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BIBLE  
STUDIES

# *Saying Yes in the Darkness*

7 Weeks in the Book of *Psalms*

Teresa Swanstrom Anderson

Teresa's Bible studies are some of the best on the market. Not only has she found a way to teach biblical truth with profound wisdom, but she does so in such a winsome and relatable way. This resource is a treasure!

KAT ARMSTRONG, author of *No More Holding Back* and *The In-Between Place*

Teresa, my pink-haired theologian, I want to hug you for writing these studies. You have shared practical, personal, and challenging ways to make the Bible come alive. When a smart woman chases after the heart of God, we all win.

TRICIA LOTT WILLIFORD, author of *You Can Do This* and *Just. You. Wait.*

In a noisy world filled with opinion, it can be difficult to cut through the clutter to find the voice of God and His vision for our lives. Plus, let's face it . . . the Bible is both intriguing and, at the same time, intimidating. Teresa does a beautiful job of taking us into God's heart by walking us through His Word. Her guided studies are for any woman who is wrestling with a sense of direction and believing in her worth. By taking us through the Scriptures in a practical, personal, and powerful way, she equips us to own our *now* and step boldly into our *next*.

MARSHAWN EVANS DANIELS, Godfidence Coach, TV personality, reinvention strategist for women, founder of SheProfits.com

With a relatable voice, Teresa makes studying the Bible approachable for women at any stage of faith. The Get Wisdom Bible Studies are a 360-degree look at God's Word with historical contexts, word studies, hands-on application, and commentary for each day's devotion. The studies are timely with varied messages of practicing contentment, trusting God in hard times, and leading the next generation. Teresa is serious about knowing God and how His character changes His people—the reader is not only encouraged to learn but to *live* the truths in these Bible studies.

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GREG HOLDER, lead pastor at The Crossing; author of *The Genius of One* and *Never Settle*



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*Saying Yes  
in the  
Darkness*

7 Weeks in the Book of *Psalms*

**Teresa Swanstrom Anderson**

NavPress 

A NavPress resource published in alliance  
with Tyndale House Publishers



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*Saying Yes in the Darkness: 7 Weeks in the Book of Psalms*

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*For my sweet love.*

*Benny, thank you for standing with me through every dark and light time, reminding me to keep saying yes to Christ through it all. I love you.*

# *Let's Connect*



*Take a few moments to be replenished . . .  
so that you can pour into others.*



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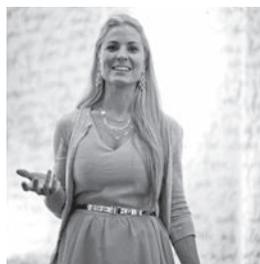
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I can't wait to discover all God is doing in your life through David's story. I'd love to see and read all about it! Post using the hashtag #sayingyesinthedarkness on Instagram, Twitter, and/or Facebook so we can encourage one another as we go through this study.

# *Get to know Teresa*



***Teresa Swanstrom Anderson*** is a blogger, author, speaker, and Bible study teacher. Teresa grew up in Seattle, but spent her middle school years in Guatemala and has a deep love for people in developing countries. Now living in Denver, Colorado, with her husband and six children, she spends her days wiping off sticky counters, Instagramming, and blogging at [teresaswanstromanderson.com](http://teresaswanstromanderson.com). She is the author of *Beautifully Interrupted* and has published several Bible studies on her blog. The Get Wisdom Bible Studies are her first traditionally published studies, taking her passion for studying the Bible and helping women to a broader audience.





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# Introduction

*Never walk away from Wisdom—she guards your life;  
love her—she keeps her eye on you.*

*Above all and before all, do this: Get Wisdom!*

*Write this at the top of your list: Get Understanding!*

*Throw your arms around her—believe me, you won't regret it;  
never let her go—she'll make your life glorious.*

*She'll garland your life with grace,  
she'll festoon your days with beauty.*

PROVERBS 4:6-9

As a society, we not only like instant gratification—we expect it. We have on-demand movies, Netflix, and Hulu. When our favorite artist releases a new album, we download it onto our phones. If we want a new book, we can get it on our Kindle or listen to it on Audible with a single click. Even two-day shipping seems too slow for us sometimes, doesn't it?

But here's the thing: Growing in our relationship with Christ isn't necessarily quick. There is no instant download to encountering God. We can't pull up into the Starbucks drive-through and leave minutes later with a full grasp of the Bible and what it says about God and means for our lives.

So if you want a bullet-points-only, CliffsNotes experience of the Bible, this study may not be for you. But don't let that freak you out! I get that life is busy, and I promise—we *can* engage deeply with God through His Word in the midst of everything we're doing without being overwhelmed.

If you are a woman whose life isn't perfect, who struggles balancing all aspects of life and wearing all the hats—but you have a genuine desire to grow in your relationship with Jesus in intentional ways that don't require hours a day—then welcome! I'm hopping up onto my chair and throwing confetti around because, my dear friend, you're exactly where you're supposed to be. Together we're going to see the pages of the Bible come alive—and see the God of the Bible become more a part of our everyday experience as a result.

### **WHY WE STUDY THE BIBLE**

The last time Jesus showed Himself to His disciples after His resurrection, mere moments before His ascension, something happened that is crucial for us to remember as we approach the Bible together. Luke 24:44-45 says, “Then he said to them, ‘These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you—that everything written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled.’ Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures” (NRSV).

We should be encouraged: Jesus opened their minds to understand that everything written about Him in Scripture must be fulfilled—but I am certain this isn't the only time Jesus has given individuals unique understanding.

He may even give it to you.

But here's the thing: These men had heard Scripture all their lives. They were ordinary working-class men without higher education. Not one of them had gone to school to become a rabbi, and they did not own a scroll or Bible. Yet because Scripture was read every time these men went to worship and biblical stories were retold throughout their lives, this knowledge was deep within the recesses of their minds and hearts. From childhood, these disciples heard God's Word.

We can know something, however, without understanding it. And that's where the disciples were operating from.

Jesus decided to use this moment before His ascension to turn

the spigot, and all their previous knowledge, the buildup of years of knowing God's Word, poured out. Except now, with Jesus' hand on that faucet, everything they had learned and heard through the years suddenly made sense to them.

With the help of Jesus, knowledge was finally tied together with comprehension, and the disciples had a major aha moment.

Just like the disciples, we won't have aha moments every time we open the Bible, worship, or pray. We will have days or even weeks when we don't "feel" any big revelations or hear whispered promptings from the Lord.

Do you feel like you're reading the Bible wrong or even wasting your time without having those heartfelt or aha moments? If you're like me, you want those heart moments all the time. That's when we feel especially close to Jesus. But here's the thing . . . it's not about us. Reading the Bible is not about having God give us a warm fuzzy feeling. It's not to show us how to act and react; neither is it about Him speaking to us. Spending time in the Word is about learning who God is. It's about growing in knowledge of the Creator of the universe and our Lord and Savior. Period.

When I realized a few years ago that the Word of God is not about me but about Him, I was rocked. I realized every verse within every page is written with the intent of us learning more about God's character and love.

*Every story, every illustration, and every law  
loops back around to teach us who He is.*

The Bible obviously shares how we should live and who we should be as lovers of the Lord, but it does so in relation to who God is and how He views us. That's why, whether you've loved Christ for five minutes or five decades, I'm just thrilled to be walking through this study of God's Word with you. Together we get to learn more about who He is! As we continue spending time with Him both in the

Word and in prayer, we'll be more prepared to experience Him when He opens our minds like He did for the disciples.

## BEFORE WE BEGIN

### *The Bible*

When I was young, I loved collecting. Specifically, I collected bottle caps and napkins. It's okay, you can laugh—it's totally weird. I had boxes of party napkins. I just loved that they were all different, like little pieces of art. Looking back, it kind of makes sense—I love entertaining and setting a pretty table. I still collect those fun napkins so I'm always ready when someone comes over, but I've also begun to collect something else: Bibles.

Why Bibles? Well, the two-hundred-year-old ones passed down from my grandfather are admittedly pieces of art, but I also have shelves of current versions. Still scratching your head as to why I'd have more than one? Well, let me tell you: because different versions say things in different ways.

A great way of understanding Scripture is consulting various translations. Though these Bibles may be worded differently, they don't ultimately differ in meaning and intent, because they all come from the Greek and Hebrew languages the Bible was originally written in.

Some translations are more literal in interpretation than others, however. For example, both *The Message* (MSG) and the The Voice translation (VOICE) capture the tone and essence of the text, while the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV), English Standard Version (ESV), and Amplified Bible (AMP) translations are known to be more literal, emphasizing word-for-word accuracy, literary excellence, and depth of meaning. In other words, versions like *The Message* should be looked at as a reading Bible (almost like a commentary that illuminates the text), rather than as a literal Bible, which is better for deep study.

Don't feel like you need to be a crazy Bible-lady like me, with

shelves full of varying translations. The great thing about the internet is you can simply find different versions online. I encourage you to download the Bible Gateway or YouVersion app on your phone or head to their sites on your laptop. Try out a few different versions, and see which ones resonate with you best. If you have a favorite Bible already, google what the Bible you're using is translated for. Is it written for tone and intended meaning? Or is it translated for literal, word-for-word interpretation? Is it a reading Bible or a studying Bible?

In many weeks of this study, we'll explore a reading version of the passage, such as *The Message*, *The Voice*, or *The Passion Translation*, which will help us grasp the thematic picture in more accessible language. As we break apart each passage and dive in deeper, we will use the literal translations, so make sure you have one at the ready. I'll include the text from *The Message*, but in most cases, you will need to reference your own Bible or the Bible app on your phone for the rest. Make sense? Great!

### *Commentaries and Resources*

If we want to be bold women who love God deeply, we must be women of Scripture. We must love the Bible in a way that surpasses others' opinion and research. To become spiritually literate, we must become a student of the Word. Commentaries and books about the Bible are incredibly helpful, but we need to make sure we're not spending more time in books *about* the Bible than in the *actual* Bible.

To be clear, I'm not saying we shouldn't refer to sermons and use commentaries. It would be foolish not to take advantage of the wisdom of others whom we have deep respect for. God has most certainly given the gift of discernment in regard to unraveling the Scripture to unique individuals.

I often study with a commentary or two nearby (in fact, I currently have three opened here on my desk),<sup>1</sup> but through the years, I've learned how important it is to make my own interpretation and

have my own thoughts about a Scripture passage (even if it's mostly questions) before considering someone else's thoughts and interpretation. I need to make sure my first Guide is God, rather than humans.

The first thing I'd like us to do is turn to a resource that can help us wrestle with what we're actually reading in the Bible. As we sort through God's Word, we need to be curious about the meanings beyond simply our initial understanding. That's why, in addition to adding the Bible Gateway or YouVersion app onto your phone, I'd also like you to download the Blue Letter Bible (BLB). This is really important because we're going to reference it All. The. Time.

All of these apps I'm recommending are free, but if you want to download only one, choose the BLB because it has Bible translation options in addition to lots of extra resources. We'll be using this app every day in this study because it allows us to easily dig into the languages of the Bible (the Hebrew and Aramaic, the languages in which the Old Testament was written, and Greek, the New Testament's language).

If your eyes are glazing over and you're beginning to rethink wanting to do our study because "Whaaat? Dissecting Greek and Hebrew sounds hard / boring / not for me"—I get it. But this is something you can do! And digging into the Bible on this level is how we learn to study for ourselves and not have a faith that is spoon-fed to us. We want to make sure we are learning God's truth, right? Not just someone else's thoughts!

The BLB will rock your world if you haven't used it before. It totally changed the way I study. I'll show you really quickly how it can do the same for you. First, let's open the app and click on the search icon at the top. Let's look up something random like Psalm 23. (By the way, depending on whether you're in the app or on the website, you may want to choose a different Bible translation that better aligns with the wording we're discussing in the study—the BLB has a few different options.) Read verse 1 and see what questions come to mind.

*Hmmm . . . what does it mean, I shall not want? Like, I'll literally never want for anything if the Lord is my Shepherd?*

Now this is the fun part. We can figure out what these words mean in the original language so we can better comprehend what God wants us to understand! To get there, tap the number by verse 1. On the screen that pops up, tap on *Interlinear*\* (we'll be using this function a lot!). On the next screen, scroll down to the phrase or word that you're wanting to dig into—in this case, *I shall not want*. You'll see that in the Hebrew the word is חָסֵר or *chacer*. What does that word mean? Go ahead and click on it to find out.

On the page that pops up, you'll find all sorts of information about this word: how to say it, what part of speech it is, what its synonyms are. My favorite sections on this page are *Strong's Definitions* and the *Gesenius' Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon*.

Now, let's say that learning more about the word and its meaning didn't clear up our question. We've started to dig in ourselves and not simply accept someone else's explanation of a biblical passage—but since things are still a little unclear, let's head to the commentaries.

Navigate back to Psalm 23 and click on verse 1 again. This time, click on the *Text Commentaries* option. Some of my favorites in the app are by Matthew Henry and C. H. Spurgeon, but look through all of them to find which ones are most helpful to you. For the purposes of our exploration, let's tap on Spurgeon's Psalm 23 commentary. Here's my takeaway from what he wrote: "I shall not want" means I may not possess all that I wish for, but I am given a spirit of contentment. After all, does God not feed the ravens and cause the lilies to grow? I know that His grace will be sufficient for me.

Other places where you can find cross-references, commentaries, and lexicons online are Bible Hub ([biblehub.com](http://biblehub.com)) and Bible Study Tools ([biblestudytools.com](http://biblestudytools.com)). So many discoveries and insights are just a click away! When you start researching word, context, and

\* On iPhones, this is called *Interlinear/Concordance*; to get to this function on the website, click on *Tools* next to the verse first.

commentaries in your study of the Bible, that is often the beginning of more questions and jumping down bunny trails of more questions and research. But you know what? The point of spending time in the Bible isn't to check off a task and move on with our day. Second Peter 3:18 (ESV) says, "But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity."

Spending time in the Word and with the Lord is about gaining wisdom and knowledge. So if you decide to bounce around even more than I do within these pages and go down bunny trails that I have yet to discover, do it! You can spend fifteen minutes on a passage of Scripture or fifteen days, months, or years. This is all for you and your relationship with Him!

## HOW TO USE THIS STUDY

### *Who + How*

There are several ways you can engage in this study. Here are some tips for each context:

1. *Individually*: If you're doing this on your own, that's great! Write in the margins, highlight sections where God seems to want to get your attention, star things, put big question marks in areas you'd like to dig into further. Get this book messy! This study is a conversation between you and the Lord, so freewrite throughout as you really dig into all the beautiful things He wants to chat with you about!
2. *One-on-One*: We grow most in community, so find a friend who would like to do the study with you! Perhaps you'll meet together every week over coffee or lunch. Or maybe you'll meet over the phone or virtually.
3. *In-Person Group*: If you are doing this study in a group setting,

such as a church Bible study or home group, still strive to be 100 percent honest and authentic in your answers. Often, when we're with other women, we're afraid that they might judge our struggles, anger, pain, or even questions we have for or about God. But when we hide our true selves, we won't see the spiritual, emotional, and relational growth that can come out of time with other people who love Jesus. Of course, if the conversation dives into particular sections or questions that you don't feel ready to share publicly, give yourself permission to not answer. But if the group feels safe and supportive, I encourage you to bring all of yourself—including your messiness. And remember—even when you're in a group, make sure to invest in your daily, personal study! Coming to the group time after careful engagement with the Scripture will help everyone flourish.

For more specific directions on how to use this study as a group, head to [GetWisdomBibleStudies.com](http://GetWisdomBibleStudies.com) to download the PDF guide. This guide will map out how to use this resource in an eight-week study and how to focus on questions and themes most beneficial for group discussion, as well as how to create and facilitate a healthy group.

4. *Virtual Group*: If you're not plugged into a group in your local context, why not start your own virtual group via Zoom, FaceTime, Skype, or another video-conference website and app? Or perhaps your friends are super busy and spread across the state or country (or world!), so finding an actual day and time to meet proves difficult. If this is the case, you can start your own Facebook group, decide who will facilitate, and start chatting about what you're learning each day or each week. You and your friends can simply post whenever works best for everyone's individual schedules! Sounds fun, right?

Each day of this study can take you only twenty to thirty minutes, but if you'd like to dig deeper, you'll be learning the skills to explore more deeply in the passage of Scripture and the context of the psalm or story. At the end of each day, you'll be prompted into a time of journaling prayer, so you can meet God with your questions and aches that emerge from this journey of saying yes in the darkness.

### *When + Where*

Before starting this study, consider when in your day would best provide some uninterrupted time to dig in. I know finding time can be so difficult in our busy lives, thanks to jobs, kids, and other responsibilities. But we make time for the things that matter—and I promise, time meeting God through His Word is so worth it.

Personally, though I'm certainly not a morning person (hello, coffee), my brain is most attentive in the morning . . . plus, I really love having time with the Lord to center myself before the chaos of the day begins. Through the years, my family notices when I haven't done this for a few days—my joy, patience, and kindness just isn't what it usually is when I'm in the Word at the start of the day!

Simply can't get up any earlier than you currently do? Maybe you work shifts or have little ones not yet sleeping all the way through the night. I get it, and I've been there. I still encourage you to give God the firstfruits of your time, though. Throughout the Bible, we are encouraged to give the first and best to the Lord. And though we may not have a first crop of corn or a perfect lamb to present to Him, we certainly can give Him the first of our time—not the leftovers. Even if rising earlier in the morning feels impossible in this season, you can still offer Him your firstfruits. Pack a bag with your Bible and this study and do it at the beginning of your lunch hour at work, first break between classes, or the first moments of your child's naptime. The laundry, dishes, and showering can wait. Put Him first.

### *What You'll Need*

This study is meant both to guide you through some of the psalms and life of David and to equip you to forge your own path through God's Word so He can make it alive in your everyday life. As you begin your study, here are a few things to keep on hand:

- A Bible in your favorite translation
- Your phone with the Blue Letter Bible app and BibleGateway or YouVersion downloaded
- A pen (you'll find space to write as we explore David's life and psalms together, but also feel free to scribble in the margins as you need to!)
- A smartphone with internet access so you can watch the short videos that introduce each week (you can find those at [GetWisdomBibleStudies.com](http://GetWisdomBibleStudies.com)).
- A place without distraction where you can truly dig in!

### *One Last Thing*

A final note to remember as we go through this study: The Bible was written for us, but it's not written *to* us. The Bible is full of stories, poetry, laws, parables, and such, which were written for people who lived in a different culture thousands of years before any of us were born. So each week in this study, we're going to explore some of the behind-the-scenes aspects of Scripture. We're going to figure out the historical and cultural background. We'll try to learn the *why* of it all.

We need to become not just readers of the Word . . . but *studiers* of it. Only then can we understand what God has *for* us in His Word.

## **SAYING YES IN THE DARKNESS**

The book of 1 Samuel might just be my favorite in the Bible. It is chock-full of drama, action, and God's presence. While a lot happens in 1 Samuel, in this study we're going to focus on the parts of

the book that align with some of David's psalms. David was a shepherd boy who became king of Israel, and 1 and 2 Samuel show us a lot about his life. David had a lot of victories, but he also walked through profoundly difficult and painful seasons. David wrote a good chunk of the book of Psalms in the midst of such seasons. Through his psalms, we see how he met God in these points in his life—and what we learn is that hardship and even consequences for sin strengthened his faith and dependence on God. During the times in the darkness, David continued saying yes to God, over and over (and over)! There's a lot we can learn from David because none of us are strangers to darkness, are we?

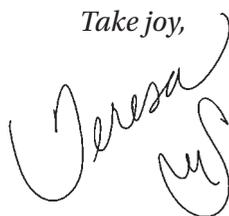
A few days into a recent January, my life fell apart. One of our kids decided he didn't want to be in our family anymore. A few months later, there was death in the family, and then my husband's dad was in the hospital. Mere months after that, I was called as a character witness in a friend's murder trial. He had been placed on death row over a decade prior. Life was hard. Life *is* hard.

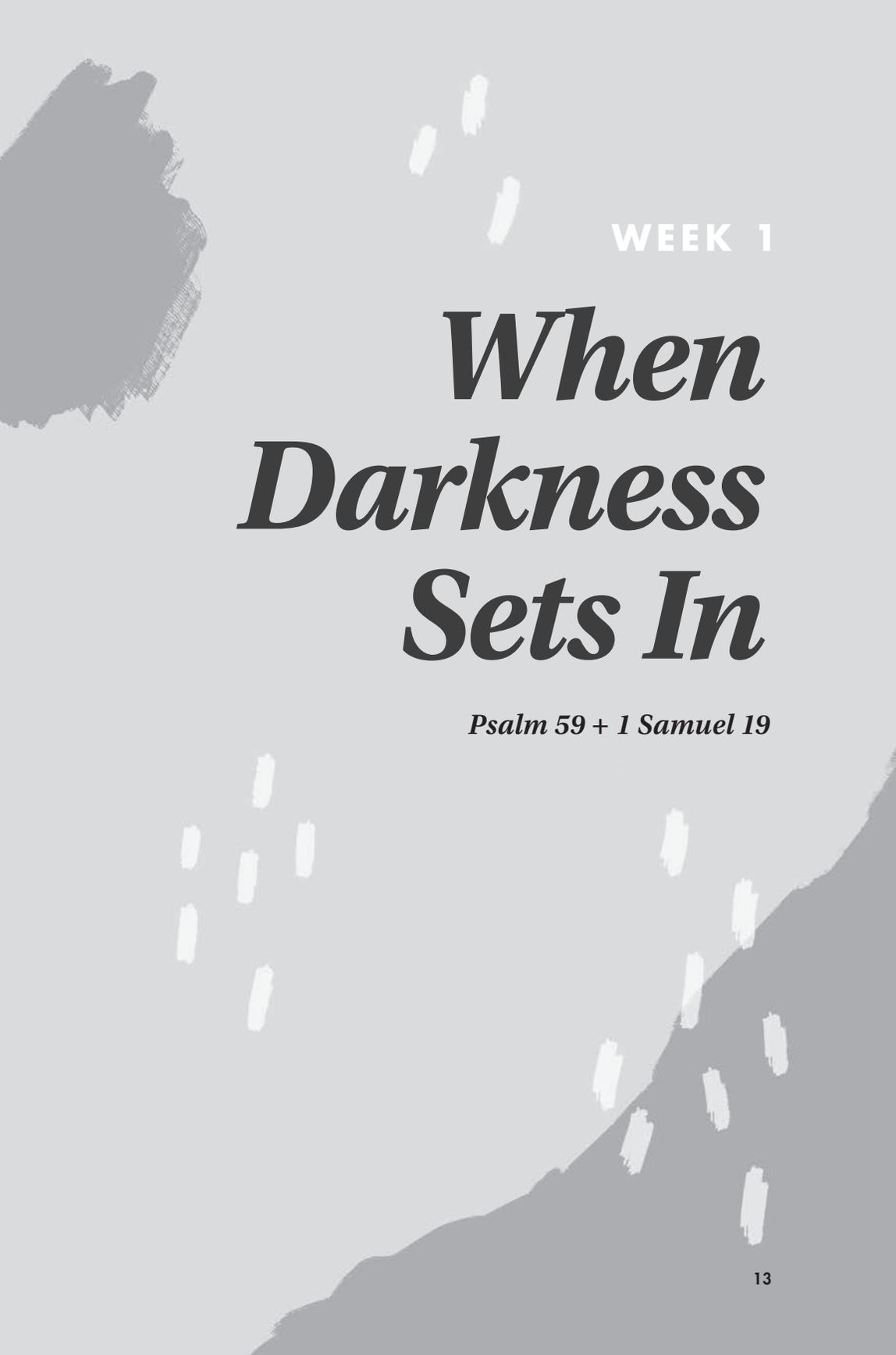
We have a choice to walk with God through it all . . . or not. We can say yes through the darkness, or we can let it envelop us so deeply that we feel we cannot get out. Yes, this is a study about David's life and psalms. But it's more than that. We're trying to see the fuller picture. We're looking for the light in it all.

Psalms is celebrated for its passages of praise but it's also known for sections of lament—of learning how to rest in the hard. But I don't want to just rest in my difficulty and pain; I want to keep moving. This study is about that in-between space: walking from the lament *into* the praise. The stepping out through the difficulty, the living in expectation that God will move and we will see light because He *is* the Light.

Let's get to it!

Take joy,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Teresa", with a large, stylized flourish at the end.



WEEK 1

# *When Darkness Sets In*

*Psalm 59 + 1 Samuel 19*

## WEEK 1 • Day 1



## READ PSALM 59

None of us is exempt from darkness. We face financial struggles, relational heartache, anxiety, fear, loss. Sometimes it feels like the darkness is unending, and we wonder if we'll ever be able to step into the light again.

David's psalms connect deeply with me because they feel so *true*. He's unflinchingly honest about his pain, his anger, his doubt. We call a lot of these psalms *laments* because David shows us how to come before our God, who loves us and can handle our wounds.

David wasn't some perfect person we simply can't identify with. He had his share of missteps and massively poor decision making—but that's what makes him so special. Through his imperfection, through his anguish and anger and pain, he remains someone whom God Himself refers to as “a man after My own heart” (Acts 13:22, VOICE; see also 1 Samuel 13:14). I want to be that kind of person. I hunger for the Lord to consider me a woman after His own heart and a loyal friend.

God-friendship is for God-worshippers;  
They are the ones he confides in.

PSALM 25:14

David understood that to become a friend of his heavenly Father, we must spend time with Him (in this case, through worship), just like in any friendship. His friendship with our heavenly Father formed deeply because of quality time, not a one-and-done mentality. He brought the Lord into his everyday life, not simply a portion of time he carved out now and then. Without quality time

spent, a relationship cannot grow. Let's become friends of God as we spend time with Him!

In each of the psalms we will study together, there's a backstory—something from the life of David that we can learn about his friendship with God, and about how that relationship helped him say yes and move forward from lament to praise. As you read our first psalm, Psalm 59, I want you to imagine what may be happening in David's life that would motivate him to pen such words. Don't worry if you don't know much about David (yet!)—just put your imagination to work.

1. As you read Psalm 59, circle all of David's cries for help, and underline any language that displays confidence that God will help in his time of trouble.

<sup>1-2</sup> My God! Rescue me from my enemies,  
defend me from these mutineers.

Rescue me from their dirty tricks,  
save me from their hit men.

<sup>3-4</sup> Desperadoes have ganged up on me,  
they're hiding in ambush for me.

I did nothing to deserve this, GOD,  
crossed no one, wronged no one.

All the same, they're after me,  
determined to get me.

<sup>4-5</sup> Wake up and see for yourself! You're GOD,  
GOD-of-Angel-Armies, Israel's God!

Get on the job and take care of these pagans,  
don't be soft on these hard cases.

<sup>6-7</sup> They return when the sun goes down,  
They howl like coyotes, ringing the city.

Then suddenly they're all at the gate,  
Snarling invective, drawn daggers in their teeth.

They think they'll never get caught.  
<sup>8-10</sup> But you, GOD, break out laughing;  
 you treat the godless nations like jokes.  
 Strong God, I'm watching you do it,  
 I can always count on you.  
 God in dependable love shows up on time,  
 shows me my enemies in ruin.  
<sup>11-13</sup> Don't make quick work of them, GOD,  
 lest my people forget.  
 Bring them down in slow motion,  
 take them apart piece by piece.  
 Let all their mean-mouthed arrogance  
 catch up with them,  
 Catch them out and bring them down  
 —every muttered curse  
 —every barefaced lie.  
 Finish them off in fine style!  
 Finish them off for good!  
 Then all the world will see  
 that God rules well in Jacob,  
 everywhere that God's in charge.  
<sup>14-15</sup> They return when the sun goes down,  
 They howl like coyotes, ringing the city.  
 They scavenge for bones,  
 And bite the hand that feeds them.  
<sup>16-17</sup> And me? I'm singing your prowess,  
 shouting at cockcrow your largesse,  
 For you've been a safe place for me,  
 a good place to hide.  
 Strong God, I'm watching you do it,  
 I can always count on you—  
 God, my dependable love.

2. The story behind this psalm may be one you've heard, or it may not. Don't flip around in your Bible yet. Based on this passage alone, what can you take from David's situation?

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3. When I'm worried about something, I often grasp the worst-case scenario and dwell on what's unfolding in front of me—before remembering that our heavenly Father is bigger than all of it. Do you think that's what David did here? Why or why not?

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4. This psalm is divided into several parts. I've heard some say there are two separate sections within this chapter. Do you agree? How do you think these two sections could be divided and summed up?

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Look back at your circling and underlining in the passage. While we do see David go back and forth between complaining and praying, praying and complaining, I feel like that's not all it is. In fact, Charles Spurgeon sees this passage broken apart even

further.<sup>1</sup> Fill out this chart and let's see if we can discover the bigger picture of what's going on:

5. What is David doing in the following verses?

verses 1-2	
verses 3-4	
verse 5	
verses 6-7	
verses 8-10	
verses 11-13	
verses 14-15	
verses 16-17 <sup>†</sup>	

Isn't that just how we often talk to God when we're worried and in a place of darkness? We pray and then freak out and complain, then toss in a little praise because we know He's bigger than our circumstances . . . but then we freak, hyperventilate, and complain again.

6. Are you ever worried that God will be upset by your prayer because of your tone or emotions? Why or why not?

7. What does David's back-and-forth tell us about God?

<sup>†</sup> In random order, the theme of these answers are: declares his confidence in God, complains of his circumstances, sings praise to God, lifts his heart in prayer.

I have some great news for you: God can handle our freak-outs. He can handle our doubts and our depression. Good friends are able to bring their true feelings to each other, right? Since David was indeed a friend of God, he was able to bring all of his feelings to the Lord. God welcomes our emotions, because we're bringing our full and honest selves into relationship with Him. He understands when we come unglued and fall to pieces. He doesn't become angry when we're pouring our heart out to Him through panic, stress, and worry. In fact, it's not a surprise to Him when we behave this way—He *created* us as emotional beings!



Let's wrap up today in quiet time with God, without an agenda. Talk to Him about what you crave to get out of this study, how you relate to David as you read Psalm 59, or various things about your day. Simply let your words flow to our Father in heaven, who loves you deeply.

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*Amen.*

WEEK 1 • *Day 2*

## READ 1 SAMUEL 19

These days, I love studying the Bible. As in, *loove* it. But there were a lot of years after I invited Christ into my life that I didn't spend time in the Word in a consistent way—let alone enjoy doing it.

I think much of my problem was that stories I'd learned in Sunday school, youth group, and Bible studies made the Bible feel disjointed. I didn't understand how things fit together. I had no comprehension of what was going on culturally or what the language actually meant.

But then I went to Capernwray Bible School in England, where I was required to read through the entire Bible before the end of the spring semester. For months, before every afternoon tea, I'd get cozy on my bed and plug away through the Bible—and my relationship with God's Word began to change. As I stared out the window at the rolling green hills dotted with fluffy white sheep, all those disconnected stories began to connect.

I finally understood backstory and context. I began to understand how one thing led to another.

*I realized there are no stand-alone stories in Scripture.*

At first, reading the Psalms can feel like walking up to a group of friends who are in the middle of a conversation. I often think, *Huh? Why is the psalmist so worried or overjoyed? What's going on in this passage that I don't understand?* Because we're not privy to the beginning of the story, we have no clue what's going on.

My desire to have a fuller understanding of the story behind David's psalms led me to dig in further. I realized that by using the reference notes in the middle or bottom of each page in my Bible,

I'm able to see the bigger picture. I also happened on some incredible information: that some of David's psalms were written from experiences he had in 1 and 2 Samuel.

1. Let's figure out the backstory to Psalm 59 (the passage we studied yesterday). Flip to 1 Samuel 19 in your favorite translation and pen down the essence of this story.
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2. What verse(s) in this chapter seems to relate specifically to Psalm 59?
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3. How does your version describe the men sent by Saul in 1 Samuel 19:11? How does David describe the men in Psalm 59?
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4. Why do you think the group of assailants are described so differently?
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First Samuel was written by the prophet Samuel. Perhaps since Samuel wasn't the one actually in the scary situation, or because he knew David wasn't ultimately captured and killed by these men, he wrote it in a less dramatic way.

Still curious about the dichotomy in the description of these men? Good. I am too.

Head to [BlueLetterBible.org](http://BlueLetterBible.org) or the BLB app on your phone and look up 1 Samuel 19:11, select the *Interlinear* tab, and then click on the word *messenger*. We see that in the original Hebrew, the word *messenger* used here is *mal'ak* (מַלְאָךְ, pronounced *mal-ahk*).<sup>‡</sup>

5. In the space below, write the various definitions of *mal'ak*:

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We see here that *mal'ak* means “to dispatch as a deputy; a messenger; specifically, of God, i.e. an angel (also a prophet, priest or teacher):—ambassador, angel, king, messenger.”<sup>2</sup>

Anyone else think this description is a little strange? Why don't we see a word more like *ratsach* (רָצַח, pronounced *rah-tsakh*),<sup>§</sup> which leans more toward the assassin and murderer type of definition?

6. Why do you think the work *mal'ak* might be used in this passage rather than a word like *ratsach*?

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Truth be known, I've looked and looked and no one seems to be talking about this, so I only have my own thoughts to go from. But I'm encouraged by something Charles Spurgeon said:

<sup>‡</sup> Forget how to use the BLB app? Head back to the Commentaries and Resources section in the introduction for step-by-step directions on using this fun and impactful resource.

<sup>§</sup> Pronunciations for Greek, Hebrew, and Aramaic words are included throughout. I encourage you to try saying these words out loud instead of glossing over them.

The commentators are good instructors, but the Author himself is far better.<sup>3</sup>

All throughout my studying, I'm talking to God, asking Him questions and praying. After all, I don't want my Bible study time to feel like homework, unengaged with the Person I'm trying to get to know. This being said, let me share what I think God is telling me about this passage.

Below is this section of 1 Samuel 19 we're talking about. Remember, verse 11 is what connects with our psalm. Circle each time the word *messengers* is used.

<sup>11</sup> Then Saul sent messengers to David's house to watch for him, so that he might kill him in the morning. But Michal, David's wife, told him, "If you do not save your life tonight, tomorrow you will be killed." <sup>12</sup> So Michal let David down through the window, and he fled and escaped. <sup>13</sup> And Michal took the household idol and laid it on the bed, put a pillow of goats' hair at its head, and covered it with clothes. <sup>14</sup> And when Saul sent messengers to take David, she said, "He is sick." <sup>15</sup> Then Saul sent the messengers [again] to see David, saying, "Bring him up to me on his bed [if necessary], so that I may kill him." <sup>16</sup> When the messengers came in, there was the household idol on the bed with a quilt of goats' hair at its head.

1 SAMUEL 19:11-16, AMP

Here's what I'm asking God about the use of this word *mal'ak*. When Saul sent these messengers, did God perhaps send some of His as well? Maybe the use of this Hebrew word, which typically refers to an angel or someone of authority specifically sent from God, is meant to remind us that these bloodthirsty men were not alone. Perhaps God's *mal'ak* stood right behind or in front of them to ensure that Saul's evil plan would not be carried out.

Whatever the case, David was not unprotected as he faced Saul's wrath. God never leaves us alone in the darkness. He is with us (Joshua 1:9) and for us (Romans 8:31), no matter what we're facing.

So do not fear, for I am with you;  
do not be dismayed, for I am your God.  
I will strengthen you and help you;  
I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.

ISAIAH 41:10, NIV

 Let's wrap up today by spending some time talking to our heavenly Father, thanking Him for protection in hard situations:

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*Amen.*

## WEEK 1 • Day 3



READ 1 SAMUEL 18

Today we're going to get a fuller picture of David as he penned Psalm 59. Let's dig in a little more to what was going on in his life during this time and figure out why on earth Saul wanted him dead.

We learn in 1 Samuel 18 that “in everything [David] did he had great success, because the LORD was with him” (18:14, NIV). David did all he was asked and then some. He went from shepherd boy who delivered food to his brothers in battle (1 Samuel 17:17-19) to the hero of it all (1 Samuel 17:32-51). He was taken into the palace (1 Samuel 18:2) and became the king’s number one musician (1 Samuel 16:14-23), his most successful warrior (1 Samuel 18:5, 12-16), his son’s best friend (1 Samuel 18:1-4), and his daughter’s husband (1 Samuel 18:22-27).

David went from zero to hero with one swing of a stone and was forced to run for his life from the king himself, who couldn’t control his envy and sought to kill him (1 Samuel 18:28-29).

I heard once that jealousy has two victims, and that is certainly true here.

1. What was Saul jealous about? Why did he want to kill David?  
(See 1 Samuel 18.)

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In 1 Samuel 19:9-10, we see Saul’s attempt to pin David to the wall with his spear while David was playing the harp. David barely escaped with his life (and this was not the first time Saul has attempted to kill David!). The next morning, Saul sent men to David’s house to try again to kill the young warrior.

Luckily, David had people on his side who believed in him and loved him dearly. Jonathan, King Saul’s son, was David’s most cherished friend and simply couldn’t understand his father’s treatment of David. Jonathan was stuck in the middle and yet never wavered

in devotion to either man, loving them both. He knew what his father was up to and warned his best friend that trouble was coming. David's wife Michal (also King Saul's child) must have been observant enough to see her father's plans unfolding outside her front door and warned, "If you don't run for your life tonight, tomorrow you'll be killed." Letting David down through a window, the brave Michal saved her husband, allowing him to escape. She had no idea, of course, but the moment she let David down from that window, she lost the man she loved dearly. Eventually her father would remarry her to someone else. It wouldn't be till years later (after David had several more wives) that David would seek to reclaim her. Michal never had children with either husband.

Saul's jealousy ruined a marriage. He forced a young man to run for his life. He turned his greatest warrior into a fugitive who began living in caves.

There's a little more to this story, though—and it has to do with trustworthiness and obedience in our relationship with God.

My husband, Ben, and I were talking to one of our kids about trust one night. Our teenage son wanted responsibility in something and yet was asking that we put boundaries on something else that he knew he couldn't be trusted with. We told him that responsibility and trust go hand in hand: We could either treat him like the young adult that he is, or we could treat him as a child. We wanted to teach him that he couldn't pick and choose where he liked having freedom and responsibility—and where he didn't. It was a package deal.

We discover this same interplay between trust and responsibility in 1 Samuel 15. Go ahead and read that chapter now.

2. Like our son, Saul thought he could pick and choose where he wanted to obey God. In verse 1, what reminder does Samuel give him?
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A few chapters back, Saul made some sacrifices to God on his own instead of waiting for Samuel like he had been asked, so the priest no longer trusted him. Perhaps Samuel wanted to remind the king that it was *God* who placed him in this position of leadership. The One True King in heaven was actually in charge.

Samuel goes on to give Saul God's instructions for dealing with the Amalekites (1 Samuel 15:2-3).

### 3. Does Saul do exactly as he's been asked?

Samuel goes to meet Saul early in the morning and is told that he has gone to another town to set up a monument in his own honor. (Who does that?! C'mon, Saul.) When Samuel reaches the town of Carmel, the king comes out to greet him, saying, "The LORD bless you! I have carried out the LORD's instructions!" (1 Samuel 15:13, NIV).

Saul is so pleased with himself. I love how Samuel responds with dry sarcasm—basically saying, "Oh yeah? Then what's this bleating of sheep in my ears? Why am I hearing lowing of oxen?" (15:14). Saul tries to make excuses and defend himself, but his disobedience is impossible to cover up.

The next two verses we'll look at, 1 Samuel 15:22-23, have long been underlined in my Bible.

### 4. Read 1 Samuel 15:22-23 in your favorite translation. What's the most important point from this passage?

We absolutely cannot go ahead of God on things. We may not pick and choose where we will obey, where we can be trustworthy

and where we simply sweep things under the rug or ignore God's commands. What we need to ponder is this: Does God want our sacrifices and empty traditions that we do simply for show or because we think we're supposed to do it? Where are our hearts?

Doing something for the Lord is actually worth nothing if it's done purely out of habit rather than out of love. What God wants is an obedient and willing heart! God desires for us to listen and respond in accordance with what He's asked. God would far rather you obey than give something up.

5. What have you sacrificed in your life that you think might justify not obeying in another area?
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As Samuel tells Saul that God is ripping the kingdom from his hands and giving it to another man who is better than he (1 Samuel 15:28), Saul apologizes for his actions (of course). It's the same today, isn't it? When someone abuses power and gets caught, remorse and regret slither out of their mouths. But it's often empty and solely spoken to regain power, not because they are actually sorry.

This establishes the beginning of the end of Saul's reign . . . and the anointing of the new king.

6. What happens in chapter 16, soon after this conversation between Saul and Samuel?
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Exactly, David and Goliath! It's here that young David becomes a household name . . . and King Saul's anxiety begins to simmer.

7. After learning what happened in 1 Samuel 15—and watching the arrival of David on the scene in chapter 16—how might you explain Saul’s treatment of David?
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David was not out for Saul’s throne. But Saul simply couldn’t wrap his mind around that fact. The young man who brought joy and support to the king would soon become a source of anger and resentment. The king’s jealousy went unchecked and boiled over to the point that he simply couldn’t rein it in himself.

8. Let’s look back at Psalm 59. Does David’s freak-out mode make more sense now? Describe a time when it felt like evil was stationed outside your door or a jealous someone was trying to take you down. How did you respond?
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We get all sorts of storied detail in 1 Samuel 18, and Psalm 59 shows us David’s inner turmoil as his life was turned upside down. But Psalm 59 also shows us something extraordinary: Even as David was running for his life, internally flailing in fear, we see him saying yes and clinging to God. Like David, we can bring our fear and confusion to God when our world feels like it’s being upended—but let’s also have the courage to move toward Him in the midst of it.



Wrap up today by spending some time with the Lord, reflecting on all you learned today and what He may be wanting to teach you through it.

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*Amen.*

## WEEK 1 • Day 4



READ PSALM 59

Friends breathe life into my soul, just as I'm sure they do yours. But like any healthy relationship, true friendships sometimes have growing pains. There will be moments when we find ourselves in conflict and need to figure out what to do in the midst of it, right? We need to learn how to grow deeper as friends through difficulty, rather than allowing it to break the closeness.

Recently, a friend and mentor accused me of something that made my heart incredibly heavy. I didn't see it coming and didn't understand how she thought that of me. I literally felt sick all day and went to bed early with a migraine. My thoughts and prayers swirled

through the afternoon and evening hours as I went first to God, and then to my husband and dearest friends, placing this person's accusation at their feet for examination.

"Here's the evidence. Look at it. Sift through it; dig deeply," I told them. "Did I do this? *Am* I doing this?"

I was doubled over in anxiety as I asked the Lord and my friends who know me best to share honestly. I wanted to know the truth so I could grow and ask forgiveness if indeed this accusation was true. Because if so, I had some serious heart-searching to do. What I was being accused of is not reflective of the type of person I want to be.

I called my best friend to tearfully vent, and toward the end of our phone conversation, she said something like this:

"You need to stop and seriously ask God to show you the insides of your heart. Lean into it, even if it's hard and yucky. Who are you at the core, really? Ask Him, being honestly willing to hear His response. Take time in silence with the Lord and go through everything in your mind like you're unpacking a suitcase . . . taking items out, one by one. Let Him show you if there is sin here."

Gosh, what wise advice. I just love having friends that are deeper and wiser than I.

I am still completely and totally devastated. And truthfully, I am really embarrassed that someone would think this thing of me. But I don't believe I did what she has said. I did take my heart to God, and I'm okay with what He unearthed in response. (Not that I don't need to grow in areas, of course. We all need to grow, right?)

If I were laying my story next to David's here in Psalm 59, though, I'd tell you quite honestly, I felt that this person was ready to attack. And she did, to some extent.

Let's look again at Psalm 59:3 (TPT):

See how they set an ambush for my life.

They're fierce men ready to launch their attack against me.

O Lord, I'm innocent; protect me!

In this situation with my friend, I was worried she was going to start spreading her thoughts and lies through our mutual friends. I was afraid she was going to post it on social media and disrupt my ministry. I was scared, and, like David, I felt ambushed.

Yes, my situation is tame compared to David's. Thankfully, I don't have mercenaries stationed outside my home just waiting to kill or capture me the moment I walk out my front door. What I do have though, is a situation where I was afraid the lie was going to swirl around and touch many aspects of my community and influence.

Has someone ever spread venom or lies about you, in jealousy or malcontent? How did you handle it? Did you wig out and try to fix things yourself? Or did you drop to your knees and plead that you would feel the Lord's presence as He walked beside you in it? Or, like me, did you do a bit of both?

1. Write about a time when you dealt with some form of attack. How did you respond within the stress and hurt of that circumstance?

2. What were you most afraid would happen in your situation?

In the wake of lies, death follows. Saul thought something incorrect about David (that he was trying to steal the throne), and he tried to kill him. My friend and mentor thought something incorrect about me, and she severed all ties. The death of that friendship breaks my heart.

Today is going to look a bit different from the rest of the week, and there's a reason for that. You see, we're not just here to learn about these stories. Reading God's Word is about more than just story time! We need to allow Him to draw us into the passage and see what He wants us to learn. Our intentional time with the Lord isn't for simply sitting and reading, remaining slightly disengaged—it is to grow in wisdom and knowledge as we also grow in relationship with Him.

Let's read Psalm 59 again. Perhaps you've had a surprising and devastating time with a friend. Perhaps a coworker or family member has hurt you. Maybe you've felt burned or crushed by the church or your community. Maybe the pain is from a while back, or perhaps it's fresh and recent. Whatever it is, I want you to read this passage with fresh eyes, placing your situation within it. You're welcome to flip back to day 1 and read it there, but I'd really love for you to read it from your actual Bible, so you can take notes in your margins as you go.

3. After rereading this passage, rewrite the psalm using your words and situation. Be vulnerable with God as you write it. I get that this would be an easy thing to skip over, for you to leave these lines below blank. But lean into the idea that it's okay to be freaked out and hurt. It's okay to panic and admit to the Lord that you feel scared and ambushed. Do the gritty; get your hands dirty. It's amazing what God can do with vulnerability.

*My Own Psalm 59*

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After writing that, what are you feeling? Is your pain fresh and full of emotion? Are you asking God why you're in the middle of it or why you had to go through it? Are you blaming the Lord for allowing the situation to happen? Are you angry, or are you at peace, knowing that God is the ultimate Protector?

4. What were your emotions as you concluded your psalm?

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5. What can you draw from any hurt you may feel? Are you able to see God moving through it in spite of it . . . or *because* of it? Can you praise Him for walking with you through this pain? Are you able to see the love and kindness of others as you've lived through it? Or are you feeling lonely and abandoned, like He's the only one you have left?

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6. We need to make sure our emotions don't go unchecked. Beth Moore once said, "Just as fear often leads to jealousy, most negative emotions lead to others."<sup>4</sup> How can we ensure our emotions don't fly out of control like Saul's did?

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7. What was Saul missing?

\_\_\_ the Holy Spirit in his life

\_\_\_ friends/confidants who could speak life and truth into him

\_\_\_ self-control

\_\_\_ a stable family

\_\_\_ a God who loved him

God offers us encouragement, hope, consolation, and direction when we come to Him in the midst of our struggles. He speaks to

us through His Spirit, equips us with self-control, reminds us of His love, and surrounds us with people who can speak life into our darkness. Unfortunately, Saul rejected God, and as a result, he pushed away all of those things.

To say yes to God, no matter what season or situation we're in, we have to first be honest with Him about the reality of our pain. We've all been hurt and lied to and deceived—and we've all had jealousy coursing through our veins at times too! God isn't dismissive or judgmental of our honest pain. He wants us to bring it to Him so He can help us pursue life and healing.



Ask God to heal all sides of whatever painful situation you're in and to meet you in the emotions you feel. Cling to Him like David did. He never walks away, no matter what the circumstance.

*Amen.*

## WEEK 1 • Day 5



READ 1 SAMUEL 18:1-5

Shortly after one of our kids decided he wanted nothing to do with us and left us for six months, we had a death in the family. Mere days later, we received an urgent call saying Ben's dad was in the hospital. It was a hard and devastating season. But something rich and true emerged in the midst of it: God reminded me over and over that *when darkness surrounds, friends step in*. I've said it forever and feel it even more emphatically after going through some seriously hard things these past few years. We have Jesus, yes of course . . . but sometimes the people around us act as His hands and feet.

The story in 1 Samuel 19 and Psalm 59 that we've spent time studying this week surrounds three friends of David: the king (Saul), the king's son (Jonathan), and the king's daughter (Michal). Some of these proved to be loyal friends, but not all.

1. What goes into a friendship that stands the test of time?

The Lord used two of David's friends in a massive wave of protection, and because of their friendship, David was unharmed. But you may be surprised, based on what we've read about Saul so far, that I'm calling him David's friend as well. Let's look at that a little more closely before continuing in our psalm.

In 1 Samuel 16:21 (ESV) we read,

David came to Saul and entered his service. And Saul loved him greatly, and he became his armor-bearer.

Before we continue, I want you to do something quickly. Grab your phone and open the BLB app. Head to the verse just mentioned (1 Samuel 16:21) and click on *Interlinear*, then on the phrase *him; and Saul loved*.

2. What is the Hebrew word used here? \_\_\_\_\_

Okay, perfect. Remember that word—we'll be coming back to it.

3. Flip to 1 Samuel 18:1, where another of David's friends enters the scene. What do we learn about Jonathan and David's friendship here?

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4. We're told that "the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David" (ESV). I always thought the way this was worded seemed a bit strange. Other translations say they became *one in spirit*.<sup>5</sup> They were friends, sure. But why do you think their friendship earned this description?

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5. Head over to the BLB and click on 1 Samuel 18:1, then on *Interlinear*. Scroll down to the word *loved*. What Hebrew word is used here?

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6. Yay; yes! The same word used about Saul's relationship with David, right? So let's dig into this word. List some of the definitions here:

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Let's throw out the sexual aspect of this word because it obviously doesn't fit here. However, "human love for another," love in the aspect of family or friend, and "to have affection for" definitely make sense.<sup>6</sup> Both Saul and Jonathan loved David like family. And yet their friendship with him veered in very different directions. Why was that?

Let's look at 1 Samuel 18:3. We read here that Jonathan and David's friendship included something unique: a covenant. Click on this verse in the BLB. Tap on *Interlinear* and then on *covenant*.

7. What is the Hebrew word for *covenant* here?

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8. List some of the words and phrases included in the definition of this word:

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9. Where else do we find this word in the Bible? Scroll down to the Concordance in the BLB to see some of the other verses that use this same Hebrew word.

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10. Who is the one making the covenant in the majority of these verses?

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If we look at David and Jonathan's friendship under the scope of this word *covenant/bēriyth*, we see that it's the same one used for pledges between God and humans. A *bēriyth* is a treaty, alliance, pledge, or agreement. God made this type of *bēriyth* with Abraham (Genesis 15:18), as well as with the nation of Israel through Moses (Exodus 24:7-8; 34:27; Deuteronomy 5:2).

If we dive deeper into the story of David and Jonathan, we learn that under their *bēriyth*, Jonathan would be second-in-command in David's future reign (1 Samuel 23:16-18) and David was to protect Jonathan's family (1 Samuel 20:14-16).

*The Message* writes beautifully about this aspect of their friendship:

By the time David had finished reporting to Saul, Jonathan was deeply impressed with David—an immediate bond was forged between them. He became totally committed to David. From that point on he would be David's number-one advocate and friend.

1 SAMUEL 18:1

In 1 Samuel 18:4 (ESV), we see that

Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was on him and gave it to David, and his armor, and even his sword and his bow and his belt.

This was a hugely significant gift. By doing this, Jonathan said to David that he recognized the shepherd-turned-soldier as the future king over Israel. The kingship was to have been Jonathan's title. His future. But jealousy did not rear its ugly head in the prince as in the king.

Jonathan walked so closely with God that he knew his father's mistakes cut off the family line to the throne—yet we see no anger. No sadness or attempts to persuade God from the decision He'd already made.

I think about all the times I try to persuade God about what He should do, as if I know better. And as much as I'd like to deny it, sometimes my eyes *do* grow green with envy as I hear about a friend getting something I want, like a book on a bestseller list or their house featured on Anthropologie's feed and website.

Jonathan should have been king. He was a good man who didn't make his father's mistakes or share his envious heart. Yet God's plan for Jonathan's life wouldn't include a crown—but rather friendship with and support for the man who would wear it.

11. Imagine something you want so badly. And then think of your best friend living it instead. What would be your internal and external response?

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How do you cultivate a heart where you can truly rally around a friend who has everything you thought should be yours—a marriage, a pregnancy, the job of your dreams?

We need to get to the point of trusting Christ enough to embrace the idea that He knows what He's doing. Our plans and dreams may be good, but *His* plan is perfect. Sometimes it doesn't make sense to us, but that doesn't mean it's not right. God does not make mistakes. He's not about to start with your life.



Release your expectations, dreams, and plans to God. Live with open hands, and take a moment to pray for a Jonathan in your life. Not only that, but pray that you *are* a Jonathan to someone. Just as Michal protected David so he could get to safety, you also could be a safe place for friends when they need you the most. Shove all jealousy aside and instead pray that the Lord

would guide you and your friends toward His ultimate desire for your lives:

*Amen.*

## **WEEK 1** *Notes*

*Share your biggest takeaways from this week:*

