

Call to Worship

An Inductive Introduction
to Studying the Psalms

RACHEL COLLINS



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Published by Treasuring God's Word, an imprint of Exalted Vision, LLC
<http://www.treasuringgodsword.com>

Printed in the United States of America

First Printing Edition, 2023

ISBN 978-1-960409-00-3

Praise the LORD, all nations!
Extol him, all peoples!
For great is his steadfast love toward us,
and the faithfulness of the LORD endures forever.
Praise the LORD!
(Psalm 117)

May the study of His Word lead our hearts to worship the Lord in exultant praise!

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Acknowledgments

The night that the first version of this study was introduced is burned into my heart. It was 2020, and it had been months since the women of my church had met together in person to study the Word. What an incredible feeling to be again gathering face to face with some of my favorite people, getting excited about the Lord in community again! Only a couple of months before this I had been on my knees praying about what study to do with these women. For the first time since I began leading women's studies, the Lord seemed to not be giving direction this way or that way, and the silence was frustrating. We had just finished an impromptu summer study, a quick, "one-size-fits-many" psalms study that I put together for the ladies to work through independently in preparation for my online teaching. I called it *Hidden Gems in the Psalms*, and we focused on psalms that were not very well known. But fall was looming, the potential for being in person again was growing greater, and still the Lord had not made clear what study we were to do.

As time grew shorter, I scheduled a meeting with my pastor to "pick his brain" and see if he had any suggestions for us, feeling very uneasy about having to go to his office and admit that I had nothing. The morning before our meeting the Lord finally spoke, "Psalms, stay in the psalms." This time, though, we would shift focus to psalms which were more well known, ones that would be familiar to the women. Pastor Mark listened as I pitched the idea, gave it his approval, and we had a plan. With only weeks until we would begin, our original decision was to continue to use the one-size-fits-many study guide that I had already put together. As I continued to pray, I recognized that I wanted something more directed for the ladies, something that would take them a little deeper than what they already knew about these familiar psalms. I started studying, and writing, and writing some more, and within just a few weeks I had a rudimentary draft of what would become the first full-length study I ever wrote. I named it *Favorite Treasures in the Psalms*, inspired by a good friend who would always open her small group discussions with "Tell me your treasures." This study title is the inspiration for the name of this whole study series – Treasuring God's Word.

What you have in your hands is a reworked, re-envisioned echo of *Favorite Treasures in the Psalms*. For my gals who worked through that study with me in 2020, you will feel some deja-vu as you work through this version, feeling as if much of it is familiar – and yet somehow very different. For all whom the Lord leads to this study, I pray that this is a blessing to you, that the Lord would speak to you, and that you would know Him in a deeper, more intimate, personal way as you worship at His footstool.

I want to recognize a few people who have helped to make this study possible:

Kathleen Duncan – who saw the original version of this study and the potential that was there and has been encouraging me and working with me, shaping this study as well as much of the outline for *Studying the Psalms*. She has been an incredible help to me in refining this study into what it is today, as well as a friend and source of deep wisdom and insight. Proverbs 27:9

Emily Perry (and Joanna) and Katie Bass – who gave invaluable insights as we worked through and fine-tuned this study, encouraging me with some of the sweetest pictures and videos of children learning to treasure God's Word! Deuteronomy 6:7

Margot Bass, Carleigh Martin, Melissa Alani, Kim Daniels, Dorothy Schmelia – Spotting all the stray periods, extra spaces, and inconsistencies that missed the first few rounds of edits! Philippians 1:3-5

Kathleen, Emily, Katie, Margot, Carleigh, Melissa, Kim, Dorothy – I can't tell you how much I appreciate the time and work you have given the Lord as we have worked through this. Every time I work through your notes I overflow with gratitude. Your willingness to do this, and your conviction that this is worth spending your precious time on, is such an encouragement and blessing to me!

Pastor Mark and everyone at CCFred – who gave the original thumbs-up allowing me to write studies for the ladies at CCFred, and for the women of CCFred who have been so encouraging as I walk through this process. Hebrews 10:24-25

Olgi Price – who is always encouraging everyone she knows to dig for treasures in God's Word. 2 Corinthians 4:7

Tim, David, and Michael – for putting up with the hours that I need to spend in my "office" writing. I love you and thank God for you! Psalm 127

Before You Begin

Take just a few moments before we begin to consider ways that you can make spending time with the Lord a priority as we work through this study. He longs to speak to you and fellowship with you regularly and has given you His Spirit who will open His Word personally to your heart.

This study guide is based on the inductive method of Bible study. You'll notice that the bulk of your time will be spent directly interacting with the text of the Scriptures themselves, with just a few summaries and explanations included to aid your study. The questions in this guide are designed to help you as you look at the text to see what it says, to guide you through a proper understanding of what it means, and to challenge you to consider your own responses to what the Lord is showing you. If you are new to inductive Bible study, take a few minutes to read through the explanation of this method in the Appendix.

Our study of Psalms is broken into six lessons, each of which is divided into five parts which are designed to be completed in about thirty minutes. The first four parts of each lesson will guide you as you study the psalm or psalms we are focusing on in the lesson. The fifth part, entitled *Wrapping It Up*, is intended to be a review of your study as well as an opportunity to journal through your responses to what the Lord is showing you. Depending on the time you have available, you might choose to either work through all these questions, or you can select just a few to focus on in thought and prayer. Sprinkled throughout each lesson are sections titled *Deeper into the Word*. These optional exercises provide you opportunities to further explore related Scripture or outside resources. At the end of each regular lesson, you will find an additional optional section titled *For Further Study* which will give you a chance to practice studying independently.

The questions in this study are based on the English Standard Version (ESV) of the Bible, and you will find the full ESV text of each psalm at the end of each lesson. Mark them up, take notes, record any questions you have, and answers you receive. You can choose any translation you prefer for your study, but if a question doesn't make sense in your preferred translation, see if referring to the ESV aids in your understanding. Occasionally you will be asked to refer to a different translation. You can readily find these either at www.biblegateway.com or on the YouVersion app.

As you prepare to work through this study, you may want to dedicate a notebook to your study of the psalms. In this notebook you can keep track of any marking symbols you use, key words that we will be tracking throughout our study of the psalms, and charts which we will be developing as we study. Your notebook can also work as your personal journal where you can record your prayers, insights, and deeper, more personal thoughts. This notebook will be particularly helpful if you choose to do the *For Further Study* sections of each lesson. More detailed instructions for this notebook will be given in the *For Further Study* section of Lesson 1. You can find charts and other resources to include in your notebook at www.treasuringgodsword.com under *Resources*. Scanning this QR code will take you directly to the *Resources* page.



Just a note about marking or highlighting the text: My best advice to you is to keep it simple. Don't fall prey to the temptation to obsess over how to mark any given word. It is easy to get so caught up in the mechanics of the marking or highlighting that you lose sight of the purpose of interacting with the text in this way. You'll find some basic suggestions on the *Marking Symbols* page in the Appendix.

Remember that Bible study is a privilege, not an obligation, and that working through this study guide is not to be seen as homework. Enjoy this sweet opportunity to get to know the Lord personally – His attributes, His ways, what pleases Him, what displeases Him, how He sees you, and how He wants you to see Him. If you are using this guide with a group, don't worry about falling behind. Begin each new lesson along with your group with no guilt for what didn't get completed in the previous lesson.

Most importantly, make sure to begin your time of study in prayer. This is so easily neglected, and yet is the key to a rich, deep time in the Word. As **1 Corinthians 2:6-16** explains, it is the Spirit of God who explains to us the wisdom of God. Through prayer we recognize our need for the Spirit to open our ears and our hearts to the things of God, so that we are reading His Word with spiritual understanding rather than natural understanding. Pray for an open heart as you begin your study, pray for understanding as you continue in your study, and pray in response as you complete each time of study.

It is my greatest joy to hear how the Lord is using this study in His Church! If you have any questions or need clarification about anything in this study, have a story to share about how the Lord is using this study, or simply want to say hello and let me know that you are using this either for personal or small group use, feel free to contact me at Rachel@treasuringgodsword.com! I would absolutely love to hear from you!

May the Lord pour out His unlimited riches of wisdom and insight into your heart as you meditate on His Word!

Introductory Words

It's Sunday morning, we've gathered with our friends and family at church, and the service is about to begin. As it does, the worship leader shares a Scripture, a prayer, a song, or a simple invitation that transfers us from our everyday lives and into the presence of God – a call to worship. We remember why we gather, who we are truly meeting with, and the awesomeness of our Lord as we focus our hearts and our minds on Him.

While the study that you are about to undertake is significantly longer than a traditional call to worship would be, the intention is the same. The Psalms are the hymnbook of the Bible and studying them will lead you into His presence just as Sunday morning worship will. Included in the book of Psalms are words of wisdom, expressions of faith and trust in the Lord, instructions and doctrinal teaching, prayers of joy and prayers of lament, prophetic utterings, and jubilant songs of praise. Over the next several weeks we will be introducing all of these elements of psalms, recognizing their differences, hearing their unique linguistic melodies, and rejoicing in the King whose reign is the unifying message underneath them all.

Our prayer is that this study will lead you into worship of your Lord, your Savior, your Shepherd, your King. As we study together, we will be digging into details of the text. We'll be discovering themes, flow, and structure of the psalms. We'll look into the meaning of the original words that were used, and we'll seek to understand the imagery and emotion that is being evoked. Underneath all of this is the desire that our time in the psalms would inspire us to lift up our hearts in awe and wonder of our God.

So, let's prepare our spirits to enter into the throne room of the Majesty on High. We are entering into a sacred place, hearing ancient prayers offered on the golden altar, offering the same sweet incense of praise to the eternal, unchanging One, worthy of honor, glory, and praise. Come, let us worship our King!

And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, saying,

“To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!”

(Revelation 5:13)



Lesson 1 – The Pathway of Worship (Psalms 1-2)

Is it any surprise that the very first word of the book of Psalms is blessed? The book of Psalms is indeed a book of worship, and as we worship our Lord, we are truly blessed. But do we understand what blessing is? When the Lord speaks of blessing, what does He mean? And how do we walk in the blessing that is available to us? As we open our study in Psalms, let's open our hearts to worship and our ears to hear the Lord's call to blessing.

Part 1 – The Path of Prosperity

As we begin our study, it is important that we seek the Lord in prayer before we open His Word and read. Why is that? Because the wisdom that is found in Scripture is a wisdom that is not understood by our human minds, but rather is explained to us by the Spirit of God who dwells within all who have put their faith in Jesus (**1 Corinthians 2:6-16**). Pause for a moment and ask the Lord to open your heart and your mind to the wisdom that He wants to bless you with.

After prayer, **read Psalm 1** in its entirety, a practice we will continue as we study each new psalm. You'll find the text for Psalm 1 at the end of this lesson. In this initial reading, don't pause to take notes. Simply read the psalm, at least once but preferably 2-3 times, to appreciate the message as a whole before we begin to consider the details.

What are your first impressions of this psalm?

There are many genres in the book of Psalms, and many styles in which the writers of the psalms chose to make their messages heard. Before you begin today, take a moment to read about genres in the introduction to this study guide. You will notice that **Psalm 1** has characteristics of a wisdom psalm.

Read the sidebar about wisdom psalms. What do you notice in Psalm 1 that would identify it as this genre?

Now let's see if we can discern the flow of thought in this psalm. What seems to be the primary message in these verses?

vv. 1-2

Wisdom Psalms

These psalms read very much like the book of Proverbs, often with a contrast between the actions of the wise person and the actions of the foolish person, showing what it looks like to live a life that is pleasing to the Lord. Other wisdom psalms include **Psalm 112**, **Psalm 78**, and the famous **Psalm 119**, which is included in the optional *For Further Study* section at the end of this lesson.

Call to Worship

Lesson 1 – Psalms 1-2

vv. 3-4

vv. 5-6

Reading through a psalm first as a whole and then breaking it down by stanza (group of verses often separated with a space in your Bible) is a great way to begin your study of any psalm. This is how we will begin each psalm we study during our time together. Understanding the overarching structure of a psalm helps us to interpret each piece of the psalm in context, which will become vital particularly as we move into psalms of lament later in the study.

Once we understand the flow of a psalm, the next thing we generally want to look for are the people that are mentioned in the psalm. The Lord is always a key figure in each psalm, and we will take time to see what we can learn about the Lord from each one. Before we do this, let's see who else is mentioned in this psalm.

Besides the Lord, who are the two people (or groups of people) described in this psalm?

Let's focus on what the psalm says about the blessed man.

Read Psalm 1. Highlight references to the *blessed man*, including pronouns. *(There is a page in the Appendix for you to use to keep track of how you are marking words in your study. While maintaining consistency in your markings is not a requirement to study inductively, many people do find it helpful to have a basic system for keeping track of similar concepts.)*

Note what the psalm says about the blessed man:

What does he NOT do? (v. 1)

What DOES he do? (v. 2)

What is the result? (v. 3)

What is his relationship with the Lord? (v. 6)

Psalm 1:1 is a beautiful example of **parallelism**, a distinguishing feature of Hebrew poetry. As you study Psalms and other biblical poetry, pay attention to the use of parallelism to discover how the author uses this technique to define, emphasize, or deepen his thoughts.

Read Psalm 1:1 again. Underline the verbs in each line. Underline also the object of the verbs – what it is that the verb is referring to. What do you notice about how each line builds on the previous one?

Parallelism

A feature of Hebrew poetry in which successive lines echo a common idea. Parallel lines can echo each other, intensify each other, or contrast with each other.

Psalm 1:2 says, “*but his delight is in the law of the LORD and on his law he meditates day and night.*” Two words in this verse are key to understanding the wisdom found within. Let’s look a little deeper into the meaning of these words, both the intent of the original Hebrew language that was used, as well as what else we can learn about them from Scripture.

The first key word is *law*. The Hebrew word found here is the word *torah*. There are many ways to understand *torah*, and these different ways of understanding this word change the way we apply this verse. The first five books of the Bible (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy) are collectively called the *Torah*, the Books of the Law, a proper name given to this collection of writings. But the word *torah* is not exclusively used in reference to these specific books.

Look at these verses. What is the reader being commanded to not forsake?

Proverbs 3:1 – “*My son, do not forget my teaching, but let your heart keep my commandments.*”

Proverbs 6:20 – “*My son, keep your father’s commandment, and forsake not your mother’s teaching.*”

The word *teaching* in these verses is the same word as we find in **Psalm 1:2**; it is the word *torah*. You see here that *torah* is not exclusive to the Books of the Law as we know them, but refers to teaching, to instruction.²

In general, in the ESV, when the word *torah* is being used to describe the first five books of the Hebrew Scriptures, the word “Law” will be capitalized (for example, **2 Kings 17:13** or **Nehemiah 8:2**). When it is

² Mark D. Futato and George M. Schwab, *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary, Vol 7: The Book of Psalms, The Book of Proverbs*. (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2009).

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Lesson 1 – Psalms 1-2

being used to describe teaching or instruction that is not exclusive to the Books of the Law, the word *law* will not be capitalized.

Let's take this understanding back to the verse. Reconsider **Psalm 1:2** with this understanding of law in mind. How does this interpretation affect the way you would apply this verse?

Now let's consider the key word *meditating*. The word found here is *hagah* and conveys a beautiful image. It means to mutter, to speak, and envisions the cooing of a dove.³ Rather than attempting to empty the mind as in Eastern meditation, biblical meditation is a constant repeating to yourself of the truths found in Scripture. It's a concept you find repeated throughout the Psalms.

Read these verses and underline the phrase that is parallel with *meditation of my heart*. How does this help us understand what Scripture means by meditation?

Psalm 19:14 – “*Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O LORD, my rock and my redeemer.*”

Psalm 49:3 – “*My mouth shall speak wisdom; the meditation of my heart shall be understanding.*”

What do you meditate on? In other words, what consumes your heart and mind during the course of the day?

³ Warren Baker and Eugene E. Carpenter, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: Old Testament*, 2003.

Deeper into the Word

It's a fascinating study to see how similar images are used in different places in the Bible. Look up **Jeremiah 17:7-8**. How does this image compare with what you see in **Psalm 1**? Notice that in these verses in Jeremiah the blessed man is the one who trusts in the Lord. What connection is there between trusting in the Lord and delighting in His commandments?

Consider the contrast found in vv. 1 and 2 and notice the word *delight* in verse 2. How would you restate these verses in your own words? Make this personal, using *I* statements as you rephrase these verses.

One of the joys of studying the Psalms is soaking in the imagery that is used to describe spiritual truths. For obvious reasons, these images are not to be interpreted literally, but are to be understood in light of both the truths they represent and the emotions they evoke. (*You can find more information about imagery in the introduction in A Word About Studying the Psalms.*)

Psalm 1:3 presents us with a simile, an analogy describing the blessed man.

What is this image?

Consider how this image illustrates the blessings of delighting in the law, the instruction of the Lord as contained in His Word. How does this image encourage you as you spend time in this study of the psalms?

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Lesson 1 – Psalms 1-2

Let's look for a moment at the contrast between the wisdom of the world and the wisdom found in the Lord.

Read James 3:13-18. Notice the two sources of wisdom found in these verses and make note of what you see about each type of wisdom, using the words from the text. Notice both characteristics of the wisdom and the outcome of each type of wisdom.

WISDOM FROM ABOVE	EARTHLY WISDOM

Keeping in mind what you learned about wisdom from **James 3**, consider the wisdom found in **Psalm 1:1-3**. What does that look like for our lives in a practical sense? Are we to reject instruction from non-believers? How about contact with them? How do we distinguish good counsel and the good paths from those that would lead to destruction?

Part 2 – The Path of Perishing

In the first part of our study, we saw that there is great blessing in meditating on the Lord's instruction, His law, found not just in the Books of the Law but throughout the Scriptures. We saw the promise of prosperity – not a worldly prosperity but a spiritual one where God watches over our paths and accomplishes His purposes in us. We also saw that not everyone chooses to follow this path of true prosperity. Let's look at the contrast found in this psalm.

Read Psalm 1. Highlight references to the *wicked*, including synonyms such as *sinners* and *scoffers*. (*Make sure this is a contrasting color to the one you used for the blessed man. Record your choice in your markings chart in the Appendix.*)

What does the psalm say about the wicked? (v. 4)

What is the result of their life? (v. 5)

What does verse 6 imply about their relationship with the Lord?

Read Psalm 1 again. Notice words such as *but* that indicated a contrast. What is being contrasted in this psalm?

You likely noticed a contrast in verses 3 and 4, as well as in verse 6. Let's consider this contrast, as well as the one found in verse 6. Based on what you see here, how would you define the prosperity that is spoken of in these verses? How does this contrast with the perishing of the wicked?

Key Words

Learning to recognize **key words** in a text is a skill that will transform your study of the Word. Often, but not always, you will find these key words repeated in a text, either directly or in synonyms and parallels. For example, in **Psalm 1**, the contrast between the righteous and the wicked is a theme that unites the entire psalm. Highlighting *righteous* and *wicked* and making lists of what the psalm tells you about these concepts will help you to unlock the message of this psalm. As you continue to study Psalms, you will find repeated references to the righteous and wicked throughout the book. Highlight these words as you study so that you can easily recognize all that Scripture teaches about these important concepts. In addition to *righteous* and *wicked*, some other key words that are found throughout Psalms are *refuge*, *deliver*, *enemy*, *steadfast love*, *faithfulness*, *trust*, and *salvation*.

Just as we saw the simile in verse 3 that illustrates the prosperity of the righteous man, **Psalm 1:4** presents us with a contrasting simile, comparing the wicked to chaff that is blown away. It's a picture of emptiness, of worthlessness, the exact opposite of prosperity. But as we look around, we often see the wicked

Call to Worship

Lesson 1 – Psalms 1-2

prospering, seemingly in contradiction to the truth that is being presented here. We are not the only ones who wonder about how to reconcile this. Let's look at the thoughts of someone who pondered this long before the psalms were written.⁴

Read Job 21:7-18. Highlight references to the *wicked*, including pronouns, in the same way as you did in **Psalm 1**.

What does Job notice about the wicked?

How does what you see in Job compare with **Psalm 1:4**?

Job is wondering why he doesn't see the wicked being treated like chaff. **Read Matthew 3:11-12.** Who is John the Baptist speaking of in these verses? What is this person going to do?

Read Matthew 13:36-43 and make note of any phrase that indicates **when** something might happen. How does what you read in Matthew compare with **Psalm 1**? When will we see the chaff (weeds, tares) being blown away?

What encouragement does it give you to know that God has a plan for dealing with the wickedness of the world around us? How does this help us to persevere?

⁴To learn more about God's dealings with the wicked, why the wicked seem to prosper for a time, and God's plan for their eventual justice, check out *Yet I Will Rejoice: An Inductive Bible study of Habakkuk*, available on Amazon.com

Deeper into the Word

If you've ever wondered as Job did why the wicked seem to prosper you are not alone. The Lord speaks often to this, calling on us to have patience and to trust His plans and His timing. **Read Psalms 37 and 73**, highlighting references including synonyms to the wicked in the same way you did in **Psalm 1**. What struggle does the psalmist have as he looks around him? How do these psalms compare with what you see in **Psalm 1**? What additional encouragement and instruction is there for us in these psalms? **2 Peter 3:9** gives us a glimpse into the Lord's heart. What does this tell you about why it seems that God does not deal immediately with the wicked? If we are to have the heart of God, what should our response be to those who are following the way of the wicked?

Before we finish, let's review what this psalm teaches us about the Lord. **Read Psalm 1** one more time, this time highlighting references to the *LORD*. (*Just as before, make a note of the color you use, as references to the LORD are the foundation of our study.*)

You may have picked up on this when we discussed the contrasts in this psalm, but just to make sure you saw this, what does **Psalm 1** teach us about the Lord?

Jesus has some words for us that echo these concepts from **Psalm 1**.

Read John 4:13-15. What do you see in this passage that has a similarity to **Psalm 1**?

Read John 15:1-11

What do you see in this passage that has a similarity to **Psalm 1**?

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Lesson 1 – Psalms 1-2

If you didn't mention this above, what parallels do you notice between this passage about abiding in Christ and **Psalm 1**'s description of delighting in the law of the Lord? Notice in particular Jesus' words in **John 15:7-10**. What is the result?

Are you abiding in Christ? Are you drinking of the living water? What fruit is this producing in your life?

Let's put all of this together. **Psalm 1** compares two distinct ways of life – one that leads to prosperity, and one that leads to perishing.

What is it that makes the difference?

What does this look like for you in your everyday life?

My prayer is that you would find the Word of God to be your delight, that you would rejoice in the wisdom that He abundantly gives, and that you would experience the joy of fruitful living in His blessing.

Part 3 – The Path of Rebellion

Psalm 1 gave us wisdom concerning two paths we can take in life. We can choose the path of delighting in God's instruction, of embracing His wisdom, and enjoy the blessing that comes with walking in that path. Or we can choose the path of the scoffers, those who refuse to acknowledge the wisdom of the Lord and face the consequences of this decision. **Psalm 2** takes us into the mind of those who have chosen the latter path, and we see the Lord's response to their plans. He has a message for them – a message that we would be wise to pay attention to.

Just as we did with **Psalm 1**, read **Psalm 2** in its entirety at least once without pausing to take notes.

What are your first impressions of this psalm?

Who are the main characters in this psalm?

At first glance, what seems to be the primary message of this psalm?

Let's look a little closer at the structure of **Psalm 2**. You'll notice that this psalm is clearly divided into four stanzas, or groupings of verses. For each stanza, make note of **who** is the primary speaker (or group of speakers), and **what** is their message. *(If it is not clear to you at this point, make your best guess based on what you see. You can make adjustments as we continue our study.)*

vv. 1-3

vv. 4-6

vv. 7-9

vv. 10-12

Call to Worship

Lesson 1 – Psalms 1-2

Psalm 2 is a psalm that features some very strong emotions. You likely noticed a tension between two main groupings of people in this psalm – the nations and their kings, and the Lord and His Anointed.

Read Psalm 2:1-6 with these groupings in mind. In one reading, highlight references to the *nations*, *peoples*, and their *kings* in one color, and underline words that describe their *emotions* in the same color. (You may choose to use the same color as you used for the wicked in **Psalm 1**.)

Read the passage again and highlight references to *the LORD* as you did in **Psalm 1**, underlining words that describe His emotions in that same color. (References to the Anointed require a little interpretation, which we will get to shortly. At this point, simply highlight references to the LORD and notice His relationship with His anointed.)

What words does this psalm use to speak of the emotions of the nations? Based on what you see, why are they feeling this way?

What words does this psalm use to speak of the emotions of the Lord? Based on what you see in the psalm and what you know about the Lord, why is He feeling this way?

The nations are raging, angry, refusing to submit to the authority of God, considering His rule to be a bondage, a burden. They demand their independence and plot ways to escape Him. For His part, God hears their rebellious words. He mocks their feeble plans, and makes plans of His own.

The wrath of God is a challenging topic, but it is one that is central to the message of the Bible and is the reason that the gospel is such good news. Take a look at these verses. **Who** is God's wrath directed at? **Why** are they the object of His wrath? **What** is the outcome of His wrath? **When** will they experience this wrath? **How** can one escape God's wrath? (Not all questions will be answered in all verses.)

Psalm 21:8-9

Nahum 1:2, 6-9

Deeper into the Word

These verses on the wrath of God are just a brief overview and are by no means comprehensive. Take some time to explore this topic, focusing on the same questions you answered in these verses. Using any biblical reference tools you have available do a topical search on God's wrath, judgment, and the Day of the Lord. Keep all this in mind as we continue our study, particularly as we get to the final verse of **Psalm 2**.

Romans 1:18-21

Revelation 6:15-17

Read Psalm 2 in its entirety once again. Is this psalm encouraging to you? Challenging? Frightening? Confusing? Why?

We'll go deeper into interpretation and application as we continue our study of this psalm. For now, consider the world around you. How does what you see in the world compare to what you read in this psalm? Is there a message in this psalm that would be applicable to today?

Call to Worship

Lesson 1 – Psalms 1-2

Where do you stand? Can you identify with the people in the first stanza of this psalm? In other words, in what ways do you currently, or have you in the past, attempted to cast off the bonds of the Lord? How did that turn out for you?

Take a few moments to write out a prayer of response to the Lord, either here or in your notebook. What questions has this lesson brought up in your heart? Is He convicting you in some way? Encouraging you? Remember that prayer is simply communication with the One who loves you, has redeemed you, and calls you His child. You can come to Him openly and honestly with your thoughts and see how He responds as you continue to study.

Part 4 – The Path of Refuge

The nations rage, vowing to cast off the reign of God Almighty so they can do as they please. Meanwhile the Lord mocks their empty plans, knowing that they are utterly impotent when faced with His omnipotence. He has already made His plans and set up His King despite the protests of those who would rebel against Him. We've heard from the nations, we've heard from the Lord, and now, as we move into verse 7, we hear another voice speaking.

Read Psalm 2:7-9, highlighting references to the *LORD* and to the *nations* as you did previously. Read this carefully to determine who the pronouns are speaking of.

Who is speaking in this stanza? (*Don't go too far into interpretation at this point – use the words in the psalm from verses 2 and 6*)

What is his relationship with the Lord?

What has the Lord promised to him?

All of this begs the question: Who exactly is this speaking of? You've seen some hints based on the words in the psalm. Let's allow context to help us interpret while also using Scripture to interpret Scripture as we work through our understanding.

Psalm 2 is what is known as a royalty, or kingship, psalm. Many of these psalms are either spoken about the king or by the king, often giving the Lord praise for the victory and deliverance He has given to the king. Some other royal psalms are **Psalm 18**, **Psalm 21**, **Psalm 72**, as well as several others.

You saw that as we highlighted references to the *LORD* we skipped making any interpretive decisions about how to

Royalty Psalms

Royalty, or kingship, psalms are distinguished readily by their references to the king, whether that king is an earthly king or our heavenly King. Occasionally these psalms are a cry to the Lord from the heart of the king, who is recognizing his responsibility to the Lord to serve His people. Other times they are a prayer for the king, sung by the people as they seek the Lord's strength. And sometimes, like in **Psalm 45**, they read very much like a song of praise to the king. As you read these psalms, particularly **Psalm 2** and **Psalm 110**, watch for references to the coming King, the One who is foreshadowed and pictured by the earthly kings. Very often, but not always, these royalty psalms are messianic in nature, speaking in veiled terms of the King of Kings who will one day reign forever.

Call to Worship

Lesson 1 – Psalms 1-2

highlight *the LORD's Anointed*. This was intentional, as occasionally these references in the royal psalms tend to have a dual interpretation, particularly as we read them with a New Testament perspective. Let's begin our interpretation by using cross-references. These references will help us listen to this psalm in the way that the ancient Israelites would have heard it.

The word *anointed* in verse 2 is the Hebrew word *mesiyah*, or Messiah as it is transliterated into English. Under our New Testament understanding, we often understand the Messiah as speaking of Jesus, but this was not a concept that the ancient Israelites would have understood.⁵ When they heard of the Lord's anointed, His *mesiyah*, particularly in the psalms, their mind would have gone to David, and to a very special promise that God gave to David.

Read 1 Samuel 16:1, 11-13. (*Read the full passage if you have time.*)

What was Samuel instructed to do? Why? (v. 1)

Who did Samuel anoint?

Glance back to **1 Samuel 16:6**, and notice what Samuel thought to himself when David's older brother was brought before him. What phrase does Samuel use when referring to the one that he was looking for? How does this compare with **Psalms 2:2**?

Do you see now how ancient Israel would have recognized David as being the Lord's anointed? Let's move forward many years in David's life. At this point, David's authority is well established, and Israel also has been established as a mighty nation under David's leadership. Even so, the center of Israelite worship is still the tabernacle that was established under Moses' authority, and the Ark of the Covenant, the symbol of God's presence, is still housed in a tent. David's heart was stirred to build something more permanent for the Lord, a house that would be the center of worship from that point forward, no longer needing to be moved from place to place but forever located in Jerusalem.

He shares this desire with Nathan, who at first gives him his blessing to build the temple, the house of the Lord. But the Lord speaks, and He shares His heart for this house.

⁵ Warren Baker and Eugene E. Carpenter, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: Old Testament*, 2003.

Read 2 Samuel 7:4-17. As you do, underline all the promises that God spoke to David.

What promises did God make to David?

v. 9

v. 11

v. 12

v. 13

v. 16

Look again at 2 Samuel 7:14. What does God call David's descendant after him? In other words, what relationship would God have with David's descendants?

How does all of this compare with what you see in **Psalm 2**?

David's response to this promise (**2 Samuel 7:18-29**) indicates that he at least partially understood the magnitude of this promise that God made to him. After the exile, when the line of David seemed to end, the people of Israel understood that God's promise to David meant that there was a coming Son of David who would be a great Deliverer and King. And yet it wasn't until after the death and resurrection of Jesus, and the understanding that the Holy Spirit gave to the apostles, that it became clear that this promise found its fulfillment in Jesus. Let's see how the apostles understood **Psalm 2**.

Read Acts 4:24-28. How was **Psalm 2** fulfilled in Jesus?

Read Acts 13:32-33. How do these verses interpret **Psalm 2:7**?

Call to Worship

Lesson 1 – Psalms 1-2

There is one more interesting verse that connects with all we've been studying. **Read Hebrews 1:5**. Notice how the first part of this verse quotes **Psalm 2:7**, while the second part quotes **2 Samuel 7:14**. How do the New Testament Scriptures interpret these Old Testament passages?

Now that we've clearly established the identity of the Lord's Anointed in **Psalm 2**, let's finish working through the psalm.

Read Psalm 2:7-12. Highlight references to the *Son*, the *LORD*, and the *kings of the earth*. (*You can go back and highlight previous references to the Son as well if you'd like*).

Who is speaking in verses 7-9?

What has the Lord promised Him? (v. 8)

What is said about Him? (v. 9)

What instruction is given in verse 11?

What contrast is made in verse 12?

Now let's see the fulfillment of these verses. Look up the following references and make note of how they compare with what is promised in **Psalm 2**.

John 3:35-36

Philippians 2:5-11

Revelation 11:15-18

Write out the final line of this psalm, the blessing that brings this psalm to a conclusion. Writing verses by hand helps us as we memorize Scripture and cements truths more deeply in our hearts and minds.

This is the gospel in the Old Testament. After His resurrection, Jesus said in **Luke 24:44** that everything that had been written about Him in the law of Moses, in the Prophets, and in the Psalms must be fulfilled, and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed.

How does **Psalm 2:11-12** imply that repentance for forgiveness of sins, and as **John 3:35-36** says, deliverance from wrath, would be found in the Son?

Where do you stand? Are you still in the place of the nations, wanting to live any way you please without God having authority in your life? Or have you repented of that sin of self-reliance and bowed the knee to the Son?

Part 5 – Wrapping It Up

Psalms 1 and 2 form an introduction of sorts to the book of Psalms as a whole. In **Psalm 1** we find the call to heed the instructions found in this book of praise, in fact in the entirety of Scripture, and the blessing that comes from obedience to the Lord's wisdom. In **Psalm 2** we find the message that God is the supreme authority, to whom all in heaven and on earth owe allegiance, as well as the promise of refuge that is found in the Son. In all of this we see two paths: a path of rebellion that leads to perishing and a path of refuge that leads to prosperity, and we are called to make a choice.

For Small Group Leaders:

Use these four questions to open your discussion with a review of the psalm or psalms that you are studying each week, allowing your group to draw application from these questions as you discuss them. Spend the remainder of your discussion time on the other application questions in this section and any application questions that are included in the main portion of the lesson.

Read Psalms 1 and 2. In each lesson, we will begin our wrapping it up time of review with four questions:

What do you learn about God from these psalms?

What do you learn about those singing these psalms?

What is the main idea or theme of these psalms?

How would these psalms have helped the psalmist or those hearing these psalms draw nearer to God?

Read Psalms 1 and 2 together. You may want to read them aloud. What common message do these psalms share? Why might these psalms have been chosen to open the book of Psalms?

Jesus spoke of two ways in **Matthew 7:13-14**. Read these verses. How do they add to what you've learned from **Psalms 1 and 2**?

Psalm 1 tells us that the blessed man is one who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked but meditates on the law (instruction) of the Lord day and night. What does this look like in your life? Who are you allowing to influence you – in-person, online, or in books and other media? What do you spend time thinking about as you go about your daily life? How can you grow in meditating on the Lord's teaching?

Call to Worship

Lesson 1 – Psalms 1-2

How does the Bible define success and prosperity? How does this compare with your own definitions?

We often hear of God being a God of love, and this is a very true assessment of Him. However, passages such as **Psalm 2** make it clear that God's love doesn't exclude Him from experiencing anger and wrath. Based on what you see in **Psalm 2**, including the cross-references you looked at, what is it that stirs the wrath of God? Recognizing that we are in no position to judge God, do you believe that God's wrath is justified? How do you see God's love even in this psalm that speaks of His wrath?

Have you ever experienced a time when it seemed like the *wicked* were getting away with their destructive plans? Did they ultimately succeed? If they did, what encouragement do you receive from **Psalms 1 and 2**?

What would it look like for you to take the messages of **Psalms 1 and 2** and apply them to your life? Are you walking in the path of prosperity? Are you taking refuge in the Son? Look again at **Philippians 2:5-9** from Part 4 and notice what it took for the Son to be able to be your refuge. Spend some time in worship and submission as the Spirit leads.

Call to Worship

Lesson 1 – Psalms 1-2

You'll find a chart in the Appendix titled *The God I Worship*. As you work through your study, fill in all the reasons that God gives us to worship Him. Think about His character, His actions, His relationship with you, His attributes, anything that you learn about God as you study. Make note of the reference in the first column. In the second column list the fact or facts about God that you learned from that reference using the wording given in the verse. The third column is for your personal response to this truth about God. You might use this space to explain in your own words why this truth about God is a reason to worship, or you might choose to simply write a brief word of praise.

You may want to recreate this chart in a notebook that you can keep with you as you continue to learn about God beyond this 6-week course. You can find a downloadable copy of this chart at www.treasuringgodsword.com under *Resources*.

Go back through **Psalms 1 and 2** and fill in this chart with what these psalms tell us about God, as well as your response to this information. If you are doing this study in a group, be ready to share some of your responses with your group.

Each week we will conclude our study in a time of prayer. Write out a prayer of response to the Lord, sharing your heart with Him as you meditate on His Word. You may want to use one or both of the psalms we studied this week as you do this, either using the psalm as a basis for your prayer and adding your own thoughts or rephrasing the psalm in your own words.⁶ As always, this is between you and the Lord, so be honest, not worrying about appearing spiritual. He is listening to you.



Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding.

In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.

(Proverbs 3:5-6)

⁶ Donald Whitney has written an excellent short book entitled *Praying the Bible* that will walk you through the process of using the psalms as the basis for your prayer. You can find it at your local bookstore or online.

For Further Study

As you work through the lessons in this study guide, you will find questions that walk you through a detailed study of specific psalms, curated to quickly bring you to the heart of the text and guide you through interpretation and application.

In these *For Further Study* sections, you are going to have a chance to work through some psalms on your own. You'll find a set of questions in the Appendix titled *Studying the Psalms* that will provide you with a step-by-step starting point as you continue your independent study in the psalms. Be sure to keep the standard *who, what, when, where, why, and how* questions in mind as you work through your study, allowing the text to answer these investigative questions.

While some space is provided here for you to work through the steps in studying psalms, you may want to do your study in a dedicated notebook that will contain all your study in the Psalms. In one section you can keep track of your notes on each individual psalm. In a second section you can compile charts of what you learn about key ideas throughout the Psalms, including your *The God I Worship* chart and any other key word charts that you will develop. A third section can be a journal for you to write reflections, thoughts, questions, and prayers.

Remember that our goal in study is to take our time in observing and interpreting the text itself. You will notice that we do not use commentaries or the notes in our Bibles until AFTER we have worked extensively in the psalm on our own. Learning to study inductively takes some time and practice but yields the fruit of confidence in not only knowing **what** you believe, but **why** you believe it. This makes our application of the text far more powerful as it is rooted in a solid understanding of what the Lord is saying to us.

This week we are going to study **Psalm 119:1-24**, the first three stanzas of this classic song of praise for God's law. You will be marking words and making your notes in your own Bible, and answering questions in your notebook. As you walk through these verses, you will see how closely this psalm connects with all that we studied in **Psalm 1**. Notice the different ways that the writer refers to God's law in this psalm, and the joyful, affectionate words used to describe it.

Prepare your heart to hear from the Lord

1. Begin in PRAYER, asking the Lord to open the eyes of your understanding (**Psalm 119:18**).
2. **Read Psalm 119:1-24** without making any notes. If you read it multiple times, use different translations. What are your first impressions of this psalm?

Observe the Text

3. What genre does the psalm appear to be?

Call to Worship

Lesson 1 – Psalms 1-2

4. **Read Psalm 119:1-24** again. What is the overall theme of this psalm? Do you notice any key words or phrases in this psalm that might help you to identify a theme? Highlight these words or phrases in a distinctive way.

What is the theme of each of these stanzas?

Stanza A (vv. 1-8)

Stanza B (vv. 9-16)

Stanza C (vv. 17-24)

We will answer questions 5-7 stanza-by-stanza.

Stanza A: Psalm 119:1-8

5. Read verses 1-8. Who are the main people mentioned in these verses? What do you learn about this person? In your notebook, make a list of your observations, answering the questions *who*, *what*, *when*, *where*, *why*, and *how*.
6. Read verses 1-8 again, looking for any key words or phrases. Highlight these and make a list of your observations, answering the questions *who*, *what*, *when*, *where*, *why*, and *how*.

Did you notice all the different words used to describe the law of the Lord? What do you learn about the law of the Lord in these verses? In your notebook, make a list of your observations, answering the questions *who*, *what*, *when*, *where*, *why*, and *how*.

7. Make notes of general observations, such as the emotions expressed in the psalm, comparisons and contrasts, and cause and effects, as well as any significant parallels and imagery.

Did you notice that the Lord is a main person mentioned in these verses? *LORD* will always be a key word in your study, as the entirety of the Bible is about Him. Pay attention to when the psalmist is talking TO the Lord, compared with when he is talking ABOUT the Lord.

You may also have noticed that *law* is a key word in **Psalm 119**. What words do you see that are synonyms for *law*? Highlight each of these in the same way as you highlight law, and list what you learn. We will

come back to these different words later as we interpret, seeing if we can discover any nuances of meaning these words may provide.

Stanza B: Psalm 119:9-16

5. Read verses 9-16. Who are the main people mentioned in these verses? What do you learn about these people? In your notebook, make lists of your observations, answering the questions *who*, *what*, *when*, *where*, *why*, and *how*.
6. If you notice any other repeated words or phrases in this stanza, highlight these and make a list of your observations, answering the questions *who*, *what*, *when*, *where*, *why*, and *how*.
7. Make notes of general observations, such as the emotions expressed in the psalm, comparisons and contrasts, and cause and effects, as well as any significant parallels and imagery.

We noticed the law and its synonyms as key words in Stanza A. Did you see this continue into stanza B? How about the word *blessed*? Who is blessed in Stanza A? Who is blessed in Stanza B? Remember we are just observing for now. When we interpret, we may want to look into the word *blessed* and see how it is that the Lord is blessed.

Notice also in Stanza B all the different body parts that are mentioned: heart, lips, eyes. As we interpret, we can meditate on why the psalmist chose to use these images.

Stanza C: Psalm 119:17-24

5. Read verses 17-24. Who are the main people mentioned in these verses? What do you learn about these people? Make a list of your observations, answering the questions *who*, *what*, *when*, *where*, *why*, and *how*.
6. What do you learn about the law of the Lord in these verses? Make a list of your observations, answering the questions *who*, *what*, *when*, *where*, *why*, and *how*.

If you notice any other repeated words or phrases in this stanza, highlight these and make a list of your observations, answering the questions *who*, *what*, *when*, *where*, *why*, and *how*.

7. Make notes of general observations, such as the emotions expressed in the psalm, comparisons and contrasts, and cause and effects, as well as any significant parallels and imagery.

Have you noticed how often the psalmist mentions how he feels about the law? Read the first three stanzas of **Psalm 119** again and highlight all the ways the psalmist refers to his love for the law.

We mentioned in our lesson that the contrast between the righteous and the wicked is a key concept in the psalms. Did you notice this concept in Stanza C? Read these verses again and make note of what **Psalm 119:17-24** says about the contrast between the wicked and the righteous (i.e. the psalmist). Notice the contrast in verse 23. What are the princes thinking about? What is the psalmist meditating on?

Blue Letter Bible

Bible dictionaries, concordances, and other reference works are very helpful tools to use as we interpret the text. The Blue Letter Bible App and website is a fantastic resource that gives you access to many of these tools from your phone or computer. On the homepage, type in the reference of the passage you are studying and choose your preferred version. The site will pull up a list of verses, which you can click on to see each word used in the verse. From there you can investigate the meaning of these Hebrew and Greek words. Blue Letter Bible also has a list of cross-references you can use. Above the list of words in a verse you will notice a set of tabs that will take you to other resources that you use to research that verse. The third tab is labeled “cross-references” and will give you a list of references that relate to each verse. Another option is to look up your key words using a concordance to see how else that word is used in Scripture.

Interpret the Text

Now that we’ve done our observations in each stanza, let’s interpret the psalm as a whole.

8. Find original word meanings of any important words in the psalm, as well as background information on imagery used in the psalm. Note how these impact the message of the psalm.

Did you notice the nuances of the different words used for the law? We saw in our lesson that the word *law* is *torah*, or instruction. Did you see that the word *testimony* is the word used for a witness? Think about God’s instruction as a witness of who He is. *Rules* could also be translated as *judgments*. God’s instruction is the standard by which He judges us. Look at some of the other words. What nuances do you discover? What difference do these nuances make in your understanding?

9. Allow Scripture to interpret Scripture by looking into cross-references. If your Bible has cross-references included in the margin, use these as a starting point. You can also look up how key words are used elsewhere in the Bible using a concordance or Blue Letter Bible.

Did you notice the similarities between this psalm and **Psalm 1**? If not, take a moment to compare these psalms. What do you see?

In your notebook, you can create a chart on the law of the Lord, adding your notes throughout your study of Psalms. You can also add a chart on the wicked, and another on the righteous. Just as with your *The God I Worship* chart, use the first column to list the reference, the second to make note of what you learn, and the third to comment on what this means for your life. You can find a template for these charts on the *Treasuring God's Word* website under *Resources*.

10. Now that you have done your study of the text itself, if you have any questions, now is the time to see what trusted commentaries have to say.

Apply the Text

As you move into application, take a moment to review what you have observed in this psalm:

What do you learn about God from this psalm? Add any further insights into your *The God I Worship* chart.

What do you learn about the one singing this psalm?

What is the main idea or theme of this psalm?

How would this psalm have helped the psalmist or those hearing this psalm draw nearer to God?

11. How do the instructions, warnings, or wisdom that are shared in this psalm impact your life? Is there an action to take, or a belief to change? How does what you've learned in this psalm reflect on your relationship with the Lord? Prayerfully consider these questions, noting your responses in your notebook.

12. PRAY this psalm back to the Lord. Use the words from the psalm as the basis for your prayer, adding your own heart's cry.

Call to Worship
Lesson 1 – Psalms 1-2

Psalm 1

- 1 Blessed is the man
who walks not in the counsel of the wicked,
nor stands in the way of sinners,
nor sits in the seat of scoffers;
- 2 but his delight is in the law of the LORD,
and on his law he meditates day and night.
- 3 He is like a tree
planted by streams of water
that yields its fruit in its season,
and its leaf does not wither.
In all that he does, he prospers.
- 4 The wicked are not so,
but are like chaff that the wind drives away.
- 5 Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment,
nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous;
- 6 for the LORD knows the way of the righteous,
but the way of the wicked will perish.

Psalm 2

- 1 Why do the nations rage
and the peoples plot in vain?
- 2 The kings of the earth set themselves,
and the rulers take counsel together,
against the LORD and against his Anointed, saying,
- 3 “Let us burst their bonds apart
and cast away their cords from us.”

- 4 He who sits in the heavens laughs;
the Lord holds them in derision.
- 5 Then he will speak to them in his wrath,
and terrify them in his fury, saying,
- 6 “As for me, I have set my King
on Zion, my holy hill.”

- 7 I will tell of the decree:
The LORD said to me, “You are my Son;
today I have begotten you.
- 8 Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage,
and the ends of the earth your possession.
- 9 You shall break them with a rod of iron
and dash them in pieces like a potter’s vessel.”

- 10 Now therefore, O kings, be wise;
be warned, O rulers of the earth.

11 Serve the LORD with fear,
and rejoice with trembling.

12 Kiss the Son,
lest he be angry, and you perish in the way,
for his wrath is quickly kindled.

Blessed are all who take refuge in him.