



Hearing God Through the Psalms

A GUIDE TO PRAYING THE PRAYERS OF THE BIBLE



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OH, THE JOYS OF THOSE WHO DO NOT FOLLOW THE ADVICE OF THE WICKED, OR STAND AROUND WITH SINNERS, OR JOIN IN WITH MOCKERS. BUT THEY DELIGHT IN THE LAW OF THE LORD, MEDITATING ON IT DAY AND NIGHT. THEY ARE LIKE TREES PLANTED ALONG THE RIVERBANK, BEARING FRUIT EACH SEASON. THEIR LEAVES NEVER WITHER, AND THEY PROSPER IN ALL THEY DO.

Psalm 1:1-3, NLT



Introduction

Why Pray the Psalms?

The desire to hear God’s voice and be heard by him is ancient— and deeply human. For thousands of years, God’s people have turned to reading, meditating, and reciting the Psalms—ancient Israel’s book of prayers, poems, and songs—as a way of speaking honestly and openly with God. Even Jesus, the Son of God, was very familiar with the Psalms. In the gospels, we see that he often quoted them from memory¹. Engaging with God through Scripture is part of what we call “conversational” life with God, where he speaks to us through his word by the Holy Spirit, and after receiving from him, we respond with our own words. What you are about to read is a time-tested and well-loved collection of words back to God. The Psalms show a wide array of human emotions, experiences, and longings. At times, the poets are praising God for his unending faithfulness², and at other times, they’re questioning where God is in the middle of suffering³. They show the psalmists leaping for joy⁴, suffering deep depression⁵, and cursing their enemies⁶.

All of this shows us that the human heart is a complex thing, and God wants us to bring our whole self to him, without a filter. In fact, someone once described the Psalms to us in this way: in most of the Bible God is speaking to us, and in the Psalms, humans speak back to God. This doesn’t describe all of them, but quite a few of these prayers, poems, and songs are human responses to what God has done, what they wish God would do, or to honor who God is.

If you feel stuck in your prayer life—like you don’t have the words, or you’re not hearing anything back from God—or even if your prayer life is rich and you want more ways to dive deeper, these next eight weeks will introduce you to simple, yet profound ways to pray.

As Christians, we’ve inherited an ancient faith. We don’t need to reinvent the wheel. We can simply receive these prayers, poems, and songs from God and his people throughout history, and offer them back to him in our own way. We know that it’ll be worth your time, and we’re pretty confident you’ll leave this journey familiar with prayer in a way you’ve never been before.

¹ Matthew 21:16, Mark 12:36, Luke 20:17, John 10:34 ² 119:90 ³ 10:1 ⁴ 28:7 ⁵ 143:7 ⁶ 109:29

Why Eight Weeks?

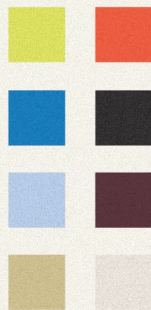
We decided to introduce the Psalms by grouping them thematically. The Bible does this with some genres, and we'll introduce you to those as they come up. And we will expand on this by introducing other helpful genres scholars have determined.

Each week, we'll zero in on one genre, so you can take your time and get familiar with it before moving on to the next. And if you find that God is speaking to you through a particular psalm or genre, just stick with it as long as you need. God's not in a rush. Whether you follow the structure we've outlined or linger in one place, we'd encourage you to find at least four times per week to pray with one of these psalms—that's why there are four for each genre. We've found that regular time in Scripture becomes transformative when we spend more days in the Bible than not throughout the week. But feel free to also pray the same psalm each day, if that's what God has for you.



¹ Matthew 21:16, Mark 12:36, Luke 20:17, John 10:34 ² 119:90 ³ 10:1 ⁴ 28:7 ⁵ 143:7 ⁶ 109:29

THE



GENRES



WISDOM

Describing the good life and warning against wrongdoing



PRAISE

Proclaiming God's goodness



LAMENT

Mourning the evil happening to us, within us, or in the world



IMPRECATORY

Asking God to intervene, establish justice, and hold evil—and those that do it—accountable



TRUST

Expressing belief and hope in God's plan and care for us



ROYAL

Celebrating kingly justice, pointing to the Messiah, and worshipping God as the universal King



ASCENT

Historically, the fifteen psalms sung while pilgrims traveled to Jerusalem to celebrate Passover, Shavuot, and Sukkot



HALLEL

Historically, the six psalms recited on the above and additional holidays, and other joyful occasions.
Many believe Jesus may have sung these with his disciples after the Last Supper⁷



Weekly Structure:

1. A brief introduction to the theme
2. Four suggested psalms for the week
3. Reflection prompts to begin and end each prayer time
4. A short psalm-inspired “breath prayer” to memorize and take into your week
5. An embodied practice to respond to God

Two Final Suggestions:

Firstly, we’d encourage you to print this PDF out and keep it with your physical Bible, so you can eliminate distractions in your prayer time. Secondly, consider inviting someone else onto this journey with you. God designed us to be transformed by God’s word and Christ’s love together in community⁸. If you can, pick at least one day a week when you can receive, reflect on, and respond to the psalm with a friend or loved one.

We’re praying for you!

“Joyful are those who obey [God’s] laws and search for him with all their hearts.”

Psalms 119:2, NLT.

⁷ Matthew 26:30 ⁸ John 17:17-26, Ephesians 4:11-16

WISDOM

PSALMS



25

¹ O Lord, I give my life to you.

² I trust in you, my God!

Do not let me be disgraced,
or let my enemies rejoice in my defeat.

³ No one who trusts in you will ever be disgraced,
but disgrace comes to those who try to deceive others.

⁴ Show me the right path, O LORD;
point out the road for me to follow.

⁵ Lead me by your truth and teach me,
for you are the God who saves me.
All day long I put my hope in you.

⁶ Remember, O LORD, your compassion and unfailing love,
which you have shown from long ages past.

⁷ Do not remember the rebellious sins of my youth.
Remember me in the light of your unfailing love,
for you are merciful, O LORD.

⁸ The LORD is good and does what is right;
he shows the proper path to those who go astray.

Wisdom Psalms

Wisdom Psalms show what “the good life” is, often contrasting the lives of those who obey God (the wise) with those who go their own way (the foolish). These psalms often reference God’s “laws,” “instructions,” and “commands,” which are found in the Torah, the first five books of the Bible. Through the Scriptures of their day, the Israelites came to know God’s goodness. As we read their words (now part of our Scriptures), we learn not only about God’s character but also how to respond to him by walking in his wisdom in our everyday lives.

One important thing to note about wisdom literature in the Bible, it describes principles not promises. Principles are things that if you live by them, you tend to have a better life. However, it doesn’t always mean things work out the way you expect or want. Sometimes we can do all the right things and still experience suffering, pain, or misfortune (a great example of this will be Psalm 73).

This Week’s Psalms: 1, 25, 73, 119

Settle in:

- Silence your phone, get comfortable, and take three deep breaths.
- Place your palms down on your lap and take a minute to release to God anything you may be holding onto—concerns for your day, situations causing anxiety, and any pressure to “get something” out of this time.
- Turn your palms face-up and take a minute to thank God for what he’s given you. Ask him to help you receive whatever he has for you.

Receive:

- Ask God, “What do you want me to notice today?” Listen in silence for a minute. You may have a word or phrase come to mind, simply get a feeling of God’s presence, notice a particular emotion welling up, or you might not notice anything at all (and that’s okay). Always hold what you hear loosely and see if it lines up with Scripture and Jesus’s kind way of showing love and guidance.



- Read one of the psalms (1, 25, 73, or 119) slowly. If you choose Psalm 119, know that it is the longest of any psalm or chapter in the whole Bible, and it's split up into 22 sections of 8 verses each. In the original Hebrew, it reads like an acrostic, meaning each section successively goes through the alphabet. You may want to set aside some more time for this one—it takes from 15 to 20 minutes to read the whole thing.

Reflect:

- Ask God: How are you inviting me to live? Is there any sin, deceit, or “foolishness” in my heart that you want to replace with your goodness, truth, and joy?

Read the psalm (or section) again with these questions in mind.

Journal anything that comes to you as you reflect on the words.

Respond:

End with this breath prayer. As you inhale, say, “You lead me in the good way.” As you exhale, say, “Help me follow you today.”

Respond throughout the week:

Write that breath prayer somewhere you'll see frequently and return to it often, memorizing it if you can.

“You lead me in the good way. Help me follow you today.”

Many Wisdom Psalms use the metaphor of walking a path to describe being led by God. At some point this week, take a slow walk in a beautiful place, and offer him an area of your life where you need to follow his lead. If you feel stuck, use Psalm 25 to guide your conversation.

PRAISE

PSALMS



8

- ¹ O LORD, our Lord, your majestic name fills the earth!
Your glory is higher than the heavens.
- ² You have taught children and infants
to tell of your strength,
silencing your enemies
and all who oppose you.
- ³ When I look at the night sky and see the work of your fingers—
the moon and the stars you set in place—
- ⁴ what are mere mortals that you should think about them,
human beings that you should care for them?
- ⁵ Yet you made them only a little lower than God
and crowned them with glory and honor.
- ⁶ You gave them charge of everything you made,
putting all things under their authority—
- ⁷ the flocks and the herds
and all the wild animals,
- ⁸ the birds in the sky, the fish in the sea,
and everything that swims the ocean currents.
- ⁹ O LORD, our Lord, your majestic name fills the earth!

Praise Psalms

Praise Psalms center on the goodness and beauty of God, shown in his character, actions, and the way he created the world. Here, you'll find God described as Creator⁹, Deliverer¹⁰, Father¹¹, and more. The psalmists use soaring imagery to convey their deep admiration of who God is and gratitude for what he's done for them. Traditionally, these psalms have been read or sung in the morning, to allow the first words we speak to be praise and gratitude to God for the gift of a new day and protection through the night.

This Week's Psalms: 8, 66, 103, 104

Settle in:

- Silence your phone, get comfortable, and take three deep breaths.
- Place your palms down on your lap and take a minute to release to God anything you may be holding onto—concerns for your day, situations causing anxiety, and any pressure to “get something” out of this time.
- Turn your palms face-up and take a minute to thank God for what he's given you. Ask him to help you receive whatever he has for you.

Receive:

- Ask God, “What do you want me to notice today?” Listen in silence for a minute
- Read one of these Praise Psalms (8, 66, 103, or 104) slowly.

Reflect:

- Ask God: Is there anything in my life that's getting in the way of praising you?
- Ask yourself: What attribute of God am I especially grateful for today?

Read the psalm again with these questions in mind.

Journal anything that comes to you as you reflect.



Respond:

End with this breath prayer. As you inhale, say, “God, you are so good.” As you exhale, say, “Thank you for your love.”

Respond throughout the week:

Write that breath prayer somewhere you’ll see frequently and return to it often, memorizing it if you can.

“God, you are so good. Thank you for your love.”

Make a commitment to tell at least one person something you love about God.

LAMENT



PSALMS



22

- ¹ My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?
Why are you so far away when I groan for help?
- ² Every day I call to you, my God, but you do not answer.
Every night I lift my voice, but I find no relief.
- ³ Yet you are holy,
enthroned on the praises of Israel.
- ⁴ Our ancestors trusted in you,
and you rescued them.
- ⁵ They cried out to you and were saved.
They trusted in you and were never disgraced.
- ⁶ But I am a worm and not a man.
I am scorned and despised by all!
- ⁷ Everyone who sees me mocks me.
They sneer and shake their heads, saying,
- ⁸ “Is this the one who relies on the LORD?
Then let the Lord save him!
If the LORD loves him so much,
let the LORD rescue him!”
- ⁹ Yet you brought me safely from my mother’s womb
and led me to trust you at my mother’s breast.
- ¹⁰ I was thrust into your arms at my birth.
You have been my God from the moment I was born.

Lament Psalms

Depending on how you categorize the psalms, Lament Psalms make up a larger share than any other genre. They express sorrow, distress, doubt, and desperation. At times, they're mourning the evil happening to God's people¹². Other times, they're mourning the evil within us (like Psalm 51, which David wrote after committing adultery and murder).

Another important theme in these psalms is feeling abandoned by God¹³. Lament Psalms give us the amazing encouragement to bring everything to God—even our ugly, unfiltered, and at times, seemingly blasphemous thoughts. God wants to hear all of it and isn't threatened by our honesty. Jesus himself quoted Psalm 22, mourning that he felt "abandoned" by God the Father on the cross.¹⁴

Many Lament Psalms include statements of trust as well, showing the struggle we all face of "knowing" something to be true, like God is good, but "feeling" the opposite, like he's abandoned us. They invite us into a paradox. We can unashamedly say how we really feel, yet we are also strengthened by speaking the truth to ourselves, calling on God for help, and choosing to praise him, even as we suffer¹⁵.

Notice we said "many"—one in particular, Psalm 88, doesn't have a clear and obvious statement of hope or trust in it!

This Week's Psalms: 22, 42, 44, 88

Settle in:

- Silence your phone, get comfortable, and take three deep breaths.
- Place your palms down on your lap and take a minute to release to God anything you may be holding onto—concerns for your day, situations causing anxiety, and any pressure to "get something" out of this time.
- Turn your palms face-up and take a minute to thank God for what he's given you. Ask him to help you receive whatever he has for you.



Receive:

- Ask God, “What do you want me to notice today?” Listen in silence for a minute.
- Read one of the psalms (22, 42, 44, or 88) slowly.

Reflect:

- Ask God: What’s distressing me?
- How are you inviting me to trust you?
- What would you like me to surrender

Read the psalm again with these questions in mind.

Journal anything that comes to you as you reflect.

Respond:

End with this breath prayer. As you inhale, say, “God, this feels so wrong.”

As you exhale, say, “And I know you are good.”

Respond throughout the week:

Write that breath prayer somewhere you’ll see frequently and return to it often, memorizing it if you can.

“God, this feels so wrong. And I know you are good.”

Take some time this week to write your own lament. Use this as a structure:

1. Begin with a cry for help (see the beginning of Psalm 22 and 88)
2. Name your distress or complaint
3. Offer your confidence or trust in God
4. Name what you are asking from God, including deliverance
5. Describe what your praise will look like when God responds

¹² Psalm 44 ¹³ Psalm 88 ¹⁴ Psalm 22:1 ¹⁵ Psalm 42:11

IMPRECATORY



PSALMS



5

- ¹ O LORD, hear me as I pray;
pay attention to my groaning.
- ² Listen to my cry for help, my King and my God,
for I pray to no one but you.
- ³ Listen to my voice in the morning, LORD.
Each morning I bring my requests to you and wait expectantly.
- ⁴ O God, you take no pleasure in wickedness;
you cannot tolerate the sins of the wicked.
- ⁵ Therefore, the proud may not stand in your presence,
for you hate all who do evil.
- ⁶ You will destroy those who tell lies.
The LORD detests murderers and deceivers.
- ⁷ Because of your unfailing love, I can enter your house;
I will worship at your Temple with deepest awe.
- ⁸ Lead me in the right path, O LORD,
or my enemies will conquer me.
Make your way plain for me to follow.

Imprecatory Psalms

Imprecatory Psalms call out evil and ask God to act. Sometimes that means pleading for rescue; other times, it means calling down some pretty intense judgment on enemies. Yikes! These psalms can be deeply uncomfortable to read.

But they're honest. These cries came from people living in war-torn, unstable times—attacked, exiled, and surrounded by violence. Daily life included threats from invading armies, famine, and exile. While many of us today live far from such realities, others around the world still face them daily.

It's also really important to recognize that these psalms don't necessarily reflect the heart or desires of God—they reflect the raw, painful emotions of people under extreme pressure. And Scripture makes space for those emotions. It gives voice to grief, rage, and desperation in a way that teaches us to bring even our darkest feelings to God, rather than pretending they don't exist.

Even Jesus, the Prince of Peace, quoted Imprecatory Psalms. He drew from Psalm 69 to express the hatred he experienced¹⁶ and to describe the zeal that drove his confrontation with injustice in the temple¹⁷. He didn't shy away from their intensity, but transformed their meaning through his suffering, death, and resurrection. It's also significant that in his most painful and desperate moment on the cross, he didn't call down fire but asked God to forgive those who killed him¹⁸.

Imprecatory Psalms remind us that the evil both around us and within us is real and that God sees it. They assure us that God cares deeply for those of us who suffer and is willing to act. And they invite us, not into vengeance, but into a partnership with a just God—resisting evil and caring for the vulnerable in his name.

This Week's Psalms: 5, 10, 69, 140

Settle in:

- Silence your phone, get comfortable, and take three deep breaths.



- Place your palms down on your lap and take a minute to release to God anything you may be holding onto—concerns for your day, situations causing anxiety, and any pressure to “get something” out of this time.
- Turn your palms face-up and take a minute to thank God for what he’s given you. Ask him to help you receive whatever he has for you.

Receive:

- Ask God, “What do you want me to notice today?” Listen in silence for a minute.
- Read one of the psalms (5, 10, 69, or 140) slowly.

Reflect:

- Ask God: What do you want me to notice about the spiritual battle I’m in daily?
- Is there an injustice in my sphere of influence you’re calling me to do something about?

Read the psalm again with these questions in mind.

Journal anything that comes to you as you reflect.

Respond:

End with this breath prayer. As you inhale, say, “God, you reign.” As you exhale, say, “Your will be done.”

Respond throughout the week:

Write that breath prayer somewhere you’ll see frequently and return to it often, memorizing it if you can.

“God, you reign. Your will be done.”

Take some time this week to prayerfully research an injustice in your local community and get involved. You may be surprised at how many opportunities there are to fight homelessness, hunger, human trafficking, or something else. A simple step could be examining how your own habits—supporting companies that use slave labor, consuming porn, etc.—fuel some of these evils.

¹⁶ John 15:25 ¹⁷ John 2:17 ¹⁸ Luke 23:34



TRUST

PSALMS



91

¹ Those who live in the shelter of the Most High
will find rest in the shadow of the Almighty.

² This I declare about the LORD:

He alone is my refuge, my place of safety;
he is my God, and I trust him.

³ For he will rescue you from every trap
and protect you from deadly disease.

⁴ He will cover you with his feathers.

He will shelter you with his wings.

His faithful promises are your armor and protection.

⁵ Do not be afraid of the terrors of the night,
nor the arrow that flies in the day.

⁶ Do not dread the disease that stalks in darkness,
nor the disaster that strikes at midday.

Trust Psalms

If you've been following along the last few weeks, you've likely noticed that trust is a theme through many genres, including Lament and Imprecatory. It's also the subject of some of the most well-known psalms. Despite all of the evil and heartbreak in the world, we are not called to fix things by ourselves but to cling to God in trust. This isn't wishful thinking or toxic positivity. It's a courageous way to walk through the "shadow of the valley of death"¹⁹. It's letting God remind us that he will be with us in trouble²⁰, and though we stumble, he won't let us fall²¹. These psalms were often historically prayed or sung in the evening or at bedtime, when night would bring a natural danger and fear.

This Week's Psalms: 23, 56, 91, 107

Settle in:

- Silence your phone, get comfortable, and take three deep breaths.
- Place your palms down on your lap and take a minute to release to God anything you may be holding onto—concerns for your day, situations causing anxiety, and any pressure to "get something" out of this time.
- Turn your palms face-up and take a minute to thank God for what he's given you. Ask him to help you receive whatever he has for you.

Receive:

- Ask God: "What do you want me to notice today?" Listen in silence for a minute.
- Read one of the psalms (23, 56, 91, 107) slowly.

Reflect:

- Ask God: Is there a part of my life that's dominated by fear, worry, striving, or compulsion that you're inviting me to release to you?
- How can I trust you above everything else in this area?



Read the psalm again with these questions in mind.
Journal anything that comes to you as you reflect.

Respond:

End with this breath prayer. As you inhale, say, “God, you are my refuge.” As you exhale, say, “I surrender all to you.”

Respond throughout the week:

Write that breath prayer somewhere you’ll see frequently and return to it often, memorizing it if you can.

“God, you are my refuge. I surrender all to you.”

If you sense God inviting you to trust him with a specific area of your life, share it with a trusted friend who can support you and help you think through what it might look like to live that out in your everyday life.

Spiritual practices are a great way to lean into trust. Specifically, adopt one that helps you practice giving up control like, silence or fasting. We’ve got tips on how to try out these practices on our website: reclaimtoday.org/silence & reclaimtoday.org/fasting.

ROYAL



PSALMS



47

- ¹ Come, everyone! Clap your hands!
Shout to God with joyful praise!
- ² For the LORD Most High is awesome.
He is the great King of all the earth.
- ³ He subdues the nations before us,
putting our enemies beneath our feet.
- ⁴ He chose the Promised Land as our inheritance,
the proud possession of Jacob's descendants,
whom he loves.
- Interlude
- ⁵ God has ascended with a mighty shout.
The LORD has ascended with trumpets blaring.
- ⁶ Sing praises to God, sing praises;
sing praises to our King, sing praises!
- ⁷ For God is the King over all the earth.
Praise him with a psalm.
- ⁸ God reigns above the nations,
sitting on his holy throne.
- ⁹ The rulers of the world have gathered together
with the people of the God of Abraham.
For all the kings of the earth belong to God.
He is highly honored everywhere.

Royal Psalms

Unless you live in a monarchy or are a time traveler, the Royal Psalms are another genre that may take some getting used to. There are often one of two main emphases in these psalms: honoring an earthly king or proclaiming God as the universal King. Even in psalms that honor earthly kings, they typically draw attention to how the rule of the earthly king mirrors the justice, strength, and kindness of God (or, at least, how it is supposed to).

In both (earthly-king and God-as-King psalms), we see glimpses of Jesus's rule and reign, generations before he was born. Our first psalm for this week, Psalm 2, encapsulates this beautifully. When it was written, Psalm 2 was seen as a proclamation that God chose Israel's king. It was also a charge to the king to serve God wisely. However, when the early church was forming over a thousand years later, early leaders like Peter, John, and Paul recognized the deepest meaning of Psalm 2— it's a proclamation of Jesus's supreme power and authority as the son of God and as the eternal King. He is the Psalm's fulfillment²².

This Week's Psalms: 2,45,47,97

Settle in:

- Silence your phone, get comfortable, and take three deep breaths.
- Place your palms down on your lap and take a minute to release to God anything you may be holding onto—concerns for your day, situations causing anxiety, and any pressure to “get something” out of this time.
- Turn your palms face-up and take a minute to thank God for what he's given you. Ask him to help you receive whatever he has for you.

Receive:

- Ask God: “What do you want me to notice today?” Listen in silence for another minute.
- Read one of the psalms (2, 45, 47, or 97) slowly.



Reflect:

► Ask God: Is there an area of my life that I'm not wanting you to be a part of?

Read the psalm again with these questions in mind.

Journal anything that comes to you as you reflect.

Respond:

End with this breath prayer. As you inhale, say, "God, you're my King." As you exhale, say, "Rule in my life."

Respond throughout the week:

Write that breath prayer somewhere you'll see frequently and return to it often, memorizing it if you can.

"God, you're my King. Rule in my life."

Take an hour this week to examine your life. Write out on a piece of paper these categories: relationships, finances, vocation, physical life, emotional life, mental life, spiritual life, and digital life. Ask God, "Is there anything I'm holding back from you?" As things come to mind, pause, take a deep breath, and lift your hand toward God as a sign of releasing it to him. Consider practical steps you can take to keep surrendering this part of your life to God, and commit to taking one step this week.

Remember, surrendering things to God isn't just the "right" thing to do but is the best way to live. Jesus called this "life to the full"²³ because God can manage our lives better than we can. Some examples of leaning into surrender might be creating better boundaries with tech so you can be more present with others, getting more sleep each night, or talking to a friend about a struggle you haven't been open about. As you take steps toward giving these things to God, tell a trusted friend or small group so that they can support you.

²²Acts 4 & 13 ²³John 10:10

ASCENT

PSALMS



Ascent Psalms

Back when these psalms were written and sung, the Israelites would make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, their holy city, for three main holidays throughout the year: Passover, Festival of Harvest, and Feast of Tabernacles (also called Pesach, Shavuot, and Sukkot, respectively). Many scholars believe these fifteen psalms (120-134) were what the pilgrims would sing as they walked uphill (ascended) to Jerusalem on their pilgrimage, explaining the title “Song of Ascents,” as the city sat on a high plateau.

Ascent Psalms capture many themes, highlighting a range of experiences common to people who follow God: mourning, needing help, waiting in hope, remembering God’s deliverance, joyfully worshipping with friends, the dangers of travel, and more. For Christians today, it’s helpful to remember that, while we don’t make pilgrimages to Jerusalem, we are pilgrims on a journey through life²⁴. These songs can accompany us on that journey, turning our eyes to God amidst the ordinary things we face each day.

This Week’s Psalms: 121, 126, 127, 130

Settle in:

- Silence your phone, get comfortable, and take three deep breaths.
- Place your palms down on your lap and take a minute to release to God anything you may be holding onto—concerns for your day, situations causing anxiety, and any pressure to “get something” out of this time.
- Turn your palms face-up and take a minute to thank God for what he’s given you. Ask him to help you receive whatever he has for you.

Receive:

- Ask God, “What do you want me to notice today?”
- Read one of the psalms (121, 126, 127, or 130) slowly.



Reflect:

- Ask God: Who have you been to me over the course of my life's journey (i.e. provider, sustainer, helper, etc.)? How can I keep looking to you, and not forget you, amidst my daily struggles and tasks?

Read the psalm again with these questions in mind.

Journal anything that comes to you as you reflect.

Respond:

End with this breath prayer. As you inhale, say, "God, you are my home." As you exhale, say, "Guide each of my steps."

Respond throughout the week:

Write that breath prayer somewhere you'll see frequently and return to it often, memorizing it if you can.

"God, you are my home. Guide each of my steps."

If you can, get out in nature and find a hill to climb while you slowly pray through one of these psalms! As you sit atop the hill (or anywhere with a nice view), journal about some "high points" in your life, noticing how God has led you to where you are now. If you're able, make this spot a regular place where you can make a mini-pilgrimage every month or so to look back over your life and thank God for his provision.

²⁴ 1 Peter 2:9-12, Hebrews 11:13-16

HALLEL

PSALMS



114

- ¹ When the Israelites escaped from Egypt—
when the family of Jacob left that foreign land—
- ² the land of Judah became God's sanctuary,
and Israel became his kingdom.
- ³ The Red Sea saw them coming and hurried out of their way!
The water of the Jordan River turned away.
- ⁴ The mountains skipped like rams,
the hills like lambs!
- ⁵ What's wrong, Red Sea, that made you hurry out of their way?
What happened, Jordan River, that you turned away?
- ⁶ Why, mountains, did you skip like rams?
Why, hills, like lambs?
- ⁷ Tremble, O earth, at the presence of the Lord,
at the presence of the God of Jacob.
- ⁸ He turned the rock into a pool of water;
yes, a spring of water flowed from solid rock.

Hallel Psalms

After spending some time with the Song of Ascents, it's natural to turn next to the Hallel Psalms (113-118). These are the psalms Israel sang at the festivals in Jerusalem, especially Passover. For the most part, they start and/or end with the Hebrew word, "Hallel," which means "to praise." This is the root of the word "Hallelujah," which means "praise God."

Because Psalm 114 is about God rescuing Israel from Egypt (a story told in the book of Exodus), this psalm, and the others like it, are read during Passover, the Jewish holiday that celebrates God's deliverance. Some scholars believe that one of these psalms may be what Jesus and the disciples sang after the Last Supper²⁵. As Christians, we know that Jesus is the true Passover Lamb, and that his sacrificial death and resurrection deliver us from sin and death. Because of this, these psalms are especially meaningful when we celebrate Easter or any time we want to thank God for rescuing us.²⁶

This Week's Psalms: 114, 115, 116, 118

Settle in:

- Silence your phone, get comfortable, and take three deep breaths.
- Place your palms down on your lap and take a minute to release to God anything you may be holding onto—concerns for your day, situations causing anxiety, and any pressure to "get something" out of this time.
- Turn your palms face-up and take a minute to thank God for what he's given you. Ask him to help you receive whatever he has for you.

Receive:

- Ask God, "What do you want me to notice today?"
- Read one of the psalms (114, 115, 116, or 118) slowly.



Reflect:

- ▶ Ask God: How have you delivered me from bondage? What parts of my life are still not wholly yours? What would it look like for me to praise you with my whole life?

Read the psalm again with these questions in mind.

Journal anything that comes to you as you reflect.

Respond:

End with this breath prayer. As you inhale, say, “Jesus, you have rescued me.” As you exhale, say, “Hallelujah, I am free.”

Respond throughout the week:

Write that breath prayer somewhere you’ll see frequently and return to it often, memorizing it if you can.

“Jesus, you have rescued me. Hallelujah, I am free.”

Take an hour this week to get in touch again with your story of deliverance. How has God rescued you? Write down your testimony and prayerfully find someone you can share it with.

What celebrations are coming up? There may be a holiday, birthday, or big event in the near future. Take some time to write your own “psalm” for this time, praising God for being with you and providing for you.

²⁵ Matthew 26:30 ²⁶ Exodus 12:1-8, Colossians 1:13-14, 1 Peter 1:18-19

Conclusion

We hope that learning these ancient prayers helps you see how the truth of Scripture can guide you in your ordinary, everyday life. By way of summing up these last eight weeks, here are some truths we hope you remember:

1. We will wander from God's good way. But because God is our shepherd, we can walk in wisdom.
2. We will be tempted to be cynical. But because God is good, we can praise him.
3. We will feel abandoned. But because God is near, we can lean on him.
4. We will suffer harm. But because God is victorious, we can grieve honestly and look for him to make all things right.
5. We will lose hope. But because God is our refuge, we can trust in him.
6. We will anxiously cling to our lives. But because God is our King, we can release everything to him.
7. We will journey through dangerous places. But because God is our home, and will never leave us, we can look to him for help.
8. We will feel trapped. But because God is our salvation, who frees us from sin and death, we can cry out to him for deliverance.

We are pleased to create free resources like this to help you read and understand the Bible so you can hear from, know, and follow God in your everyday life. If this journey has been helpful, and you would like to help us make more free resources like this one, please consider supporting us at reclaimtoday.org/give.

Thank you!

The Reclaim Today team

