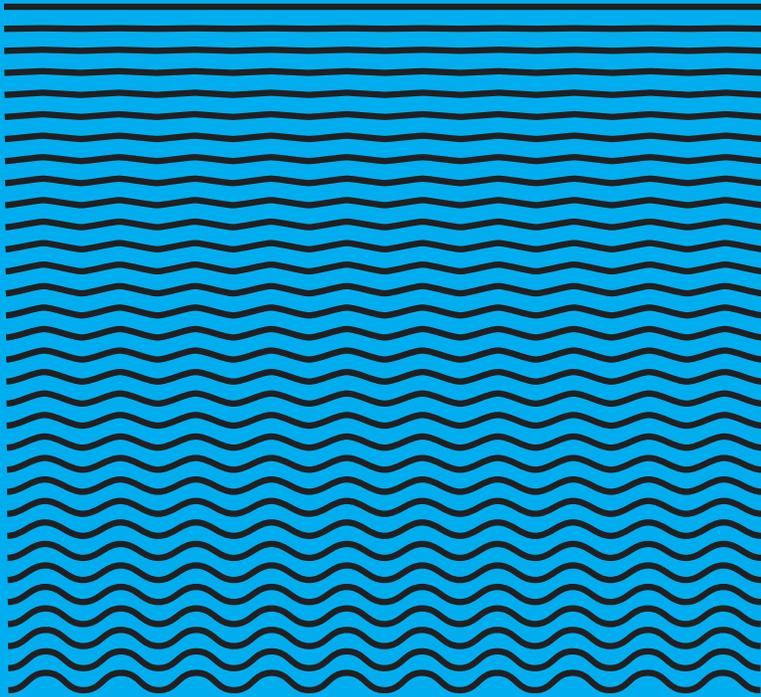


# PSALMS

FINDING REST IN THE UNWAVERING GOD





## *introduction*

In this study you'll encounter eight psalms, a mere sampling of the 150 found in the Bible. They are the hymns of the Old Testament, the songs of God's people that have been used in worship for over three millennia. And, relevant to this study, they contain every conceivable human emotion, from exquisite emotional highs to anguishing lows, and everywhere in between. John Calvin, a theologian from the 1500s, liked to call the psalms an "anatomy of the human soul." The psalms are surprisingly, audaciously human. And yet they are also audaciously divine, allowing us to pray to God using his own words.

*"The psalms were God's songs, the prayers given to God's people by God's own Spirit, that is, the Holy Spirit. We as God's people today pray the psalms because in them God speaks to our hearts so that in our hearts we may speak to him."*

- Hughes Oliphant Old

Throughout this study our prayer as a church is simply for that reality. May God give you his own words that you may dwell in them and they in you, and in his words may you encounter him.

*Vintage Church Staff*

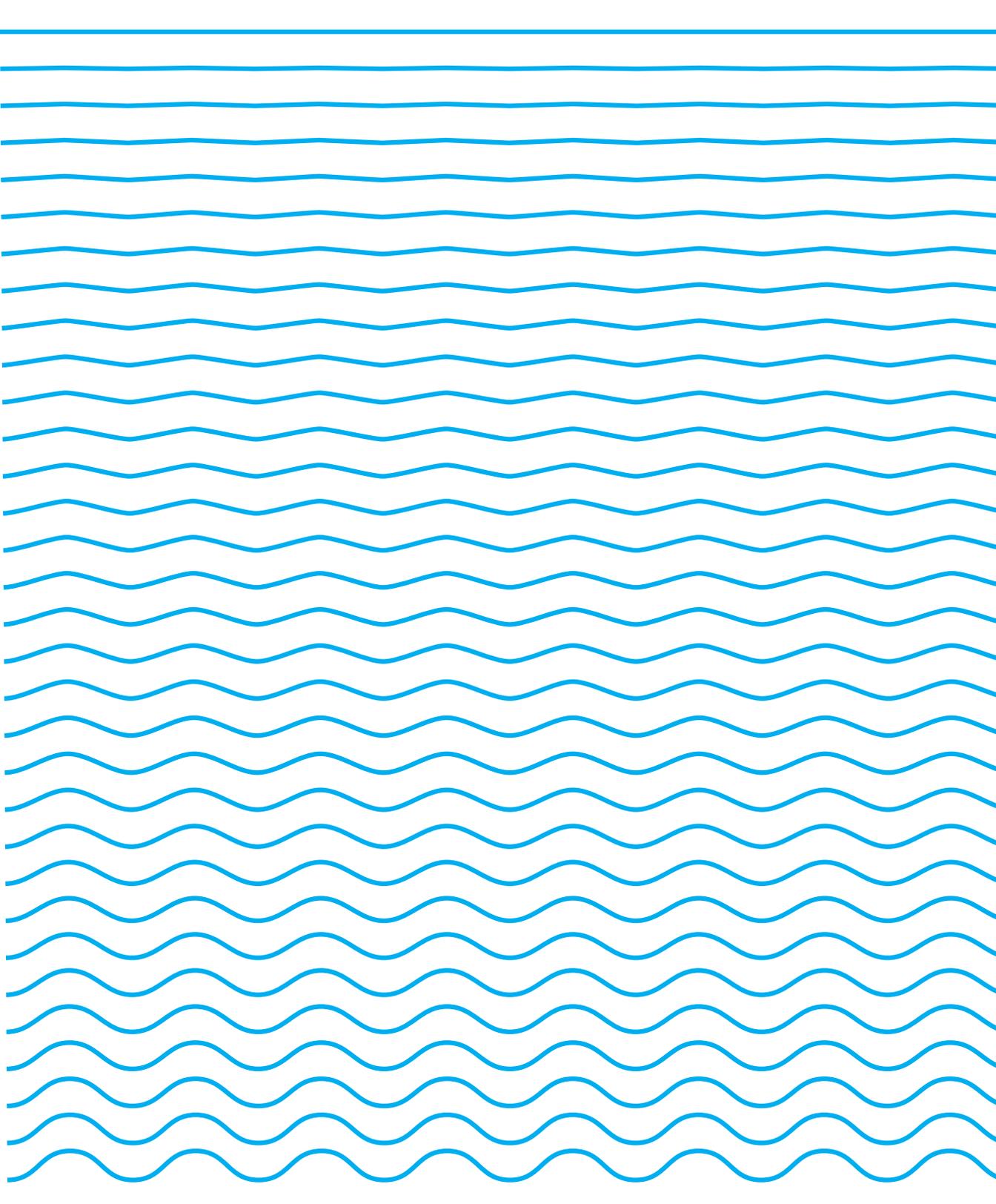
## sabbath

In our study we will put into practice several prayers and exercises that will support our dwelling in God's word, and one specific help worth mentioning here is the Sabbath. The Sabbath is a day of rest from work; the word "sabbath" means "to stop." Time and space don't allow for a full introduction, but interestingly, you'll find the Sabbath introduced on the first page of the Bible (Gen. 2:1-3). There God rested from his work in Creation, and he tells us to imitate him and do the same (Exo. 20:8-11). Learning how to Sabbath is a journey, and understandably, not every follower of Jesus has embarked on that journey. We're convinced, though, that it is one of the most potent, countercultural, and underutilized gifts from God for spiritual growth.

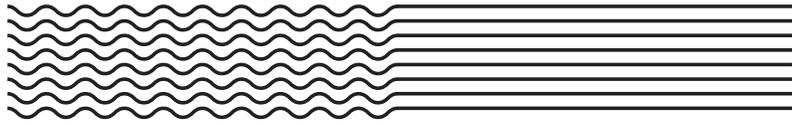
Within this study you'll see some simple tips on how to get started using the content from the psalms as our guide. Pete Scazzero, in his book *Emotionally Healthy Spirituality*, includes five other things that are helpful for growing in your practice of the Sabbath: stop, rest, delight, contemplate, and prepare.

Stop from your work and embrace your limits, rest from your work in the freedom of God's goodness, delight while you rest in the wonderful world God has given you, contemplate God's steadfast love in set aside time with him, and lastly, prepare ahead of time. Just like you might do for a vacation, setting aside a day of rest inevitably takes planning. And lastly we would add: have fun!

Don't make sabbathing another to-do, and don't think you have to figure it all out now. Give some of the recommendations in this study a shot and see how they impact your relationships with the Lord and with your loved ones.



**week one**  
**PSALM 98**



1 Oh sing to the Lord a new song,  
for he has done marvelous things!

His right hand and his holy arm  
have worked salvation for him.

2 The Lord has made known his salvation;  
he has revealed his righteousness in the sight of the  
nations.

3 He has remembered his steadfast love and faithfulness  
to the house of Israel.

All the ends of the earth have seen  
the salvation of our God.

4 Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth;  
break forth into joyous song and sing praises!

5 Sing praises to the Lord with the lyre,  
with the lyre and the sound of melody!

6 With trumpets and the sound of the horn  
make a joyful noise before the King, the Lord!

7 Let the sea roar, and all that fills it;  
the world and those who dwell in it!

8 Let the rivers clap their hands;  
let the hills sing for joy together

9 before the Lord, for he comes  
to judge the earth.

He will judge the world with righteousness,  
and the peoples with equity.

## WEEK 1 MONDAY



If you haven't already, start by reading Psalm 98.

This specific psalm will help us begin at the end. If you read through all 150 psalms you'll see every conceivable human emotion represented somewhere, from exquisite emotional highs to anguishing lows, and everywhere in between. John Calvin, a theologian from the 1500s, liked to call the psalms an "anatomy of the human soul." Uniquely, the psalms are both the divine Word of God and audaciously human.

Throughout our study in the psalms we'll ride some of their emotional waves, taking time to express our joy, loneliness, gratitude, frustration, faith, and repentance, and each as a means of worship. But here's another thing you'll notice if you read through the whole book of psalms (which you really should, at some point). Towards the beginning of the book you'll notice more psalms of lament, like Psalms 13, 31, 35, 41, 44, etc. But as you progress through the book you'll notice laments give way to more and more psalms of praise, like Psalm 98, extolling God's goodness, faithfulness, and works of salvation. The whole book is intentionally structured to help you see that God turns "mourning into dancing." (Ps. 30:11)

So, to help us see where we're headed, we decided to start our study with dancing. You'll notice in Psalm 98 that the call to worship keeps widening. The first stanza (v.1-3) tells the people immediately present to "sing to the Lord a new song." The second stanza (v.4-6) tells all the people of the earth to "make a joyful noise" with all kinds of instruments. Then the third stanza (v.7-9) tells even the seas to roar, the rivers to clap, and the hills to sing. This psalm kicks down all the walls so we can see the whole creation around us erupting in a chorus of praise to the Creator.

Now pause to think: what can this psalm tell you about God? Take a moment to list a handful of things below. After you do, end your time in prayer, thanking God for who he is.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## **ENGAGING YOUR FAMILY:**

As you are spending time with Psalm 98 this week, make room in your home to reflect as a family by bringing your children into this time. Verse 1 says: “Oh sing to the Lord a new song, for he has done marvelous things!” Make this your refrain for the week with your children. Set up space in the car, on a walk, or at the dinner table to come back to this refrain. Talk to your children (no matter what age) about what marvelous things the Lord has done in each of their lives, in your personal life, and in your life as a family unit. The more natural you make this, the more you see scripture coming to life in your house and the more your children see it relating to the everyday things they are going through! For children who are able to read and write, encourage them to follow along in their Psalms Devotional as well. They will be walking through Psalm 98 this week alongside you, allowing for conversation around praising the Lord this week.



## WEEK 1 TUESDAY



Each week we'll read the same psalm at least five times, and this is intentional. Throughout our psalms series we want to make a practice of slow, thoughtful engagement with God's word. When you read the psalm each day, don't skim it like a news article. Try reading it like the poetry it is, slowly and patiently. Chew on it. Consider even some tactics to slow your reading down. Maybe let your eyes pause on each word as you read, or read the whole psalm a couple times through. Think about ways to engage your other senses—you can read the psalm aloud, either to yourself or someone else, or write it out by hand. Do whatever will help you not just read the psalm but inhabit it.

Take a slow moment to read Psalm 98 now.

On your second day with it, what did you notice? Did you see any repeated words or phrases? Go back and underline or highlight words that are repeated often; you might notice that each stanza has different repeated words or phrases that create different, complimentary themes.

Now, you might not normally be into this sort of thing, but read the third stanza again and try taking a moment to imagine its sights and sounds:

Imagine the sound of the ocean tossing up waves and slamming against a cliff.

Imagine how a river would clap.

Imagine hills covered in waving long grass, singing to God. What do you think they would sing about?

If you inhabit this psalm for just a moment, what does it make you want to say to God? Think back to verse 1, “Oh sing to the Lord a new song, for he has done marvelous things!” What’s something that has happened in your life, whether it happened yesterday or years ago, that makes you want to sing to God? Write out a prayer thanking God for that specific thing.

---

---

---

---

---





## WEEK 1 WEDNESDAY



One of the many benefits of the psalms is how they give voice to our emotions. If you're going through a loss or season of grief, a psalm of lament can put words to your pain and help you vocalize it to God. The same is true for any other feeling—if you're already in a mode of worship, reading something like Psalm 98 can help your heart overflow in praise.

One of the difficulties, though, is when you read a psalm that doesn't match your head or heart space. Reading a psalm of lament when you're having a great morning can feel like a giant downer. And coming to a psalm of praise like Psalm 98 when praise isn't yet in your heart can feel duplicitous or forced.

However, just like the psalms give voice to our great and terrible feelings, they also give voice to the feelings we want to have. That's not to say that we should only ever want to be chipper praise mongers—the Bible, particularly in the Psalms and the book of Lamentations, proves that God readily accepts the lowest of our lows when we bring them to him.

So whether we're struggling to give our praise or our grief to the Lord, the psalms can help us in the gap between the way we feel and the way we want to feel. They remind us of the truths that add ballast to our emotions, they help us bring the tension of our misaligned feelings to God, and they help us desire authenticity in the way we relate to God in prayer. Above all this, they point us directly at God and help us anchor our hearts to him.

Take a moment to read through Psalm 98 again.

What gaps have you experienced, either this week or even just this morning, between the tone of this psalm and the tone of your life? Jot down the moments or moods that have highlighted that gap below.

---

---

---

---

Once you've had a moment to reflect on that, pray Psalm 98 to the Lord. What the psalmist says here is true, no matter how we feel while approaching that truth. In your prayer, see how the truth of the scriptures, prayed back to God their author, tune your heart to sing his praise.

## WEEK 1 THURSDAY



Let's start by focusing on the first stanza, verses 1-3, of Psalm 98. Flip back to it and circle all the things that God has done in those verses. It's a lot—each verse gets at least one circle.

This litany of God's accomplishments describes his victorious, saving efforts on Israel's behalf. Perhaps the psalmist wrote this shortly after a military victory, or perhaps they were thinking about the many past deliverances of God in Israel's past, with their liberation from slavery in Egypt (Exodus 1-15) being the grandest example. Either way, the psalmist is remembering the past actions of God and exploding in praise.

And note in verse 3 how the psalmist describes this: "He has remembered his steadfast love and faithfulness to the house of Israel." The psalmist is saying that the Lord delivered Israel because he remembered *his own* steadfast love towards his people, not their love of him. The language here highlights God's self-sufficiency in doing this; it's his hand, his arm, his salvation. He's responsible for it all, and he gets all the credit—the only thing human beings contribute to the matter is their "joyful noise." (v.4)

When the psalmist wrote this they already had plenty of things to praise God for. But here in our time we have Jesus' death and resurrection as the even greater Exodus. On the cross God provided the most costly and most necessary work of salvation, freeing us not just from earthly slavery or political enemies but from bondage to sin and death. And it's this work of salvation that will be praised for all eternity. Read Revelation 5:6-14 and you'll see another "new song" like Psalm 98, where humans and heavenly creatures circle Jesus' throne and praise him, saying "Worthy is the lamb that was slain!"

Our prayers are often filled with anticipation about the future, either about things we don't want to happen or things we really do want to happen. There's nothing wrong with anticipation, but that's not the only way to pray. What the psalmist models here is remembrance. The psalm involves no requests for the future, it only looks back to what God has already done and praises him for it. This history of faithfulness provides a pattern for hope in the future, since God's gracious character never changes.

When you finish this paragraph, take a moment to read Psalm 98, and when you see all the circles in verses 1-3, think about Jesus' sacrificial death in your place. This isn't meant to bring you to a point of guilt—that's not where the psalm is headed. After you read, take a couple minutes to sit in silence and remember the riches of God's love shown to you in the all-sufficient work of Jesus.

## WEEK 1 FRIDAY



Each week in our Psalms series we want to use Friday to prepare to rest in the truths of the psalm we've inhabited that week. One of the ways we can do this is by growing in our practice of the Sabbath. That might not be something you're familiar with, so check out our intro for what exactly a Sabbath is. Whether you are planning to "officially" Sabbath this weekend or not, we think using Friday to prepare to take time this weekend to rest in these truths is worthwhile, and should lead us into Sunday worship with praise-filled hearts.

Thinking back to our study yesterday, we saw how the Lord worked the wonder of our salvation on our behalf. One of the ways we might grow in our rest here is by trusting all the more in the sufficiency of Jesus' work of salvation, and that likely involves chipping away at our tendency to look to other things for salvation or fulfillment.

For salvation, you might be inclined to think that God has to be won over by your good behavior. But as we've seen, God saves without any contribution from us. For fulfillment you might look to things like your career, finally feeling like a success, finding a spouse, or being productive enough to justify your own existence. These things scream at us to secure our own "enough-ness," and they will never bring us

the peace we're looking for. False hopes disturb the calm waters of a sure hope in Christ.

So heading into the weekend, what's something that can help you chip away at your false hopes? What we want to do is flex our letting-go muscles. Ask yourself, what's something you could let go of this weekend that would help you find freedom in Jesus? One key thing is looking for anything you tell yourself you "should" do. Things like, "I *should* mow the lawn," or "I *should* work extra hours over the weekend, even though I'm not required." Now, for example, if you have kids, you should feed them—we all have responsibilities we simply must fulfill. But for this exercise, consider first the artificial requirements you place on yourself that are often tied to these false hopes, things that supposedly supply the "enough-ness" you're looking for. It could even be something tiny, like making your bed. Write it below to make it more concrete: what's one thing you're "supposed" to do this weekend that, if you didn't do it, would provide you with some space to rest in the love of God?

---

---

---

---

---

Now, when you subtract this thing, fill it with something good.

Take time to read a good book, enjoy the scriptures, go outside and spend some time with friends (with no specific agenda), or grab ice cream with your kids. In Jesus you have the love and smile of your Father in heaven; enjoy the world he has made and the day he has given you. Close your time today by slowly reading Psalm 98 again. This is what God has done for you. Rest in that truth.

### **ENGAGING YOUR FAMILY IN THE SABBATH:**

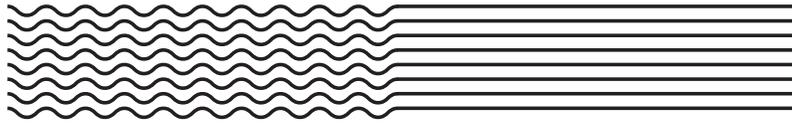
As you prepare for the Sabbath, be sure to include your family in the journey you are making. If you are reflecting on what you feel like you *should* be doing and brainstorming what to put in place of it, bring your family in. Think about discussing together which things feel like work and can be done on another day, and what rest-filled moments can make their way into your day that your family will enjoy.

Your kids will love this, you will love this, and the day will point you back in celebration of your Good Creator.



**week two**

# PSALM 46



*To the choirmaster. Of the Sons of Korah.  
According to Alamo. A Song.*

- 1 God is our refuge and strength,  
a very present help in trouble.
  
- 2 Therefore we will not fear though the earth gives way,  
though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea,
  
- 3 though its waters roar and foam,  
though the mountains tremble at its swelling. *Selah*
  
- 4 There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God,  
the holy habitation of the Most High.
  
- 5 God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved;  
God will help her when morning dawns.
  
- 6 The nations rage, the kingdoms totter;  
he utters his voice, the earth melts.

7 The Lord of hosts is with us;  
the God of Jacob is our fortress. *Selah*

8 Come, behold the works of the Lord,  
how he has brought desolations on the earth.

9 He makes wars cease to the end of the earth;  
he breaks the bow and shatters the spear;  
he burns the chariots with fire.

10 “Be still, and know that I am God.  
I will be exalted among the nations,  
I will be exalted in the earth!”

11 The Lord of hosts is with us;  
the God of Jacob is our fortress. *Selah*

## WEEK 2 MONDAY



This psalm is, in part, about Zion, the “city of God” mentioned in verse 4. Once the Temple of Solomon was finished in Jerusalem (c. 960 BC) it cemented the role of Israel’s capital city as a center both of political rule and of worship. This wasn’t just where a human king reigned—this was where God himself reigned. And Jerusalem was a majestic metropolis; sprawling across the twin heights of Mount Zion and Mount Moriah, Jerusalem was situated in a beautiful, strategically defensible locale, surrounded by an imposing fortified wall built that guarded the sacred city.

But Psalm 46 is primarily about God, the one who actually protects Zion. Considering this psalm was sung in the Temple in Jerusalem, you might have expected the authors to say “Zion is our fortress,” since it literally was a fortress city. But rather than putting their hope in a city or nation–state, the psalmist sings the better reality: God himself is an unshakeable refuge. He is the one who defends his people and routes their enemies. Though the earth melt away, though Jerusalem itself crumble and fall, the unchangeable God of the Universe will forever be a refuge.

To round out our introduction to Psalm 46, one last thing is worth pointing out. Verse 4 tells us about “a river whose streams make glad the city of God.” There is no river in the city of Jerusalem. There never has been. Makes you wonder, what is the psalmist talking about?

Close your time by reading through Psalm 46 and thanking God for all that this psalm tells you about him.

### ENGAGING YOUR FAMILY

As you are spending time with Psalm 46 this week, make room to reflect as a family by bringing your children into your study. Verse 1 talks about God being our refuge and strength. As you sit in the knowledge of who God is and how he is your fortress, bring your kids into this reflection. As you ride in the car, take a walk, or sit at dinner, talk about trusting in God as your strength. Ask your kids, what does it mean to trust in God? Where can they lean into God as their strength? For children who are able to read and write, encourage them to follow along in their Psalms Devotional as well. They will be walking through Psalm 46 this week alongside you, allowing for shared conversation around coming to the Lord as our refuge this week.

## WEEK 2 TUESDAY



Continuing our practice of inhabiting the psalms, take a slow moment to read Psalm 46. As you do, underline or highlight the refrain (verse 7 and verse 11). Repetition in the psalms is always meant to drive home a specific point and help you sit with it.

After reading it again, what's something you saw today that you didn't see yesterday?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

One of the many interesting things about Psalm 46 is the progression of imagery. It starts with earthquakes and upheaval in the first stanza (v.1-3), then highlights the solid city of God in the midst of this upheaval (v.4-7), and finally tells us to “be still” (v.8-11). This final command to “be still” occurs right after the war language of verses 8-9, which describe the sort of situation for which you would never actually want to be still. Imagine you’re a Jerusalemite and there’s a war going on right outside the city gate—you would be jumping up to go help in some way, or pacing around your house praying for deliverance. In the middle of conflict, people are rarely still.

But “be still” is only half the command. The Lord says, “Be still and know that I am God.” Knowing God and his character, including his perfect control over all things and his perfect goodness, is the means by which we can truly have peace in the midst of upheaval.

Let’s put it into practice. While we typically say humans have separate components like a body, a mind, and a soul, they’re all interconnected and interdependent. Quieting your body can help quiet your soul. End your time by taking a moment in prayer to be physically and spiritually still, and do so for however long you want. Practice this command from the Lord: “Be still and know that I am God.”

## WEEK 2 WEDNESDAY



Much of the Christian life can be described as “already but not yet.” It’s a theme in the scriptures, and this is an excellent way to describe *sanctification*, the process by which followers of Jesus are made more and more like him. In a sense, followers have already been sanctified, having been cleansed by the giving of the Holy Spirit (Titus 3:5). But, as is obvious to all of us, followers are not yet fully like Jesus (i.e. without sin), and are in the slow process of growth while anticipating the day when they will be perfected (1 Cor. 13:9–10). Already, but not yet.

Turning back to Psalm 46, one of the many things the psalms do is help us exercise truths we may or may not be actively believing. Like we’ve already seen, we often read psalms that differ from our current head or heart space, and one thing that can help with that tension is making the psalm personal. Here’s verse 1 and the first part of verse 2. Write “my” in the first blank and “I” in the second, and then read it aloud to yourself.

God is \_\_\_\_\_ refuge and strength,  
a very present help in trouble.

Therefore \_\_\_\_\_ will not fear though the earth gives way.

Perhaps there is a sense in which God is already your refuge, and a sense in which he is not yet your refuge. Perhaps it is hard for you to believe this psalm at all. As we exercise these truths, they show in sharp relief where we don't align with them, where we've placed our hope elsewhere, and where we struggle to believe that God is who he says he is.

Read Psalm 46 again, and when you're finished, write out a prayer on the next page both thanking the Lord for being a refuge and asking him to be *your* refuge.





## WEEK 2 THURSDAY



The psalms deftly capture the true humility of being human. Whether divulging the psalmist's own emotions or expressing specific worries and fears, the psalms give no pretense for human might or excellence. Read something like Psalm 51 and you'll see plainly that the psalmist is done with the idea of finding refuge in himself. The psalms cry to their readers, you are not the refuge you are seeking! You are not your own help, you are not your own fortress—you are not God.

In this the psalms point us straight to Jesus. Everything that is true here in Psalm 46 is true because of Jesus. Note that the author of the psalm gives no prerequisite for finding refuge in the Father—we don't have to accomplish anything to earn that refuge. We can say, "therefore we will not fear," not because of our sufficiency but because of Jesus'. And praise God that we can! In our lack, Jesus is our abundance. In our weakness, Jesus is our strength. In our distress, Jesus is our fortress.

Take a moment to read Psalm 46 again. What's one thing you see in this psalm that helps you hope in the Lord rather than yourself?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

Sometime in the 1520s Martin Luther wrote the hymn, “A Mighty Fortress is Our God” based on Psalm 46. Here’s a verse from it—vocabulary alert: *Sabaoth* means “Lord of Hosts.” Reading the old language slowly will help you absorb the crucial truth here: Jesus is our blessed hope!

Did we in our own strength confide, our striving would be losing;  
Were not the right Man on our side, the Man of God’s own choosing;  
Dost ask who that may be? Christ Jesus, it is He;  
Lord Sabaoth, His Name, from age to age the same,  
And He must win the battle.

## WEEK 2 FRIDAY



*“There is no more proper response to really seeing God as he is — transcendent beyond all imagination — than to be still and adore.”*

**Tim and Kathy Keller, *The Songs of Jesus***

In Psalm 46:4 the psalmist describes “a river whose streams make glad the city of God.” A few days ago we mentioned that there isn’t a river in Jerusalem. So what is the psalmist talking about here?

The psalm itself isn’t terribly specific, but later passages may provide some elaboration. In Ezekiel 47:1-12, the prophet sees a stream of “living water” flowing from the temple in Jerusalem to the rest of the land, growing trees in the desert with “leaves for healing.” That’s the prophecy Jesus references in John 7:37-39 when he stands up at the feast and tells everyone, “Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.’” The river in Ezekiel is also referenced in Revelation 22:1-2. There we see Jesus’ perfect eternal kingdom, and flowing from his throne is a “river of the water of life” that watered trees with “leaves for healing.”

What does all that mean? The “river whose streams make glad the city of God” has its source in the Triune God, who brings abundant life to our inward beings such that they overflow. And that sort of joyful inward state points ahead to a day when we will enjoy all the goodness of God’s presence in person. To some degree, when we have time in this world to rest in God’s presence, we look ahead to the coming world when we will rest in his presence forever.

Go back and take a slow moment to read Psalm 46.

Each week, as we encounter the truths of the psalms, we want to take time to rest in those truths and praise God for his abundant goodness. Looking ahead towards tomorrow or this weekend, what’s one way you would like “be still and know that [He is] God”? What do you think stillness looks like for you in this particular season or period of your life? And how might this stillness help you enjoy God’s presence?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## ENGAGING YOUR FAMILY IN THE SABBATH

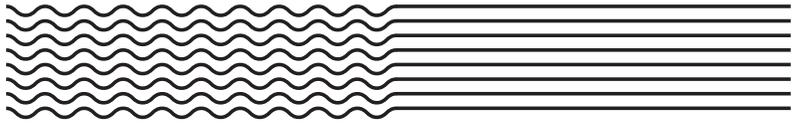
As you prepare for the Sabbath, be sure to include your family in the journey. You may read about stillness and automatically throw up your hands, wondering how that fits in with the chaos of young children or teens breezing in and out of your house. But the stillness spoken of here doesn't mean shutting your family out and pretending they aren't there—it means drawing them in and worshipping together. Think of one way you see Jesus in the life of your family. It may be that moment where you all sit down to eat and feel like a unit. It could be going on a walk and experiencing nature together. Reflect and identify that moment and seek it out as you Sabbath. Know that He is God and enjoy His presence in that moment.





# week three

## PSALM 13



*To the choirmaster. A Psalm of David.*

- 1 How long, O Lord? Will you forget me forever?  
How long will you hide your face from me?
- 2 How long must I take counsel in my soul  
and have sorrow in my heart all the day?  
How long shall my enemy be exalted over me?
- 3 Consider and answer me, O Lord my God;  
light up my eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death,
- 4 lest my enemy say, "I have prevailed over him,"  
lest my foes rejoice because I am shaken.
- 5 But I have trusted in your steadfast love;  
my heart shall rejoice in your salvation.
- 6 I will sing to the Lord,  
because he has dealt bountifully with me.

## WEEK 3 MONDAY



Begin by reading Psalm 13.

David had a pretty prolific musical career for a king, considering he wrote about half of the psalms in the Bible. Read the story of David's life in 1-2 Samuel and you'll see that the sorts of ups and downs portrayed in his psalms were taken straight out of his life. When David was a shepherd boy he was anointed king; he was born in a penniless village but died in a splendid palace. And all along the way he met foe after foe, from the infamous Goliath to the previous king, Saul, who tried to assassinate him multiple times, and even to his own son, Absalom, who attempted to steal the throne. When you read about his low spots like Psalm 13, remember that David wasn't making any of this up. He was well, well acquainted with grief.

And that makes him good company, because you simply cannot get out of this life without experiencing something similar. Depending on your faith or cultural background, that might be hard to admit. Some treat sadness like a black hole that might swallow you if you get too close, or like a sign of weakness. Also, certain forms of Christianity, and secular American idealism to boot, tend to peddle a sort of triumphalism that doesn't allow much room for feeling defeated.

**But how amazing is it that God includes stuff like Psalm 13 in the Bible? David's sorrow here confirms for us that God wants our genuine feelings, even when they might not seem very Christian to us.**

**Interestingly, we're not sure what event in David's life prompted this psalm. Perhaps it was an illness, based on verse 5, or maybe it was the heartbreaking rebellion of Absalom. Thankfully, that lack of detail makes it all the easier to apply this psalm to our own situations. What's something in your life, past or present, that you think this psalm could help you pray about?**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Close your time in prayer, thanking the Lord that he hears you even when your prayers come through tears.**

## ENGAGING YOUR FAMILY

As you are spending time with Psalm 13 this week, make time to reflect with your family. You will spend time learning about bringing suffering and sorrow to God, something that is healthy for everyone in your household to practice. Create space with your kids to talk about experiences that are difficult in their lives (maybe from this week) that they want to bring to the Lord in prayer. Practice vocalizing these feelings of sadness, sharing them with God, and remembering that God has space for those feelings. For children who are able to read and write, encourage them to follow along in their Psalms Devotional as well. They will be walking through Psalm 13 this week alongside you, allowing for conversation around sadness with the Lord this week.



## WEEK 3 TUESDAY



Go back and read Psalm 13, this time underlining or highlighting any phrases you see repeated. How do those phrases help you understand David's state of mind?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

Psalm 13 is a psalm of lament, and these sorts of psalms empower us with language for bringing our suffering to God. In doing so they don't deny our suffering or try to dress it up in neat platitudes. They legitimize it, they empathize with it, they even help us vocalize it.

Have you ever felt forgotten or ignored by God? That seems to be part of what David was feeling here, and the wording he uses before God, the King of the Universe, is almost impertinent. He doesn't just accuse God of forgetting him, he drills him, "Will you forget me forever?"

But our laments don't just express our suffering. They also confess our belief. In his lament, David implicitly confesses his belief *in* God by addressing his lament *to* God. In verse 3 he pleads, "Consider and answer me, O Lord my God." Even in his despair he leans on his relationship with the Lord and calls him "*my* God." And the same can be true for us. Even when we feel broken and faithless, simply mustering the strength to cry out to God is a confession of our faith.

Close by taking a moment to pray, thanking God for always being available to you in prayer. And, if it matches what your life is like right now, pray this psalm back to God, both as an expression of your suffering and as an exercise of trust in him. Maybe you need to sit with God and grieve — let Psalm 13 guide you.

## WEEK 3 WEDNESDAY



The next time you are suffering, God's all-powerful nature might actually provide some of the tension you'll experience. At least, that seems to be going on here in Psalm 13. Whatever David was going through, it was something he knew God could change—that's why he was pleading for the Lord to answer him. David knew there were outcomes from which God could guard him, and the real difficulty was waiting for God to do something about it.

For followers of Jesus, part of the tension of suffering is knowing that it is within God's power to stop. He does all that he pleases (Ps. 115:3), nothing is too hard for him (Jer. 32:17), and even the birds don't fall to the ground unless he wills it (Matt. 10:29). But knowing that God could have planned anything else for us provides some challenges. For past, present, or future suffering we might wonder, why God? How long, God? Will you, God?

But, as David does in Psalm 13, it's precisely because of God's sovereign power that we must come to God. Only he can help. Questions about our suffering, or the suffering of others, must inevitably come before him since no one else has the authority to answer.

However, our wondering over past, present, and future suffering shouldn't happen in a vacuum. If we want to know about God and his plan for us, we must inevitably come to his word. And in his word we find out about his promises. In Psalm 13:5 David mentions God's "steadfast love," a common term in the Bible to refer to God's love in his *covenants*, which are his binding promises to mankind. "Know therefore that the Lord your God is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments, to a thousand generations." (Deut. 7:9) Take a moment to flip back to Psalm 13 and circle "steadfast love" in verse 5.

We absolutely must revisit the promises of God and his steadfast love when we suffer. Though David was met with some powerful threat, he knew that God was all-powerful, so he always makes good on his promises. Take a moment to go back and read Psalm 13. Then, write out a prayer below; if you're facing a particular grief or loss, lift that to God and remember his promises. If you aren't currently facing something like that, write out a prayer thanking God for his many promises to you, which all find their "yes" and "amen" in Jesus (2 Cor. 1:20).





## WEEK 3 THURSDAY



Start by reading Psalm 13 again.

Yesterday we turned to God's promises, his covenants, to help us take our suffering before him. And all of God's promises towards us are only true because of Jesus.

The beginning of Psalm 13, "Will you forget me forever?" might remind you of another psalm, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" That's the first line to Psalm 22, which is also a psalm of lament. And it's one of the psalms Jesus quoted while he was dying on the cross.

In his little book *Psalms: The Prayer Book of the Bible*, Dietrich Bonhoeffer says that the psalms of lament help us "cast the agony of suffering onto God." They help us say to God, "We can no longer bear it, take it and bear it yourself, you alone can handle suffering." That, in summary, is the gospel. All suffering is ultimately caused by the effects of sin and death, which is at work both in our broken world and within our broken hearts. We all know, "we can no longer bear it."

But, gloriously, Jesus came to bear it. In *On the Incarnation*, Athanasius put it this way: “It was our sorry case that caused the Word to come down, our transgression that called out his love for us, so that he made haste to help us and to appear among us.” Not only did he come to bear our suffering, he came to be with us in our suffering. Bonhoeffer also tells us, “For our sake he cried on the cross, ‘My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?’ Now we know that there is no longer any suffering on earth in which Christ will not be with us, suffering with us and praying with us—Christ the only helper.” We can rest assured that any time we would pray, “Why, Lord?” Jesus is there praying with us.

Beside Psalm 13:5, where you circled “steadfast love,” write “Jesus.” He is the perfect picture of this love in which we hope.

To close, take a moment to look up a song by Sandra McCracken called “In Feast or Fallow.” Make the space, sometime today, to sing this song to God (you can always just sing along to it online somewhere). It deftly captures the way in which the gospel allows us to look squarely at suffering and still say, “I will sing to the Lord, for he has dealt bountifully with me.” (13:6)

## WEEK 3 FRIDAY



To finish our time in Psalm 13, take a moment to go back and look specifically at the final stanza, verses 5-6. Look at the tenses of the verbs; some are future tense, some are past tense. What can those tenses tell us about how David is feeling here at the end of the psalm?

---

---

---

---

---

Of the verbs in that stanza, the key is the last one. Despite his present suffering, David can look ahead to a future in which he will again praise the Lord “because he has dealt bountifully with me.” David looks back towards the riches of God’s grace to know with certainty that God will inevitably visit him with kindness in the future. In his commentary on this psalm, Derek Kidner says that David’s confidence in praising the Lord again “springs evidently from [his] certainty that he will have such a song to offer, when he looks back at the whole way he was led.” In God’s power and sovereignty, in his past blessings and steadfast

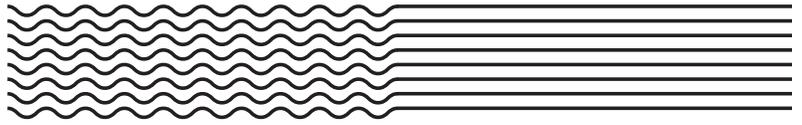
covenants, and in his love as we've seen it displayed in Jesus, we can find rest even in the midst of suffering. Looking ahead towards tomorrow, or to the weekend, one way you can exercise this restful confidence is through remembrance. Consider finding time at a meal with your family or a friend to specifically remember a time when God clearly showed you his kindness. Telling this story of God's grace can both rejuvenate the praises in your own heart and give the other people at the table a shared taste of the goodness of God.

## ENGAGING YOUR FAMILY IN THE SABBATH

As you prepare for the Sabbath, be sure to include your family in the journey you are making. Our children, no matter how old, will benefit and grow from reflection on God's kindness and a time of remembering how His promises have carried you. As you share as a family, think about ways to share that will make the blessings and the covenants of God clear to even the youngest members of your family. Allow them to chime in and share how they too saw goodness in the middle of suffering or hardship (or stand by to help point out the beauty in the midst of pain.) Noticing the Lord and praising his kindness in these circumstances is often a learned practice, one that your kids will grow in as you lead the way.

## week four

# PSALM 42



*To the choirmaster. A Maskil of the Sons of Korah.*

- 1 As a deer pants for flowing streams,  
so pants my soul for you, O God.
  
- 2 My soul thirsts for God,  
for the living God.  
When shall I come and appear before God?
  
- 3 My tears have been my food  
day and night,  
while they say to me all the day long,  
“Where is your God?”
  
- 4 These things I remember,  
as I pour out my soul:  
how I would go with the throng  
and lead them in procession to the house of God  
with glad shouts and songs of praise,  
a multitude keeping festival.
  
- 5 Why are you cast down, O my soul,  
and why are you in turmoil within me?  
Hope in God; for I shall again praise him,  
my salvation  
6 and my God.

My soul is cast down within me;  
therefore I remember you  
from the land of Jordan and of Hermon,  
from Mount Mizar.

7 Deep calls to deep  
at the roar of your waterfalls;  
all your breakers and your waves  
have gone over me.

8 By day the Lord commands his steadfast love,  
and at night his song is with me,  
a prayer to the God of my life.

9 I say to God, my rock:  
“Why have you forgotten me?  
Why do I go mourning  
because of the oppression of the enemy?”

10 As with a deadly wound in my bones,  
my adversaries taunt me,  
while they say to me all the day long,  
“Where is your God?”

11 Why are you cast down, O my soul,  
and why are you in turmoil within me?  
Hope in God; for I shall again praise him,  
my salvation and my God.

## WEEK 4 MONDAY



Start by reading Psalm 42.

At different times Psalms 42 and 43 have been read as one psalm or as two; 42:5, 42:11, and 43:5 are all the same refrain, so it was perhaps one long song. However, we'll keep to the division as it stands and just look at Psalm 42 this week. In it the psalmist describes a situation in which they long to worship God in the Temple but, for whatever reason, can't. It seems as though the psalmist is physically away from Jerusalem and is prevented from getting there. And in that separation this psalm captures the longing we often experience in many different situations for the refreshment of God's presence. What are some words or phrases that you see in this psalm around the idea of refreshment?

---

---

---

---

---

---

Psalms were the hymns, or worship songs, of the Old Testament, and Psalm 42 is built in a common song structure: verse 1 (v.1-4), chorus (v.5-6a), verse 2 (v.6b-10), and chorus again (v.11). Kind of like we saw last week in Psalm 13, the laments in each verse are followed by self-addressed reminders of hope. Interestingly, the psalmist flips back and forth between addressing God, “my soul thirsts for you,” and addressing themselves, “why are you cast down, O my soul?” This combination of God-ward talk and self-ward talk helps address the problem from two different angles; the psalmist is both naming the issue, “I thirst for God and am without him,” and reminding their soul of the solution, “God will satisfy my thirst.” Though this satisfaction hasn’t yet arrived, the psalmist knows where to wait for it. This is an excellent model for prayer in which you simultaneously go to the source of your satisfaction and remind yourself of the source.

Take a moment to model your prayer this way. Go to God and name the situation of your spiritual life, whether things are going well or poorly, and confess to him, and to yourself, that he alone is your salvation and your God.

## ENGAGING YOUR FAMILY

As you are spending time with Psalm 42 this week, make time to reflect with your family. In this week our psalm leads us to reflect on what it looks like to feel downcast or far from God, a feeling we don't often voice openly with others, much less in front of our kids. There is a freedom our kids can begin to walk in when they know that, even when they feel far from God, God is not far off. As you work through Psalm 42 this week, take note of moments when your children may feel far off. This may show itself in an obvious way (if a sin is clearly visible) or it may take some special time to stop and open up in conversation. Return to Psalm 42, where your child can be reminded that even in a moment of feeling far off, they can "Hope in God." For children who are able to read and write, encourage them to follow along in their Psalms Devotional as well. They will be walking through Psalm 42 this week alongside you, allowing for conversation around feeling far from the Lord this week.



## WEEK 4 TUESDAY



Start by flipping back to Psalm 13 and underlining or highlighting all the water imagery.

As we've seen in other psalms, there's a lot of watery content here. In the first stanza the psalmist starts with an image of a deer in the dry, mountainous landscape of Israel, panting for water. That deer is an image of the psalmist's soul; though they have longed for nourishment, the only food or drink they've managed to find is their own tears. This is more than dehydration—this is desperation.

The water imagery also includes the place references in verse 6, “from the land of Jordan and of Hermon, from Mount Mizar.” This refers to the area around the Jordan river, the main river running through Israel, which had its headwaters in a group of mountains called Mount Hermon. Unfortunately, we don't know exactly where Mizar was, but it was likely another mountain in that same region. By adding in these locations the psalmist places themselves in the landscape of Israel well away from the Temple in Jerusalem, in a mountainous region where the waters of the Jordan gathered momentum over rapids and waterfalls.

And there the psalmist feels overwhelmed and forgotten by God. The depths have swallowed them up. This language is reminiscent of Jonah's prayer in Jonah 2:3,

"For you cast me into the deep, into the heart of the seas, and the flood surrounded me; all your waves and your billows passed over me." They had longed for the refreshment of God's presence, and now they were crushed in God's absence. And yet out of the depths they cry.

Interestingly, both the psalmist and Jonah call them God's waves. "All *your* waves have gone over me." Even while desperate and overwhelmed they know that God is somehow at work in their troubles.

When you finish this paragraph, take a moment to slowly read back through Psalm 42. There is a whole world contained in these words; pause and let the imagery of the psalm fill your mind. Stand on the mountain with the deer; hear the roar of the waterfalls. See the psalmist tumbling in the torrent, and see them quietly ask their soul, "Why are you cast down too?" Sit and imagine as long as you're able, and close in prayer, thanking God for the beauty of his word.

## WEEK 4 WEDNESDAY



In his book *Spiritual Depression*, Martin Lloyd-Jones asks, “Have you realized that most of your unhappiness in life is due to the fact that you are listening to yourself instead of talking to yourself?”

He goes on to explain that every day, from the moment we wake up, the innate feelings, fears, and lies within us keep up a continual running commentary. For example, this is the part of your mind that reminds you of past failures often and, when you screw up again, says, “See. I told you.” In *Perelandra*, C.S. Lewis describes it similarly: “There is a chattering part of the mind which continues, until it is corrected, to chatter on even in the holiest places.”

What Martin Lloyd-Jones and Psalm 42 would recommend is to talk rather than listen. That’s what the psalmist is doing with their self-ward talk here. Flip back to Psalm 42 and draw a box around the refrain in v.5-6a and verse 11 (it’s the same two sentences in each). This is the psalmist reminding themselves, multiple times, of the grounding truth that will help them weather the storm of the taunts they are receiving from outside and from within.

This is one of the many spiritual tensions the psalms put into words for us: belief and doubt can both well up from within us. As much as we want to praise God from the depths of our hearts, we must also admit, “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?” (Jer. 17:9) As we’ve seen thus far in the psalms, that doesn’t mean we override or cover up our emotions. It means that, like in Psalm 42, we bring our emotions to God while reminding ourselves of the truth that adds ballast to those emotions.

Take a moment to read through Psalm 42 again. When you’re finished, think this out in writing below: when the chattering part of your brain chatters, what are you most prone to hear? What role do you think self-ward talk can have in your spiritual life? What’s one way you think you could put this sort of self-ward talk into practice?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---





## WEEK 4 THURSDAY



In Psalm 42:8 we see the same language we saw in Psalm 13 about God's covenantal, "steadfast love." In 42:6b-10 the psalmist gives their second lament of the psalm, but right in the middle of it, between the onslaught of verse 7 and the oppression of verse 9, they confess, "By day the Lord commands his steadfast love, and at night his song is with me, a prayer to the God of my life." Through the hardships of the day, through the lonely watches of the night, God never abandons his people.

And more than that: he comes to find us. In Luke 15, Jesus gives three pictures of God's steadfast love, and all three assure us that God seeks out his children. Like a man looking for his lost sheep, like a woman searching for a lost coin, like a father longing for the return of his son, God earnestly desires fellowship with you. So much so that his Son left his Father's presence so that you might enter it, and lost his life that you might gain yours.

As we practice the skill of self-ward talk, where we remind ourselves of the hope we have in God even when we feel hopeless, we must always return to the core truth of the gospel, that Jesus' death on the cross is the definitive emblem of God's steadfast love towards us. We remind ourselves of this truth because it is both the treatment and solution for the sickness of our unbelief. The return of symptoms doesn't make the prognosis fatal—it's simply a cue to return to what cures you! And in Jesus we have every assurance that our healing is inevitable, "For I am confident of this very thing, that he who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Jesus Christ." (Phil. 1:6)

The solution to the discouragement and disquietude we see in this psalm is expressed in the refrain: Hope in God. Our cynicism or fearfulness might tell us to hedge our bets, to not stake everything on God. But the gospel assures us that there's simply no other "rock," no other source of salvation, than Jesus Christ.

Read through Psalm 42, then write out a prayer below thanking God for the gift of his son. Think back to verse 11; what does it mean for you to be able to call Jesus, "*my* salvation and *my* God"?

## WEEK 4 FRIDAY



To end our study of Psalm 42 this week, read through it one last time. When you hit the refrain of verse 5, pause for a moment. Remind your soul, “Hope in God.” Then keep reading, and pause again at verse 11. Take cues from the psalm on how to interact with God as you read it.

Looking ahead towards the end of the week, this psalm can lead you in two ways towards your practice of the Sabbath. First, the recurrence of the refrain in this psalm mimics the kind of prayer that you might say while you are meditating on God’s word. Meditation might sound a little new-age to you, but it’s an ancient Christian practice, and a common theme in the psalms: “On the glorious splendor of your majesty, and on your wondrous works, I will meditate.” (Ps. 145:5)

Meditation might look like specific time spent in silence and focused reflection. But meditation can also punctuate your day. One way of doing this is something called a “breath prayer,” which is a silent prayer you can say in one breath. Using Psalm 42:1 as an example, you could pray as you inhale, “As a deer pants for flowing streams...” Then exhale and pray, “...so pants my soul for you, O God.” You could repeat this over and over for a few minutes while you breathe slowly,

or you could do it at various points in the day, in the middle of chores, while commuting, etc. It's an excellent way to build into your prayer life with God's word in a readily obtainable way.

Second, in Psalm 42 the psalmist longs to be in God's presence worshipping with God's people again. Just like self-ward talk, worshipping alongside other followers reminds us of the source of our hope. There's an important overlap between Sabbath and worshipping with the church; whether you Sabbath on Sunday or not, rest is meant to build into your worship, and your worship is meant to build into your rest. In this manner, in the Ten Commandments God tells us to "Sabbath to the Lord your God." (Exo. 20:10) When we engage in Sabbath rest, we rest *unto* the Lord.

So consider, what would it look like for your weekend to contain some hopeful anticipation for worship with your church family? Close in prayer, and process with the Lord what it means for you to commit your rest in the next few days to him.

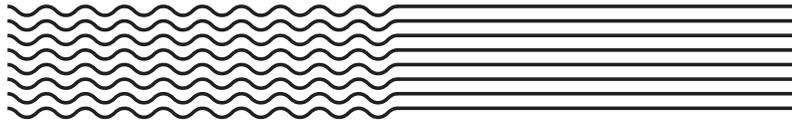
## ENGAGING YOUR FAMILY IN THE SABBATH

As you prepare for the Sabbath, be sure to include your family in the journey you are making. You may read about stillness and automatically throw up your hands, wondering how that fits in with the chaos of your family. But the stillness spoken of here doesn't mean closing your family out and pretending they aren't there; it means drawing them in and worshiping together. Think of one way you see Jesus in the life of your family. It may be that moment where you all sit down to eat and feel like a unit. It could be going on a walk and experiencing nature together. Identify that moment and seek to deepen it sometime this weekend. Know that He is God and enjoy His presence in that moment.



# week five

## PSALM 16



*A Miktam of David.*

- 1 Preserve me, O God, for in you I take refuge.
- 2 I say to the Lord, "You are my Lord;  
I have no good apart from you."
- 3 As for the saints in the land, they are the excellent ones,  
in whom is all my delight.
- 4 The sorrows of those who run after another god  
shall multiply;  
their drink offerings of blood I will not pour out  
or take their names on my lips.
- 5 The Lord is my chosen portion and my cup;  
you hold my lot.
- 6 The lines have fallen for me in pleasant places;  
indeed, I have a beautiful inheritance.
- 7 I bless the Lord who gives me counsel;  
in the night also my heart instructs me.

- 8 I have set the Lord always before me;  
because he is at my right hand, I shall not be shaken.
- 9 Therefore my heart is glad, and my whole being rejoices;  
my flesh also dwells secure.
- 10 For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol,  
or let your holy one see corruption.
- 11 You make known to me the path of life;  
in your presence there is fullness of joy;  
at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

## WEEK 5 MONDAY



Here we have another psalm by David, specifically a *miktam*, which was probably a genre of song, though we've lost the exact definition of that term to history. In it David entrusts himself to God, confessing that he has no good whatsoever apart from him. That sort of absolute statement is a stirring and clarifying call to worship God and nothing else.

Specifically in verses 5–6 David calls the Lord his “chosen portion,” saying, “the lines have fallen for me in pleasant places.” This language calls to mind the settling of the land of Canaan in the book of Joshua, when the nation of Israel was finished with their wilderness wanderings and God finally brought them into the promised land. When he did, land was allotted to all the tribes of Israel (Josh. 13–21). All except the descendants of Aaron, that is. These were the priests and Levites, who served in the Tabernacle and later in the Temple; the priests made the sacrifices and offerings while the Levites administered the services and sang the worship songs. Now, land was a really big deal in this time period. If you and your family didn't have any land for agriculture, you and your family didn't eat. So instead of surviving off their own land, the Levites had to survive off the

contributions of the whole nation of Israel. In so doing, the nation was invested in worship at the Tabernacle and Temple, and the Levites were able to dedicate all of their time and effort towards stewarding Israel's worship.

But God was also making a specific point by doing this. In Numbers 18:20 the Lord tells Aaron and his household, "You shall have no inheritance in their land, neither shall you have any portion among them. I am your portion and your inheritance among the people of Israel." God specifically wanted the worship leaders of Israel to stake their whole beings upon him, to know that their only hope of provision and sustenance rested on the Lord alone.

That's the imagery David is bringing to mind by calling the Lord his "chosen portion." Thinking of the allotment of the land of Israel, it's as if someone came to David and told him he too had been given no space on the map. And yet David is deeply pleased with his real estate. Even if he was landless he could look to the goodness of the Lord and say, "The lines have fallen for me in pleasant places."



## ENGAGING YOUR FAMILY

As you are spending time with Psalm 16 this week, make room in your home to reflect as a family by bringing your children into this time.

This week, as we are faced with the idea that God is our portion and our beautiful inheritance, we will be in one of two places.

We will either feel that deeply and make that our Amen, or we will find ourselves questioning whether it is true for us and for our children.

Psalm 16 reminds us of the truth, that even when the world around us is unstable, because of the Lord, we will not be shaken. Create spaces with your family this week to reflect on this truth in honest conversation. Do you have a child that is thriving in some way? What a great time to talk about how, when things are great, we can reflect on the goodness of God and how He is our portion, not the greatness of our circumstances. Do you have a child that is struggling with friendship, a team, or self-image? The same God who meets us on the mountaintop goes before them that they might not be shaken (v.8). This becomes real with your guidance, honesty, and example.

For children who are able to read and write, encourage them to follow along in their Psalms Devotional as well. They will be walking through Psalm 16 this week alongside you, allowing for conversation around who God is this week.

## WEEK 5 TUESDAY



Start by reading Psalm 16 again. What did you notice today that you didn't notice yesterday?

---

---

---

---

This psalm has some highly bold statements in it. "I have no good apart from you." "You will not abandon my soul." "I shall not be shaken." David seems utterly convinced that in God he isn't lacking anything that is necessary to constitute a happy life, and because of this he is unshakeable.

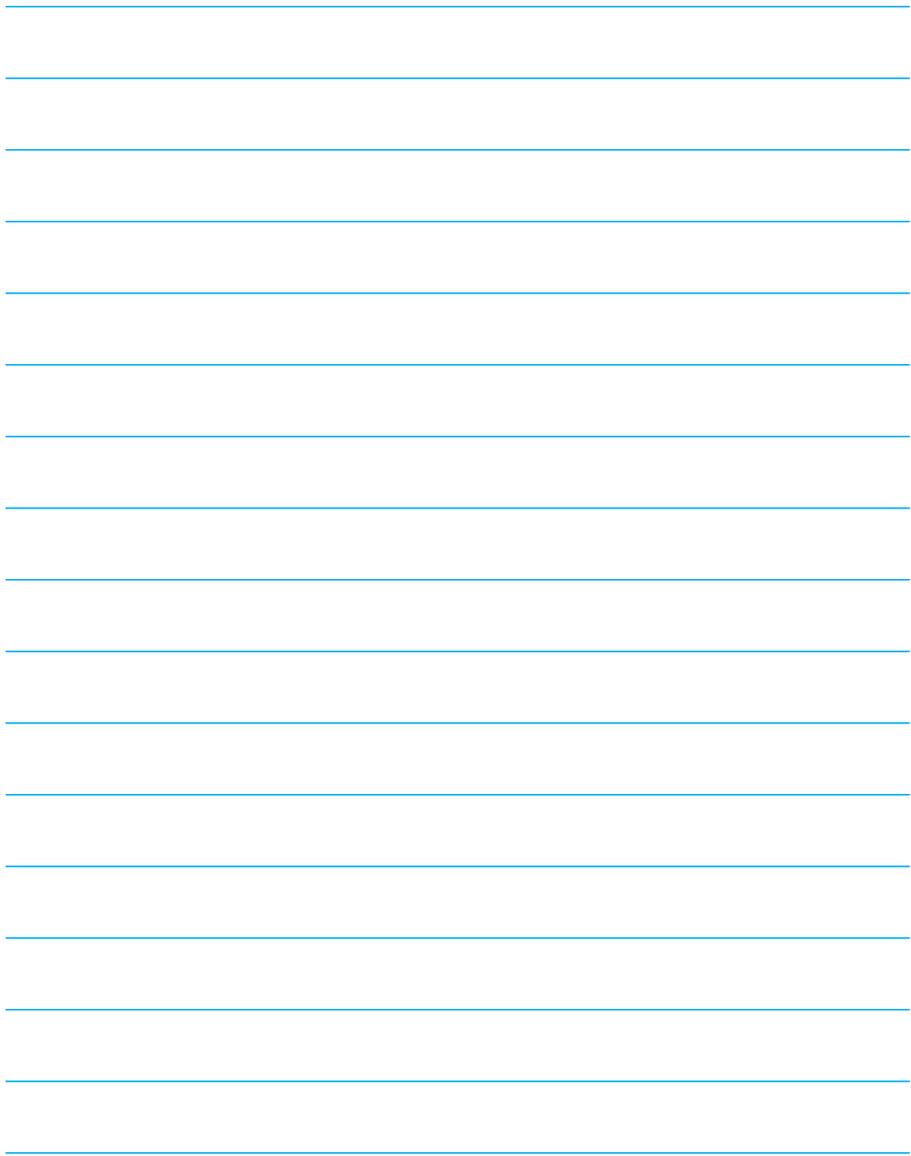
Definitely don't miss the cause and effect here. It's not as if David is inhumanly tough or has disciplined himself to be unmovable. The only reason he can say, "I will not be shaken," is because he knows, "[God] is at my right hand." In David's context, that phrase "at my right hand" describes someone who is right beside you ready to stick up for you;

it's like having a supporting witness in a courtroom or a partner with you on the battlefield. When David looks at God and sees his awesome power combined with his tender love he knows he has an unshakeable foundation, not because of his strength but because of the Lord's.

We see this theme time and time again in the scriptures. Jesus says whoever listens to his words is like a man who has built his house upon the bedrock; the house isn't the source of steadiness, the rock is (Matt. 7:24). Paul, facing some unknown affliction, cried to the Lord but left convinced that God's grace was sufficient for him in his weakness (2 Cor. 12:9).

Thinking back to David, does this mean he went through the rest of his life annoyingly upbeat and unphased? We saw in Psalm 13 that this wasn't the case. David isn't talking about his mood or resilience being unshakeable. The strength he describes here is external to him. It's as if he's been tied to an anchor—though he might be tossed around by the wind and the waves, though his outward life might appear in a constant state of flux, below the surface the gravity of the anchor is holding him secure.

End your time by writing out a prayer below. Do you feel as though God is at your right hand? Do you tend to look anywhere else for strength and support? Ask the Lord to realize the truths of this psalm in your life.





## WEEK 5 WEDNESDAY



Maybe over the past few days the mention of “drink offerings of blood” in verse 4 has seemed a little creepy to you. The Bible is often a lot weirder than we expect. To explain it, the nations that surrounded ancient Israel in the land of Canaan contained a ton of different religions, almost all of which practiced some sort of sacrificial system. Which, so did the Hebrew people, but a unique feature of Judaism was how the animal sacrifice was handled. It was common among Canaanite religions for a cup of the animal’s blood to be passed around and sipped. But this sort of practice was abhorrent to God precisely because it confused the role of sacrifice, making it seem more like a magic art than forgiveness for sin. That’s why he forbade the practice for Israel in Leviticus 17:10–16, because the sacrifice “makes atonement by the life” and both life and atonement (i.e. forgiveness for sins) belong to God alone.

In Psalm 16:4, David is pointing to the religions surrounding his nation and saying that he will not participate in their unlawful practices, or even speak the names of their idols. To do so would mean breaking God’s command, “you shall have no other god besides me,” (Exo. 20:3) and to abandon the Lord as a “chosen portion.” In verse 2 David says

he has no good apart from God, and in verse 4 he confirms, being apart from God offers no good.

David also describes idol worshippers as those who “run after another god.” The word for “run” there means “to hasten,” implying the anxiety with which they pursue what they want, perhaps because they intuitively know how insecure and fickle the offers of an idol are. David elaborates on their unhappiness: “[Their] sorrows...shall multiply.”(16:4) This is the exact same language God used with Eve in Genesis 3, right after Adam and Eve brought sin into the world by rebelling against him, when God pronounced the curse under which we are all born: “I will surely multiply your sorrows.”(Gen. 3:16a)

Draw a star beside Psalm 16:4, because this verse is a warning for us. Idol worship wasn’t unique to the ancient Canaanites—we all chase after false gods because of sin, whether they have names or not. And yet God confirms that doing so will only multiply our sorrows, because only he makes known the path of life; only with him is fullness of joy. (16:11)

Read back through Psalm 16. What is convicting about this psalm to you? If you know you’ve been running after something that isn’t God, take a moment to confess that to the Lord in prayer. “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”(1 John 1:9)

## WEEK 5 THURSDAY



One helpful tactic for studying the Bible is to look for any places one passage is quoted in another, and Psalm 16 surfaces again in Acts 2, about 1000 years after David wrote it. There, the apostle Peter tells us that David spoke of a future hope that was perfectly fulfilled in Jesus.

Specifically, Peter points to verse 10, “For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol, or let your holy one see corruption.” Vocabulary alert: *Sheol* is the Hebrew word for the land of the dead, it’s Greek synonym being Hades. In David’s day, Jewish men and women believed in the afterlife, but specifically that one’s soul went to Sheol, which was a netherworld away from God’s presence. They could only hope that God would somehow be gracious to them upon their death, delivering them from Sheol (Ps. 30:3) and bringing them into his presence forever (Ps. 16:11).

Now, that’s a tad different than what we think of as heaven and hell, but keep in mind, God has always been revealing things bit by bit—Jesus himself doesn’t show up until you’re two-thirds through the Bible! What David understood about the afterlife, that humans were separated from God except by an act of divine mercy, is

fundamentally what we understand in the New Testament and works perfectly with the revelation of the gospel. And now we can do more than merely hope that God will be merciful—in Jesus we have the guarantee of God’s mercy towards those who put their trust in him!

So Peter tells us David’s words were a prophecy about Jesus’s resurrection, that God would not abandon his Holy One to Sheol and would save him from the corruption, or decay, of the grave (Paul says the same in Acts 13:35). And he did this so that those who are united to him might be saved from the same, that we might be called into fellowship with him in his death, his resurrection, and the joy of his presence forever.

The word “presence” in verse 11 can also be translated “face,” as in being right in front of someone’s face, able to see them and be seen by them. Jesus’ death for you was not a begrudging act; he didn’t sneak you in the back way to God’s grace. He paid what it cost to bring you right into God’s presence, right before his face. And there, because of Jesus, God overflows in grace and kindness towards you. Because of Jesus, he is your portion, your beautiful inheritance, and your fullness of joy.

And there’s more: according to Hebrews 7:25, Jesus is, right now, praying for you. He is the perfect advocate for you, the one at your right hand as David mentions in verse 8, interceding for you in order to strengthen and establish you according to his word.

Take a moment to sit in all this. Don't do anything; just hold the profound kindness of this in your mind. If you have hoped in Jesus, Psalm 16 is both true about you and being made true about you. Lean into it: "Therefore my heart is glad, and my whole being rejoices!"



## WEEK 5 FRIDAY



*“He only knows the way of life who is so united to God that he lives in God, and cannot live without him.”*

**John Calvin, *Commentaries***

Read through Psalm 16 one more time.

The timeframe of verse 11 indicates that only in eternity could we begin to grasp the riches of God’s glory and kindness towards us in Jesus (Eph. 2:7). It will take eons and eons to barely scratch the surface. But interestingly, that verse also talks about the “path of life,” which we’re meant to walk on right now. In fact, the “pleasures” of verse 11 relates back to the “pleasant places” of verse 6, showing that, because of God’s kindness, the joy we will one day experience in full has already begun right now.

Consider what it would look like to revel in God’s love this weekend. One of the reasons God gave us the Sabbath is to stir up our delight in him. Stopping from work frees us to praise God, knowing that he is the true and only source of our happiness, and to provoke our sense of fun in the world he gave us. If we will delight in God’s presence forever,



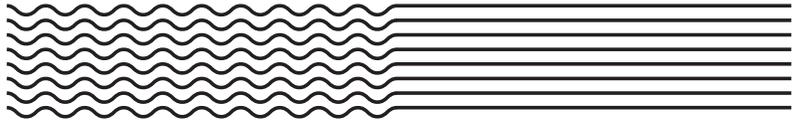
## ENGAGING YOUR FAMILY IN THE SABBATH

As you prepare for the Sabbath, be sure to include your family in the journey you are making. Thinking about what it looks like to revel in God's love is something your kids will be able to participate in and will enjoy doing. As you think through ideas of what you would love to do this weekend just for the fun of it, ask your kids for their opinions as well. It doesn't mean you have to fit everything into one day, but now you have a list of things that point your family to thank God for his kindness that the whole family can get behind. This can be used week in and week out, added to and reflected upon. Have fun dreaming up your favorite ideas together and putting them into practice on the Sabbath, joining together as you celebrate the Lord's kindness to your family.





**week six**  
**PSALM 130**



*A Song of Ascents.*

1 Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord!

2 O Lord, hear my voice!  
Let your ears be attentive  
to the voice of my pleas for mercy!

3 If you, O Lord, should mark iniquities,  
O Lord, who could stand?

4 But with you there is forgiveness,  
that you may be feared.

5 I wait for the Lord, my soul waits,  
and in his word I hope;

6 my soul waits for the Lord  
more than watchmen for the morning,  
more than watchmen for the morning.

7 O Israel, hope in the Lord!  
For with the Lord there is steadfast love,  
and with him is plentiful redemption.

8 And he will redeem Israel  
from all his iniquities.

## WEEK 6 MONDAY



Begin by reading Psalm 130.

This psalm is short enough that you could memorize it by the end of the week. Use whatever method you prefer; one way is to take the first stanza (v.1-2), write it down on a slip of paper, and find a handful of moments during the day to read it out loud or under your breath until you can recite it without looking at it. Add the second stanza once you've mastered the first, and you should have the whole thing relatively soon. This is an excellent psalm for memorization, particularly as we look to grow in our ability to wait on the Lord.

At the top of this psalm you'll see it described as a "song of ascents." These songs (Psalms 120-134) were sung by Jewish pilgrims as they made their way to Jerusalem for various festivals. As we mentioned in week 2, Jerusalem was built on top of a mountain, so people traveling to Jerusalem inevitably started from a lower elevation and ascended to the city.

Imagine the sound for a moment. In ancient Israel people typically made this sort of journey in large family groups. Echoing all through

the valleys leading up to Jerusalem there were clusters of men, women, and children singing these songs. Plus, these pilgrimages were often made on foot, and when you've got younger and older members of your family all traveling somewhere, you rarely travel fast. The Psalms of Ascent capture this sort of hopeful, patient progression towards the place of worship.

And Psalm 130 captures that movement. It starts in the depths and raises a cry for mercy, slowly climbing out of despair towards assurance that "with the Lord there is...plentiful redemption." In this assurance the psalmist finds the resolve to wait patiently for the Lord.

Take a second to go underline or highlight any repeated words or phrases in the psalm.

This should draw your attention to verses 5-6 (though you'll see other repeated words and parallel phrases). "I wait for the Lord...my soul waits...more than watchmen for the morning, more than watchmen for the morning." The image here is achingly beautiful. In an ancient city, watchmen stood guard at the city gates in shifts through all hours of the day and night. As you can imagine, the night shifts were the most terrifying. Would an enemy try to breach the city while everyone was sleeping? Would some danger lunge out of the dark? What the watchmen on the wall waited for in the cold, sinister hours of the night was the sign of their relief: daybreak.



## ENGAGING YOUR FAMILY

As you are spending time with Psalm 130 this week, make room in your home to reflect as a family by bringing your children into this time. This Psalm helps us work through what it looks like to come to the Lord asking for forgiveness; what a practical and valuable Psalm for every member of our family no matter the age. As you spend time in Psalm 130 this week, talk to your children about specific areas they can bring to the Lord for forgiveness, and what true forgiveness looks like. Model the forgiveness of the Father with your own actions, giving them a practical example of what it looks like to live within the freedom of a relationship where iniquities are not marked. Step out and share with your children areas where you are asking for forgiveness and how the Lord is working in your own life in these areas. Learning about forgiveness and grace firsthand while seeing these practices openly in Psalm 130 will affect the way they view their own sin and the way they approach God.

## WEEK 6 TUESDAY



Did you try out memorizing verses 1-2 yesterday? No shame if not, but if you're still interested in doing so, you can always start today.

Take a moment to read Psalm 130 again. On your second read, what's something that stands out to you?

---

---

---

---

---

This psalm is one of the seven Repentance Psalms (Psalms 6, 32, 38, 51, 102, and 143 are the others). We don't know what occasion made the psalmist write this psalm, but once again, the lack of specific details makes it incredibly useful for us. You can see how easy it is to apply this psalm to anytime you're aware of your need for forgiveness before the Lord.

A couple of features in this cry for forgiveness will help us understand how to utter our own. In verses 1-2 the psalmist cries out to the Lord.

You only cry to someone who you think will hear you, and you only cry for mercy to someone you think can help. Even in the depths the psalmist believes “my help comes from the Lord.”(Ps. 121:2)

Then, in verses 3-4, the psalmist gets rid of any attempt at self-help; it'll provide no answers here because “If you, O Lord, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand?”(v.3) That phrase “mark iniquities” carries an image of a record book; if God were to open up a book filled with all the things done and left undone by a person, no one on earth could stand before him and be declared guiltless. All have sinned and fallen short of God’s glory.(Rom. 3:23)

What the psalmist has come to is a point of humility. They’ve been emptied of any pretense towards self-satisfaction. And we too should similarly become self-dissatisfied. Maybe you are already. But this emptying isn’t sufficient unless we are filled with the faith that helps us cry, “Father, forgive me!”

As much as the starting point of this psalm is guilt, the end point is a place of confidence: “With the Lord there is steadfast love and with him is plentiful redemption, and he will redeem Israel from all his iniquities.” God *himself* will deliver his people from their sins.

What does this psalm stir up in you today? Close by processing your thoughts and emotions with the Lord, knowing that you can “approach the throne of grace with confidence.”(Heb. 4:16)

## WEEK 6 WEDNESDAY



Read Psalm 130 again. If you've been working on memorizing it, use this time to practice however much you know by now.

Whenever you read a piece of scripture, it can be helpful to ask yourself, "Why did God put this in here?" You have to wonder, why did God include so many psalms that ask for forgiveness? Why did God want us to sing and pray these words to him?

Because he wants us to ask him for forgiveness! We might convince ourselves that we don't need forgiveness, or that God doesn't have it for us, but neither are true. As soon as you seek him, God stands ready to reconcile you to himself. And yet this necessitates talking about our sin with God. We might not like it, it might feel uncomfortable or primeval, but God wants to deal with our sin. The scriptures reassure us that sin is no trivial thing; it's actually cosmic rebellion against a perfectly holy and just God, for which the only just sentence is death (Rom. 6:23). The problem of our sin is so lethal that God had to send his son to solve it.

But the scriptures also reassure us that God longs for people to repent and come to know him (2 Pet. 3:9). Until we are forgiven by God, deliverance is yet hoped for. You could be released from prison, freed from debt, or reconciled to an enemy, but if you are not yet reconciled to God you're still under the ultimate sentence. Our reconciliation to God is our utmost need, which means our sin must be dealt with.

But what about followers of Jesus who have already been forgiven of sin? Should they keep talking about their sin with God? If sin is rebellion against God, if it is inherently deadly and destructive, then of course we must bring our sin to the Lord! But we do so not because we need any more forgiveness than what we already have in Jesus, but because we are reminded once again of the desperation sin causes in our life (think back to Psalm 16). The discord that sin causes between us and our loving Father necessitates it being addressed.

*“It is the essence of communication between persons that they shall talk with each other from the same basic agenda. Wherever this is not done, communication tends to break down. If, however, an atmosphere of trust can be maintained, then one learns how to wait and be still.”* Howard Thurman, *Disciplines of the Spirit*





## WEEK 6 THURSDAY



In the Gospels we see Jesus go up to festivals in Jerusalem several times (ex. John 7), the occasions on which he would've sung the Psalms of Ascent. We know he and his disciples sang together (Matt. 26:30), and Jesus quoted from the psalms often, including while suffering on the cross (Matt. 27:46). So at some point in his life, Jesus sang Psalm 130.

Go back and read Psalm 130, and imagine Jesus praying it.

You might wonder, why would the perfect, sinless Son of God pray a prayer that asks for forgiveness? Because of us. Here are Dietrich Bonhoeffer's thoughts on the matter:

"How can the sinless one ask for forgiveness? In no way other than he can, as the sinless one, bear the sins of the world and be made sin for us (2 Cor. 5:21). Not for the sake of his sins, but for the sake of our sins, which he has taken upon himself and for which he suffers, does Jesus pray for the forgiveness of sins. He positions himself entirely for us. He wants to be a man before God as we are. So he prays also the most human of all prayers with us and thereby demonstrates precisely that he is the true Son of God." (*Psalms: The Prayer Book of the Bible*)

Jesus prayed for forgiveness because of us, but also for us, not out of obligation but purely out of the Trinity's own desire. Jesus, the only one who can stand before the Father and be declared guiltless, came to bear our guilt so that we could stand before the Father.

And here in the Bible, God gives us his own words, written through the Spirit, accomplished by the Son, addressed to the Father, that we may receive his grace in forgiveness. If you're the watchmen on the wall, it's because of Jesus alone that "joy comes with the morning."

(Ps. 30:5)

Are you surprised by his forgiveness? What does all this stir up in you? Take a moment to process your thoughts with the Lord in prayer.

## WEEK 6 FRIDAY



Read Psalm 130 one more time (or recite it to yourself).

Maybe sometime this week you've wondered about verse 4.

"But with you there is forgiveness, that you may be feared." If God has "steadfast love" and "plentiful redemption," why would we fear him?

In the Bible, the "fear of the Lord" is a term used to communicate the multifaceted way in which a humble human relates to an almighty God. Psalm 130 captures the different aspects of that relation, the trembling you might experience knowing that you have no business coming into his presence (v.3), the awe that might fill you over being forgiven by him (v.4), the joy in your heart knowing that he has steadfast love towards you (v.7), and quiet submission as you wait on the Lord (v.5-6). This fear isn't groveling, it is a worshipful adoration, a respectful surrender, and a close clinging.

Just like the watchmen on the wall waiting for dawn, the fear of the Lord means we do not wait as those without hope. Knowing the awesome, mighty, tender, and compassionate character of God, we wait on him, because in him our whole hope dwells.

Thinking ahead to your weekend, and perhaps your Sabbath, one way to practice waiting is to set aside time for silence and solitude with the Lord. This is an ancient Christian practice; Jesus himself did it often (Luke 5:16). All it takes is blocking out some time to sit quietly, alone and without any distractions, and to pray. This sort of prayer often looks like more listening than speaking. A way to start is by reading (or reciting) Psalm 130:5–6. Then be still, say what’s on your heart, and above all, listen.

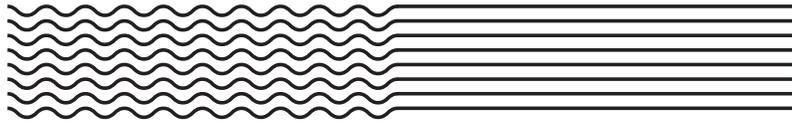
For practical purposes, you can set a timer for a set period of time that will stretch you (15 minutes, 30 minutes, maybe an hour), but set it somewhere you can’t see it, so you don’t keep checking it. That being said, one of the goals here is to actually lose track of time. That’s what happens when you enjoy someone’s company.

## ENGAGING YOUR FAMILY IN THE SABBATH

As you prepare for the Sabbath, be sure to include your family in the journey you are making. If you are preparing to set aside time for silence and solitude don’t think this will just magically happen with kids. Plan this time before your day starts. This may mean waking up before your kids, communicating with your spouse the time you will take to step away and be alone, or communicating with your older kids. If your kids are older you can bring them in on this journey as well, setting up a short time of silence as a family. Whatever this looks like for your family, plan, communicate and be sure to have plenty of grace!

**week seven**

# *PSALM 147*



**1 Praise the Lord!**

For it is good to sing praises to our God;  
for it is pleasant, and a song of praise is fitting.

**2 The Lord builds up Jerusalem;**  
he gathers the outcasts of Israel.

**3 He heals the brokenhearted**  
and binds up their wounds.

**4 He determines the number of the stars;**  
he gives to all of them their names.

**5 Great is our Lord, and abundant in power;**  
his understanding is beyond measure.

**6 The Lord lifts up the humble;**  
he casts the wicked to the ground.

**7 Sing to the Lord with thanksgiving;**  
make melody to our God on the lyre!

**8 He covers the heavens with clouds;**  
he prepares rain for the earth;  
he makes grass grow on the hills.

- 9 He gives to the beasts their food,  
and to the young ravens that cry.
- 10 His delight is not in the strength of the horse,  
nor his pleasure in the legs of a man,
- 11 but the Lord takes pleasure in those who fear him,  
in those who hope in his steadfast love.
- 12 Praise the Lord, O Jerusalem!  
Praise your God, O Zion!
- 13 For he strengthens the bars of your gates;  
he blesses your children within you.
- 14 He makes peace in your borders;  
he fills you with the finest of the wheat.
- 15 He sends out his command to the earth;  
his word runs swiftly.
- 16 He gives snow like wool;  
he scatters frost like ashes.
- 17 He hurls down his crystals of ice like crumbs;  
who can stand before his cold?

18 He sends out his word, and melts them;  
he makes his wind blow and the waters flow.

19 He declares his word to Jacob,  
his statutes and rules to Israel.

20 He has not dealt thus with any other nation;  
they do not know his rules.

Praise the Lord!



## WEEK 7 MONDAY



Start by reading Psalm 147. What's something in it that stands out to you?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

This psalm is all about praise; it even mentions the delightfulness of praise itself in the first verse. It's three stanzas, v.1-6, v.7-11, and v.12-20, all start with a command to praise or sing to the Lord. Verses 1-6 praise God for tending to his people and sustaining them in their humility. Verses 7-11 praise God's universal care for all of creation and his special love for his people. And verses 12-20 praise God for his power in creation and the power of his word.

In particular we see a companionship, not a contrast, between God's universal power and his tender love for his people. Based on the reference to building up Jerusalem and gathering the "outcasts of Israel" in verse 2, there's a chance this psalm was written during the Reconstruction, when the people of Israel were able to return to their homeland from their exile in Babylon (c. 500 BC). As joyous of a development as this return was, it was also fraught with difficulty, as neighboring nations resisted giving back the territory and political power that they had gained in Israel's absence (Neh. 4:4-5). During the Reconstruction it was perfectly clear that God's people desperately needed both his universal power and his tender love.

Of course that's still true for us too, but often it's hard to think about both God's power and love together. When we dwell on God's bigness it can be easy to feel insignificant to him, as if he's much too big to be troubled with our small selves. But this psalm describes no incompatibility between God's infinite power and our finite concerns. "He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds." (v.3) Instead of his divine nature making him inaccessible it actually makes him readily accessible, and his love and power show us that he both cares about our troubles and is strong enough to do something about them.

End your time in prayer, thanking God for his awesome power at work in the world around you and for his tender love committed specifically to you.

## ENGAGING YOUR FAMILY

As you are spending time with Psalm 147 this week, make room in your home to reflect as a family by bringing your children into this time.

As you are reflecting on God's power paired with companionship for his people, point that out to your children this week in ways that relate to their hearts. For young kids this may be in a moment of playfulness with creation where they are looking at the sun noticing how it hides behind the clouds, or chasing after lightning bugs. For older kids it may be pointing out these points of creation and sharing how they cause your heart to lean into a companionship with your creator.

As this Psalm reminds you to reflect and praise, teach your children to do so as well. For children who are able to read and write, encourage them to follow along in their Psalms Devotional as well. They will be walking through Psalm 147 this week alongside you, allowing for conversation around praising the Lord this week.



## WEEK 7 TUESDAY



Read Psalm 147 again. As you do, underline or highlight any imagery that stands out to you; there's a lot there.

First and foremost we see God, the cosmic Creator, who alone knows how many stars there are and can summon them all by name. He reigns over the whole earth, commanding all the various elements and circumstances in our world and, in particular, supporting the life on our planet that surrounds us in abundance. In verses 8–9 we see a whole circle of life depicted—the rain waters the grass, which feeds the beasts, which feed the carrion-eating crow. And this is all by God's design and under God's guidance, to the benefit of his creation and, particularly, his people.

In verses 12–20 we receive this fly-by tour of the whole nation of Israel, from city gates and leaping children to fields of fine wheat and peaceful borders. Next, at verse 10, we breeze through almost every form of precipitation (including some not-so-fun ones). And the way the psalmist frames this flood of images is key to understanding what's going on here. “He sends out his command to the earth; his word runs swiftly.” (v.15) “He declares his word to Jacob, his

statutes and rules to Israel.”(v.19) The psalmist includes this rapid-fire imagery to drive home a point: all this is accomplished by God’s word.

This calls to mind the very beginning, Genesis 1, where God spoke creation into existence. Throughout scripture this has always been the emphasis, that God is so powerful he need only speak for things to come into being, meaning his words are crackling with divine power. When God sends out his word it never comes back empty but always accomplishes his purposes (Isa. 55:11). And in his word we find God himself. His word is his self-disclosure, in which he reveals his character, nature, desires, and purposes for our salvation. In his *Commentaries*, John Calvin said, “We can conceive of nothing more delightful and desirable than that God should undertake our salvation.” God’s word is an inexhaustible treasure because God himself is, and because in it he reveals himself as the source of our redemption.

Read back through Psalm 147 again and let the imagery of the power of God’s word sit in your mind. Then close in prayer, thanking God for the beauty and might of his word.

## WEEK 7 WEDNESDAY



Perhaps you've found Psalm 147:10 puzzling this week. "His delight is not in the strength of the horse, nor his pleasure in the legs of a man." Like we saw yesterday, God lovingly tends to all of his creation. So what's wrong with horses and men's legs?

The imagery here is of war, referring to the strength of a horse pulling a chariot and the legs of a running warrior. In the psalmist's time, much like today, military might and physical prowess were prized possessions. The psalmist is communicating here the stark difference between God's economy, what he values, and what mankind tends to value. Because God is an all-power Creator, he is unimpressed with our puny attempts at strength or self-sufficiency, looking instead for a humble response to his love. And this is especially true because our attempts at self-sufficiency, our arrogance, will only hinder us from receiving his love.

Maybe it isn't physical strength or warhorses, but what's one or two things you're prone to turn to in your attempts at self-sufficiency?

---

---

---

---

---

---

Verse 11 continues the thought of verse 10, “but the Lord takes pleasure in those who fear him, in those who hope in his steadfast love.” We saw in Psalm 130 that the “fear of the Lord” is a multi-dimensional word for relating to God as humble human beings, and one of the aspects of this relation is obedience. The psalms speak often of holding fast to God’s word by keeping it; the very first psalm starts out, “Blessed is the man [whose] delight is in the law of the Lord and on his law he meditates day and night.” (Ps.1:1)

Since the psalms are the hymnbook of the Bible, why would God include obedience in his worship songs? In their devotion on the psalms, *The Songs of Jesus*, Tim and Kathy Keller conclude, “God delights not merely in words of acclaim but in people who obey him. If you get an emotional experience out of worship but aren’t willing to obey, you are using him without giving yourself to him.” That is a hard-hitting truth.

Take a moment to read back through Psalm 147, and then look at the things you listed above. Are you more willing to obey these things than your Creator? Do you look to them for hope rather than the steadfast love of the Lord? Process your thoughts with the Lord in prayer.

## WEEK 7 THURSDAY



Start by reading through Psalm 147, putting stars by any verses where you see God's tender love expressed.

Here is another place where it can be helpful to personalize the truth of God's word. This awesome Creator, enrobed in splendor and enthroned in heaven, has steadfast love *for you*. You are not too small in his sight. Here are some selections from Psalm 147 slightly reworded; write "me" or "my" in the blanks:

He heals \_\_\_\_\_ broken heart and binds up \_\_\_\_\_ wounds.

He strengthens the bars of \_\_\_\_\_ gates.

He makes peace in \_\_\_\_\_ borders.

He declares his word to \_\_\_\_\_.

The Lord takes pleasure in \_\_\_\_\_.

Thinking back to yesterday and what it means to obey God's word, we also see in Psalm 147 that God's desire for our obedience is by no means incompatible with his tender love towards us. His word, spoken to us, is a means of inviting us to cling to him. Derek Kidner

summarizes “By addressing us, not programming us, God shows that he seeks a relationship, not simply a sequence of actions carried out.” (*Psalms 73-150: A Commentary*) God doesn’t want your obedience as if it’s something that’s valuable apart from you. He wants you.

We see in verse 11 that this unimaginably big God, who can create whatever splendid things he wants, experiences real joy and delight when people put their life’s hope in him. And, because of Jesus, we know his delight in us is never subject to change. Those who put their whole hope in Jesus share in the declaration God made on the day of Jesus’ baptism, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.” (Matt. 3:17) Because of Jesus’ perfect life and obedient death in our place, we don’t have to keep filling up God’s love towards us as if it’s something that drains out or gets used up. “For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Rom. 8:38-39)

Read aloud the reworded selections above. Then write out a prayer below, thanking God for his steadfast love towards you in Jesus that will never, ever run dry.

## WEEK 7 FRIDAY



As we've seen this week, God's word is a mighty, precious thing. It is beautiful, powerful, and tender, and it both calls us to praise him and provides the words for doing so. One way to fill your day with the word of God is with a prayer practice called the "daily office." The word "office" there may sound boring, but the term doesn't have anything to do with the workplace—it refers to fixed times throughout the day for prayer. There are many different ways of observing fixed-hour prayer; you can find books that provide readings and written prayers, like *The Divine Hours* by Phyllis Tickle; you can read a different psalm at each set time, starting at Psalm 1 and slowly making your way through the book; or you can just pause in silence and pray about whatever is on your mind at that moment.

Historically, the daily office has been observed at seven times throughout the day, but we'd recommend starting with just three or four; 6am, 9am, noon, 3pm, 6pm, and 9pm are good examples to choose from, depending on how early you wake up, but feel free to adjust these based on your normal rhythms. Set an alarm for your specific times, and when your alarm goes off, pause for something like a couple minutes. Read a psalm,

pray, do whatever helps you be with the Lord for that brief moment. You'll find that these little breaks, what you could call micro-Sabbaths, are tiny but powerful, and part of their strength is by interrupting you, such that your life conforms to prayer rather than prayer to your life.

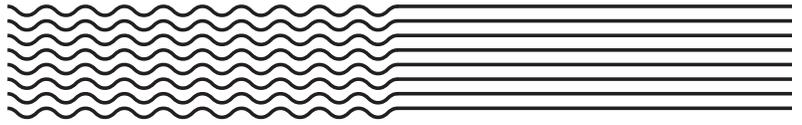
Consider trying out the daily office today, or sometime this weekend as a feature of your Sabbath. Close your week in Psalm 147 by practicing what it means to stop and be still. Read through the psalm and then sit with the Lord for however long you can. Sit and be with him, rejoicing in his word and his steadfast love towards you.

## **ENGAGING YOUR FAMILY IN THE SABBATH**

As you prepare for the Sabbath, be sure to include your family in the journey. When including moments to pause and pray, bring your children into a few of these moments as well. If praying a Psalm during these times, pray the Psalm together. It can be helpful to think through which times you want to pause in daily office alone and which times you want to pause in daily office aloud with your kids, doing so with a full heart and glad spirit to be walking alongside of them and discipling them in such an intentional way.

# week eight

## PSALM 145



*A Song of Praise. Of David*

- 1 I will extol you, my God and King,  
and bless your name forever and ever.
- 2 Every day I will bless you  
and praise your name forever and ever.
- 3 Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised,  
and his greatness is unsearchable.
- 4 One generation shall commend your works to another,  
and shall declare your mighty acts.
- 5 On the glorious splendor of your majesty,  
and on your wondrous works, I will meditate.
- 6 They shall speak of the might of your awesome deeds,  
and I will declare your greatness.
- 7 They shall pour forth the fame of your  
abundant goodness  
and shall sing aloud of your righteousness.
- 8 The Lord is gracious and merciful,  
slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.

- 9 The Lord is good to all,  
and his mercy is over all that he has made.
- 10 All your works shall give thanks to you, O Lord,  
and all your saints shall bless you!
- 11 They shall speak of the glory of your kingdom  
and tell of your power,
- 12 to make known to the children of man your  
mighty deeds,  
and the glorious splendor of your kingdom.
- 13 Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom,  
and your dominion endures throughout all generations.  
[The Lord is faithful in all his words  
and kind in all his works.]
- 14 The Lord upholds all who are falling  
and raises up all who are bowed down.
- 15 The eyes of all look to you,  
and you give them their food in due season.
- 16 You open your hand;  
you satisfy the desire of every living thing.
- 17 The Lord is righteous in all his ways  
and kind in all his works.

18 The Lord is near to all who call on him,  
to all who call on him in truth.

19 He fulfills the desire of those who fear him;  
he also hears their cry and saves them.

20 The Lord preserves all who love him,  
but all the wicked he will destroy.

21 My mouth will speak the praise of the Lord,  
and let all flesh bless his holy name forever and ever.



## WEEK 8 MONDAY



Start by reading through Psalm 145.

In Week 1 of our study we noted how the psalms slowly progress from more laments towards the beginning of the book to more praises towards the end. The last five psalms are successive peaks of worship, culminating in the emphatic last verse of the whole book, “Let everything that has breath praise the Lord! Praise the Lord!” We started our series with dancing, and now here we’ll end it with dancing.

Psalm 145 is the last psalm in the book written by David, and it carries his flourish. Here we see the unsearchable greatness of God (v.3), the universal power of God (v.15), the eternal kingdom of God (v.13), and David’s fervent commitment to praise God for all this and more (v.2). The end of the psalm is a lot like the end of the whole book, “Let all flesh bless his holy name forever and ever.”

For his final contribution to the psalms, David drew inspiration from a monumental point in Israel’s history. Verse 8 is almost a verbatim quote from Exodus 34, the moment when God revealed his glory

to Moses. This was after Israel's deliverance from Egypt, while they were camped at Mt. Sinai. This was the crucible of Israel's identity as a people, when God bound himself to them in a covenant and then forgave their unfaithfulness when they chose to worship false gods instead (Exo.32). In Exodus 33, Moses requested to see this God who had promised himself to Israel, and God granted him the request. As God passed before Moses like a king making a procession, his regal title was pronounced, "The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness."(34:6)

David is pointedly reminding his people of God's self-disclosure at Mt. Sinai. Ask to see the glory of God and he will show you his covenants—his faithfulness and steadfast love reveal just how singular and exalted he truly is. The word behind "faithful" in verse 13 and "kind" in verse 17 is the same Hebrew word, *hasid*. In the Bible it is almost always used to refer to godly people (ex. Psalm 4:3), as in those who are devoted to God. In fact, the only three occasions in the Bible where this word is used to refer to God are two here in Psalm 145 and once in Jeremiah 3:12, "Return, faithless Israel, declares the Lord. I will not look on you in anger, for I am merciful (*hasid*), declares the Lord; I will not be angry forever."

God is a faithful, dare we say, *devoted* God. What does this psalm stir up in you today? Write out some thoughts on the next page, and close your time in prayer.



---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## ENGAGING YOUR FAMILY

As you are spending time with Psalm 145 this week, make room to reflect as a family by bringing your children into your study. Throughout the week we will keep coming back to key ideas about God, that he is faithful, that he is gracious and merciful, that he is love. Think about the patterns within your home in which you talk about God. Where do you create space to talk about and reflect on his faithfulness, graciousness, and love? Maybe you do so at dinner once a week? Maybe it is before bed every night? This week, take some time to create space where you and your kids can reflect on the goodness of God, praising him together. For children who are able to read and write, encourage them to follow along in their Psalms Devotional as well. They will be walking through Psalm 145 this week alongside you, allowing for shared conversation around God's goodness this week.

## WEEK 8 TUESDAY



Read through Psalm 145 again, underlining or highlighting any repeated words, phrases, or themes.

One repeated word is “kingdom.” Why do you think David, the king of Israel, was interested in talking about God’s kingdom?

---

---

---

Another theme throughout the psalm is the recurrence of “I” and “they” phrases: “I will meditate” (v.5), “they shall speak” (v.6), “I will declare” (v.6), “they shall pour forth” (v.7). The “they” of these phrases is God’s people; it’s almost like a call and response, with David leading the procession of praise while the people of God follow along. In this interplay we see how the call to praise God is given to “all flesh” (v.21), but must inherently be taken up by individuals. When we read “they shall pour forth,” each person within the group must be willing to say “I will pour forth” for this to happen. That’s not to ignore the support that others give to our worship—they are a real source of comfort and







## WEEK 8 WEDNESDAY



Read Psalm 145 again, and when you get to verses 7-8, draw a box around them.

Exodus 34:6 isn't the only other place we see God described as "gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love." Another is in Jonah 4:2, towards the end of Jonah's story, but there the description takes on an entirely different tone. Initially, God told Jonah to go call the people of Nineveh to repentance, but instead he fled from God's presence, was cast into the depths of the sea, swallowed by a fish, then spat back out to go fulfill his call. Jonah completed his duties begrudgingly and warned the Ninevites that God would destroy their city if they didn't repent, and praise God, they repented and God relented!

For a prophet like Jonah this should have been a success story, "but it displeased Jonah exceedingly." (4:1) His anger exposes his heart: "O Lord, is not this what I said when I was yet in my country? This is why I made haste to flee to Tarshish; for I knew that you are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, and relenting from disaster." For one reason or another, Jonah didn't

believe the Ninevites should be forgiven by God, which made God's forgiveness seem wrong to him. When we come to God with preset criteria for how he should and should not behave we will inevitably find him breaking our rules.

Here are two ways we try to set rules around God's love. First, like Jonah, we only want God to be abundant with some people (though, of course, that "some" always includes ourselves), and we'll make distinctions based on all sorts of arbitrary values. Second, we take issue with verses like Psalm 145:20, "but all the wicked he will destroy," and claim that if God isn't abundant to all then he's truly abundant to none. These two narratives are actually quite similar because both tell God he can only love and forgive on our terms.

In his commentary on this psalm, Derek Kidner puts the "shadow" of verse 20 in perspective: "It would hardly be a psalm about life...without this shadow; nor would God's faithfulness be fully seen without reference to his uncompromising judgement." We need to take God at his word about himself, that his steadfast love is compatible with his justice, and that he is "near to all who call on him."(v.18)

Take a moment to confess to God. Are there any rules you tend to place around his love and forgiveness? Go to him reminded that he is "gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love" for you and for all who call on him.

## WEEK 8 THURSDAY



In Psalm 145:4 David sings about an ideal pattern within God's people where one generation proclaims all the goodness of God to the next. Think about this: David wrote these words some 3000 years ago, and the reason you're reading them right now is because what he said has come to pass. One generation has passed on to another and another, throughout the various empires, achievements, and catastrophes of human history, all the way down to you.

And isn't it amazing that, between David's lifetime and now, God's work got better? Here in Psalm 145 David is bursting over God's forgiveness and love, and yet, well after David's death, both reached their climax in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. When David penned these words he had no clue what exactly God was going to do, or maybe even how gracious and merciful God was prepared to be. But as we know now, God has accomplished mighty acts through his Son, fulfilling David's words in verse 19, "He fulfills the desire of those who fear him; he also hears their cry and saves them." And all through the ages God's Spirit has continued to stoke the fires of his praise within his people, particularly by passing it from one person to another. All who follow Jesus owe their own exposure to the good news of Jesus, in part, to this lineage of faithfulness.

Worship isn't just singing; worship includes the whole of your life. The way you do a job, the way you care for others, the way you speak and the way you stay silent—all of these and more can be acts of worship. This includes testimony, where we tell others about the wonder of God's love in Jesus. Proclaiming God's goodness to another person is just as much worship as proclaiming God's goodness in song.

Read through Psalm 145 again, and pay special attention to how God's people "pour forth" his fame here. Does this make you think of someone who first told you about God's goodness? Does it call to mind someone with whom you would like to share his goodness? Close your time in prayer, thanking God for his faithfulness in telling you about his goodness through others and asking that he would help you pour forth his fame.

## WEEK 8 FRIDAY



We've come to the end of our study through our eight psalms. Hopefully, at several points throughout your study, you have been met with the living God and able to sit in his presence. Take a moment to think back through the different psalms we've looked through; maybe even flip through your notes. What's something you've learned about God or about enjoying his presence that you hope will stick with you in the future?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

To wrap up our final study, one last recommendation for growing in your practice of the Sabbath is something we could call at-home worship. This looks like gathering the people you live with or a group of friends and spending a little time in worship together. The best approach is to make this a simple affair; do it after a meal or around another thing that brings you all together. Keep it straightforward, with scripture, some sharing, prayer, and maybe a song.

One way to do this is by using Psalm 145. You could read the whole psalm, or if you have young kids, just a few verses (ex. v.1-3). Feel free to share any insights you've had this week about how great God is, but again, the simpler (and shorter) the better. You can even look up some lyrics and sing a song together, something like "Great is Thy Faithfulness," "All Creatures of Our God and King," or another song you'd prefer—you can easily look up a video of the song you want and all sing to it together. Close your at-home worship in prayer, thanking God for who he is and for being present with you. Be gracious with yourself as you try out at-home worship; it might not look like you expect, but like we saw in Psalm 147, God delights in our praises, even the messy ones.

Now, to close out our study, read through Psalm 145 one last time. Sit for a while, a long while if you can, and dwell on God's goodness.

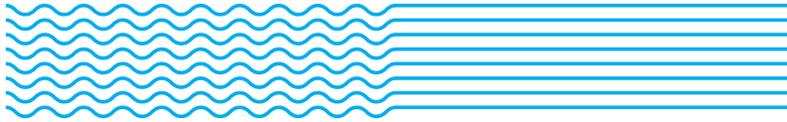
"Let everything that has breath praise the Lord! Praise the Lord!"

## ENGAGING YOUR FAMILY IN THE SABBATH

As you prepare for the Sabbath, be sure to include your family in the journey you are making. When looking to implement family worship, remember that the heart behind your worship matters. You are not going to sit down for a 30 minute devotion plus music if you have young children—their attention will not last that long. Children will glean the most from a time of reflection, prayer, and even a song that meets them where they are developmentally. They will remember intentional moments spent as a family that point to a God who is greater than an earthly parent. For families looking to practice at-home worship together, Donald Whitney's book *Family Worship* provides loads of insight on how to get started.







## FURTHER READING

*A Praying Life*  
by Paul E. Miller

*Psalm 1-72: A Commentary*  
and *Psalm 73-150: A Commentary*  
by Derek Kidner

*Psalms: The Prayer Book of the Bible*  
by Dietrich Bonhoeffer

*Emotionally Healthy Spirituality*  
by Peter Scazzero

*The Divine Hours*  
by Phyllis Tickle

*The Songs of Jesus*  
by Tim and Kathy Keller

