. Describe that time in your life.
3. Book 4: Why would a psalm attributed to Moses (Psalm 90) be appropriate for a nation in exile?
4. Book 4: Read Psalm 103. Why is it so important to take time to reflect on the goodness of God even in the midst of trouble?
5. Book 4: Why is confession—like the communal confession found in Psalm 106—so important?

## Challenge

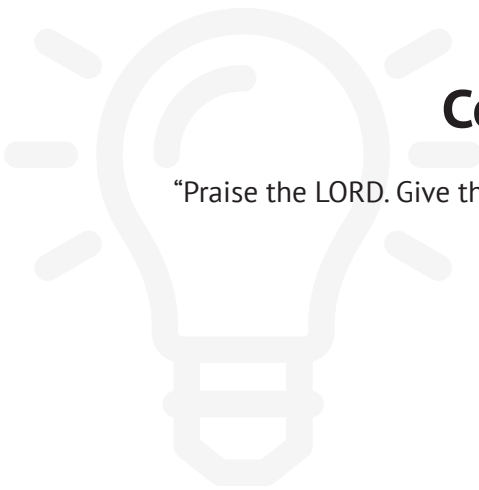
Create a timeline of faithfulness—a list of all the moments in your life where you could sense God at work. Consider holding on to this timeline for moments when life seems to fall apart.



## Commit To Memory

“Praise the LORD. Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his love endures forever.”

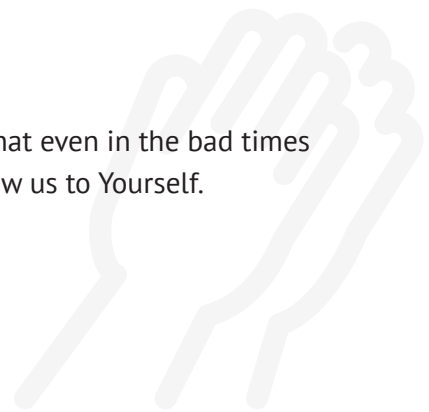
Psalm 106:1



## Prayer

Thank You, Lord, for never leaving or abandoning us, and that even in the bad times  
You're working to make all things right and to draw us to Yourself.

Amen.







# HOW TO READ THE PSALMS

**SUMMARY** | God's primary characteristic is love. The Psalms are an account of His loyal, steadfast, and never-ending love. Book 5 of Psalms celebrates the faithful God who rescued Israel. This collection of literature examines the Israelites' return from exile and ultimately points forward to the day when Jesus would come and begin the process of fixing our broken world.

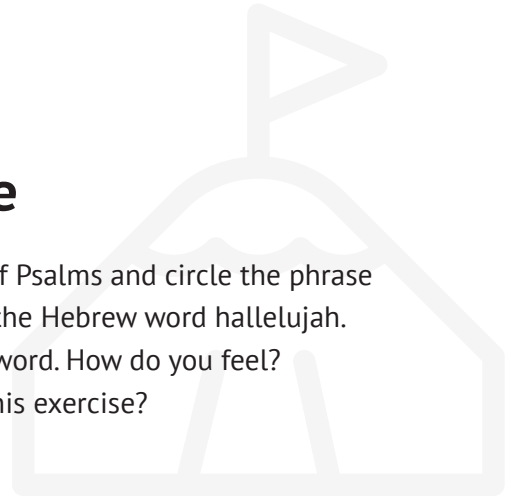
Join in this final week of How to Read the Psalms and discover how they impact your everyday life.

## This Week's Discussion Questions

1. Book 4 ends with a plea for God to gather Israel from the nations (Psalm 106) and Book 5 begins with the news that God answered (Psalm 107). Describe a time when God answered your prayers.
2. (Book 5) Look at Psalm 107:1, 8, 15, 21, and 31. How have you experienced God's unfailing love?
3. (Book 5) Psalm 119 celebrates the wisdom of God. How have you experienced His wisdom?
4. (Book 5) What images would come to mind for an Israelite who heard the opening words to Psalm 121?
5. (Book 5) Psalm 150 is a special psalm because every line begins (except verse 6) with the word "hallelujah" or in English "Praise the Lord." Why might the book of Psalms end with this psalm of praise when there's still so much brokenness in the world?

## Challenge

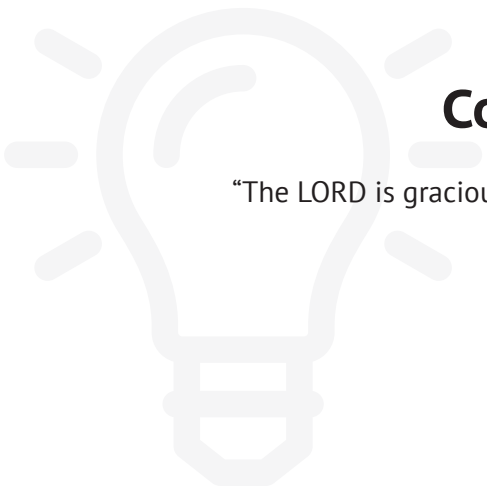
Look through the final five psalms of the book of Psalms and circle the phrase “Praise the Lord” each time you see it. This is the Hebrew word hallelujah. Now read every verse that includes this word. How do you feel? What comes to mind during this exercise?



## Commit To Memory

“The LORD is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and rich in love.”

Psalms 145:8



## Prayer

Thank You, Lord, that we have Your good promise that one day all things will be made right. Help us to navigate this world by keeping our eyes fixed on You.  
Amen.

