



ROSE VISUAL
BIBLE STUDIES

6 SESSIONS

PSALMS

Bible Study



PSALMS

Rose Visual
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Psalms
Rose Visual Bible Studies

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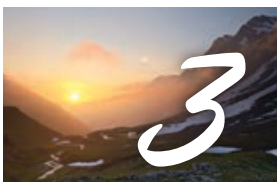
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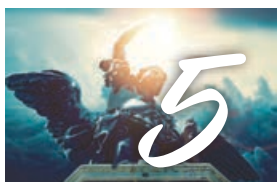
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*“May these words of my
mouth and this meditation
of my heart be pleasing in
your sight, LORD, my Rock
and my Redeemer.”*

Psalm 19:14

Psalms

Not long ago, I had an opportunity to take a drive through part of the Appalachian Mountains in southwest Virginia. My road was the Blue Ridge Parkway, a historic highway winding through beautiful peaks and valleys. From the isolation and safety of my car, I observed through the windows tall trees, grazing deer, and views overlooking broad valleys.


After my scenic drive, I parked my car at the base of Sharp Top Mountain, one of Virginia's tallest peaks. That's when my adventure really began. Once the barrier of my car was removed, I was able to hear, see, touch, and feel the wild beauty surrounding me: hawks circling the sky while scanning for prey, the strong scent of the forest trees, and the roll of thunder from an approaching storm. I hiked all the way to the top of the mountain that summer day. My muscles ached and my body became tired, but my experience of the mountain was far grander than only observing it from behind my car windows. A wide gap stretches between observing and experiencing the wild beauty of the natural world.

The book of Psalms records for us the shared history of those who have not only observed but *experienced* God. These are the songs of God-followers who have crested the summits and languished in the valleys of life while raising their voices to praise or complain to



God. Their experience is not safe or sanitary, but their songs are wild and free, beautiful and true.

This study is your invitation to step out of safety and into the wild beauty that comes from experiencing God, as you go deeper in your relationship with him through the psalms. Over the next six sessions, you will have an opportunity to immerse yourself in different types of prayer-songs from the book of Psalms, consider the background of the psalms and their connections with Jesus, and explore how the songs you sing and the song of your life reflect themes in the book of Psalms.



Let the heavens rejoice,
let the earth be glad;
let the sea resound,
and all that is in it.

Let the fields be jubilant,
and everything in them;
let all the trees of the forest
sing for joy.

Let all creation rejoice
before the LORD.

PSALM 96:11–13



SONGS OF PRAISE

Psalms 1 and 150

Songs of Praise

“That person is like a tree planted by streams of water.” PSALM 1:3

We become like whatever we choose to worship, and the connection between our worship and our faith cannot be overstated. The words, symbols, and actions that express our worship shape our faith and character. If we worship wealth or leisure, then we are likely to become increasingly greedy or lazy. If we worship the living God, he will graciously shape our character to match his over time. If our worship is shallow, then our faith will lack deep roots that can make us strong and productive throughout every season of life. But if our worship focuses on God’s character and faithfulness while expressing the full range of the human experience—our successes and shortcomings; our great joys and terrible griefs—then our faith will grow to become unshakable, and our lives will be rich, full, and steady.

Whether chanted in a synagogue, sung from a hymnal, or read from projectors on walls—the psalms have provided God’s people with prayers, poetry, imagery, and themes that defined both worship and faith for many generations. By studying, praying, and living the psalms, our lives become an enduring song of praise to the Lord and grow like a strong, well-watered fruitful tree that thrives through every season.





Read It

Key Psalms to Read

For this session, read Psalms 1 and 150, the first and last psalms in the book.

Optional Reading

Jesus knew and sang the psalms. Consider how worshiping with the psalms might have influenced his teaching in passages like Matthew 6:9–13, the Lord’s Prayer.

“Let everything that has breath
praise the LORD.”

PSALM 150:6





Know It

1. In what ways are the righteous and the wicked contrasted in Psalm 1?

THE RIGHTEOUS ARE ...	THE WICKED ARE ...

2. What is the dominant theme in Psalm 150, the book's closing psalm?

3. Why do you think these two specific psalms were placed first and last in the book of Psalms?



Explore It

The Five Books of Psalms

The psalms are divided into five large sections or “books.” Each book concludes with a doxology—a short, memorable expression of praise.

SECTION	PSALMS	DOXOLOGY
Book 1	1–41	“Praise be to the LORD, the God of Israel, from everlasting to everlasting. Amen and Amen” (Ps. 41:13).
Book 2	42–72	“Praise be to his glorious name forever; may the whole earth be filled with his glory. Amen and Amen” (Ps. 72:19).
Book 3	73–89	“Praise be to the LORD forever! Amen and Amen” (Ps. 89:52).
Book 4	90–106	“Praise be to the LORD, the God of Israel, from everlasting to everlasting. Let all the people say, ‘Amen!’ Praise the LORD” (Ps. 106:48).
Book 5	107–150	“Praise the LORD.... Let everything that has breath praise the LORD. Praise the LORD” (Ps. 150:1, 6; In fact, all of Psalm 150 functions as a doxology).

Notice how books one, two, and three each conclude with the words “Amen and Amen.” Book four ends with “Amen! Praise the LORD” or more literally “Amen! Hallelujah.” Book five closes the entire collection with a final “Praise the LORD” or “Hallelujah.”

Psalm Writers

The book of Psalms had many authors and it developed gradually throughout Israel's history. Moses may have been the first author of Hebrew poetry. In Exodus 15, Moses composes a song praising God for Israel's escape from Egypt and rescue at the Red Sea, sometime in the fifteenth century BC. Many of the psalms are attributed to King David who reigned around 1000 BC. The book of Psalms probably did not reach its final form until about 450 BC, as Ezra and his colleague scribes completed their compilation and editing work after returning home to Israel from exile in Babylon and Persia. Psalms like 137 were probably written during the time of Israel's captivity and exile.

The book of Psalms identifies several authors but leaves about a third of the psalms unattributed:

- 73 psalms by David
- 49 psalms are unattributed
- 12 psalms by Asaph
- 11 psalms by the sons of Korah
- 2 psalms by King Solomon
- 1 psalm by Moses
- 1 psalm by Ethan
- 1 psalm by Heman

Hebrew and English Scriptures

While the Hebrew Scriptures and English translations of the Old Testament contain the same books of the Bible, they appear in different divisions and order. English translations follow the organization and book order of the Latin Vulgate, which was translated from Hebrew manuscripts into Latin by Jerome in the fourth century. The order of books in the Hebrew Bible places the book of Psalms near the end, rather than in the middle, like most English translations.

The divisions of the Hebrew Bible are:

- **Torah (Law):** Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy—the five books of Moses;
- **Nevi'im (Prophets):** Former Prophets: Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings; and Latter Prophets: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and concluding with the twelve minor prophets; and
- **Ketuvim (Writings):** Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Song of Songs, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther, Daniel, Ezra and Nehemiah, and Chronicles. (Some scroll collections offer alternative book order for the Ketuvim.)

The entire collection of books is referred to as the Tanakh, which is a combination of the names for the sections: Torah, Nevi'im, and Ketuvim.

The Book of Psalms

The English title *Psalms* comes from the title used in the Septuagint, which is the Greek translation of the Old Testament. In the Septuagint, the Greek word *psalmos* was used to translate the Hebrew word *mizmor*, which may mean “song.” The Hebrew title for the book of Psalms is *Tehillim*, which means “praises.”



The Psalms Scroll of the Dead Sea Scrolls (c. AD 30–50)

Hallelujah

Hallelujah! This single word is formed by combining two Hebrew words: *hallel* and *Yahweh*.

- *Hallel* simply means “to praise,” and it is used in various places throughout the Old Testament.
- *Yahweh* is the personal name for God revealed to Moses in Exodus 3–6.

Some English Bible translations keep the word as *hallelujah*, while many others translate its meaning: “Praise the LORD.”

Hallelujah did not appear to be used until around 600 BC during the time that Israel experienced defeat from foreign enemies and exile from their homeland. The word first appears in the Bible in Psalm 104:35 and then frequently through the end of the book of Psalms, though it appears nowhere else in the Old Testament. *Hallelujah* is used twenty-three times and is, in fact, the very last word of the book of Psalms (Ps. 150:6).

Amen

The Hebrew word *amen* is a way of saying “let it be,” “surely,” or “truly.” This word is related to the Hebrew word *aman*, which means “to believe,” “to trust,” or “to have faith.” *Amen* is used to affirm something believed or stated as true. In the Old Testament, this word is often used to emphasize blessings and curses (for example, Deut. 27:15–26; Jer. 11:5). In the New Testament, the Greek translation of *amen* serves as the final word in the Bible: “The grace of the Lord Jesus be with God’s people. Amen” (Rev. 22:21).

Christians adopted the word *hallelujah* and carried it over directly from Hebrew to Greek in the early church. In English, the word can be spelled *alleluia* or *hallelujah*. In Revelation 19, the word is repeated four times in a song of praise to God. This indicates how the early church employed the word in their worship. When we pray or praise God using this word, we are joining our voices with believers who have used the same expression of praise for more than 2,000 years.

The Language of Prayer

Infants learn how to speak by hearing and then mimicking sounds from their parents.

Christians can learn how to speak with God by hearing, internalizing, and then mirroring the thoughts, words, and characteristics seen in the book of Psalms.

In many parts of the modern church, a growing separation between worship and prayer has emerged, as worship became more closely associated with a style of music and with musical performance. But for much of church history, prayer and worship have been synonymous. The psalms reflect this unity between prayer and worship.

In Luke's account of the Lord's Prayer, the disciples come to Jesus and ask, "Lord, teach us to pray" (Luke 11:1). The language that Jesus used in prayer is the language of the psalms. Jesus's model for prayer echoes themes found in the psalms (Matt. 6:9–13; Luke 11:2–4). The sixteenth-century Reformer Martin Luther



King David playing the harp; a page from a 15th-century Ethiopian Psalter

incorporated the psalms into his prayer life, explaining: “The Lord’s Prayer is my prayer, I use it, and intermingle at times something from the Psalms.”

The psalms are worship-prayer songs lifted up to God. Through reading, meditating on, discussing, and praying through the psalms, we learn the language of prayer and communion with God. The psalms teach us how to speak with God about his person, kingdom, and will as we approach him with our daily needs, our debts and failures, and our temptations and trials.

“Hear my prayer, LORD; let my cry
for help come to you”

PSALM 102:1

