

Here we go! One hundred and fifty stories and songs make up the Psalter. We will hit on many of them in this study. We'll journey through the ups and downs of a shepherd boy chosen by God to be king, the reign of the wisest man who ever lived, the division and destruction of a kingdom, suffering and struggling in exile, and joyous returns and reunions.

Psalms are responses. One side of a beautiful conversation engineered by God, who lovingly chases after us. Eugene Peterson puts it like this:

"The Psalms are acts of obedience, answering the God who has addressed us. God's word precedes these words; these prayers don't seek God, they respond to the God who seeks us. These responses are often ones of surprise, for who expects God to come looking for us? And they are sometimes awkward, for in our religious striving we are usually looking for something quite other than the God who has come looking for us. God comes and speaks--His word catches us in sin, finds us in despair, invades us by grace. The Psalms are our answers. We don't always like what God speaks to us, and we don't always understand it. Left to ourselves, we will pray to some god who speaks what we like hearing, or to the part of God that we manage to understand. But what is critical is that we speak to the God who speaks to us, and to everything that He speaks to us, and in our speaking (which gathers up our listening and answering) mature in the great art of conversation with God that is prayer. The Psalms--all of which listen in order to answer--train us in the conversation."<sup>i</sup>

God reveals. How will you respond?

## Day 1 - Two Ways

1. In the above paragraph by Eugene Peterson, underline any phrases that are especially meaningful to you. Why did you choose those phrases?

### Read Psalm 1.

In v. 2, the word "law" refers to the Hebrew word *torah*. The basic sense of the word is *instruction*. This term is not defined as just any instruction, but specifically as the Lord's instruction.<sup>ii</sup>

2. In v. 2, the psalmist directs the audience to do what two things with the "law?"

and

These words are much different than *understand* or *read*. What do the above two words mean to you?

3. In v. 3, what image is the righteous man compared to?
4. Why do you think the psalmist chose this image to represent the righteous man?
5. Read Jeremiah 17:5-8 for a significant parallel. Using both the Jeremiah passage and Psalm 1, record as many details as you can find about each of the "ways" described.

Way #1 - "Blessed is the man who..."	Way #2 - "Cursed is the man who..."

6. How do these two radically different images motivate you to delight and meditate in God's Word today?
7. Read the following verses and summarize what each says about the way/path we choose.

Verse	Summary
Deuteronomy 30:19	
Jeremiah 21:8	
Matthew 7:13-14	

8. Write Psalm 1:6 below.

In Psalm 1, the psalmist seems to yearn for his reader/listener to recognize God's sincerest hope for all of us before we even dig in to any of the 149 remaining songs and stories!

9. Read John 14: 6. Who was speaking?

What does this statement mean to you, personally?

10. What do you believe is God's sincerest desire for your life?



What do you think God is revealing to you today? Pretend He's sitting in the chair across from you. What would you say to Him? Write a few sentences as a response to Him.

## Day 2 - Who Reigns?

The Psalms are assumed to have been written/compiled over roughly 1,000 years of Israel's history.<sup>iii</sup> While these songs may have spanned all the way back to Ezra's time (500 B.C.), most were probably written during the reign of King David; seventy-three of them were most likely written by David himself. While Psalm 1 serves as a strategically placed introduction to the entire Psalter, Psalm 2 opens the door to the life and times of David.

Psalm 2 is a royal psalm. Most commentators agree it was probably sung during coronation ceremonies when a new king in Jerusalem was being crowned.<sup>iv</sup>

*Read Psalm 2.*

11. Based on vv. 1-3, how would you describe what is happening?

What question does the psalmist ask regarding this situation?

12. In v. 1 the psalmist uses the word *plot*. Look up *plot* in the dictionary and write the definition below.

13. What/who do you think the people are plotting against in this psalm?

Do you think people are still plotting the same way today? Explain.

14. In vv. 4-5, how does the psalmist describe the Lord's response to what was happening in vv. 1-3?

15. Because this is a royal psalm, it is possible that the terms *Anointed* (v. 2) and *Son* (v. 7) were seen as referring to a future king. Now re-read Psalm 2 considering that human kings have long since disappeared and note the capitalization of each word. Who do you think the psalmist is referring to as *Anointed* and *Son*?

16. In vv. 10-12 we find five commands. Write each command below and what the command means to you.

Verse	Command	Meaning
Psalm 2:10		
Psalm 2:10		
Psalm 2:11		
Psalm 2:11		
Psalm 2:12		

17. Write the last sentence of v. 12 below.

What comfort does this promise bring to you?



What do you think God is revealing to you today? Write a few sentences as a response to Him.

## Day 3 - Save Me

One of my favorite authors said once that there are only three essential prayers we need in this life: Help. Thanks. Wow.<sup>v</sup> I love that notion. But is it really that simple? Generally, scholars have agreed that each psalm fits into one of five categories: wisdom, lament, praise, royal, or thanksgiving. But for this study, we'll keep it REALLY simple. Is it a Help-psalm, a Thanks-psalm, or a Wow-psalm?

*Read Psalm 3.*

18. Based on our new categories of psalms (Help, Thanks, or Wow), which category does Psalm 3 fit into?
19. The ancient scribes added a subtitle for this psalm (you will see these throughout the book of Psalms) that appears in most translations. What is the subtitle of this psalm? NOTE: if you don't have it in your version, check the ESV version.

*Read 2 Samuel 15:7-10,13-23, 30.*

20. Based on 2 Samuel 15:30, how would you describe David's feelings toward having to flee his home?

While we aren't sure if this psalm was written during this time in David's life, we can know that the ancient scribes felt certain that this lament certainly seemed to reflect David's sorrow during this time.

21. Think of a time (past or present) when you struggled with the same feelings that David did. Write a sentence or two describing this experience in your life.

22. Psalm 3 is comprised of three main elements: complaint, confession of trust, and petition. Re-read each passage in this psalm and answer the questions below.

<b>Complaint</b>	<b>Psalm 3:1-2</b>
What phrase/s in this passage describe a complaint about current circumstances?	
<b>Confession of Trust</b>	<b>Psalm 3:3-6</b>
What phrase/s in this passage confess trust in God despite current circumstances?	
<b>Petition</b>	<b>Psalm 3:7-8</b>
What phrase/s in this passage petition God to do something in response to the current circumstances?	

23. Go back and put a \* next to any of the above phrases that were particularly meaningful to you. Why did these verses have special impact on you today?

I'm really good at complaining to God (or anyone else, for that matter). I'm pretty good at asking for help, too. But what I've realized lately is that I have a hard time handing over trust to God...in all circumstances (that's the kicker). I know I'm not alone. I had a conversation just last night about a friend who endured an unthinkable tragedy as a child. He struggles still today with trusting a God who would allow such seemingly unnecessary pain. I. Get. That. I believe God gets that, too.

24. Consider this: David's complaint in vv. 1-2 is happening *while* he's confessing his trust in vv. 3-4. What two phrases does David use to describe God in v. 3?

and

What situation in your life is happening *right now* that you need to trust in God the same way David did?



What do you think God is revealing to you today? Write a few sentences as a response to Him.

## Day 4 - Past Mercies, Present Help

Time is sacred. Just take a look at Genesis 1. "And there was evening and there was morning..." repeated six times as God spoke our world into existence. God created time to be intentional and rhythmic from the beginning of time!

These days it seems one of the hardest things for us to do is to find rhythm in our days and nights; we are pulled in a million different directions in this 24/7 world of immediacy. We struggle to find rest and instead, settle for chaos. We miss out on stillness in lieu of productivity. What if we took God's direction and became intentional about time? What if we took pause and listened for the poetic rhythm of God in our days and nights?

*Read Psalm 4.*

25. Would you categorize this psalm as *evening* or *morning*? Why?

26. Think about your personal prayer time. Do you pray more often in the evening or in the morning? Do your prayers sound different depending on when you pray them? If so, how?

27. What three pleas does the psalmist share in v. 1?

I often say and firmly believe that "faith is remembering." As frustrated as the psalmist seems (to me), when I read Psalm 4, I hear echoes of the notion that he remembers God's faithfulness in spite of his current situation.

28. What verses in Psalm 4 represent the psalmist remembering God's faithfulness?

Have you personally experienced the notion that "faith is remembering" in your own life? If yes, how? If no, why do you think you haven't?

29. In vv. 2-5, the psalmist shifts from talking to *God* to talking to *people*. What are some of the statements/directives the psalmist is giving in these verses?



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## Day 5 - Facing Opposition

30. Psalm 5 is one of many psalms written in the face of opposition. What happens to your relationship with God (especially your prayer life) when you find yourself facing opposition or persecution?<sup>vi</sup>

Read Psalm 5.

31. Would you categorize this psalm as *evening* or *morning*? Why?

Eugene Peterson says, "Morning prayer prepares for action...Psalm 5 bridges the passivities of grace into the activities of obedience."<sup>vii</sup> Re-read Psalm 5 with Peterson's quote in mind. Consider the psalmist ready to take action against his opposition. Search the psalm for his deepest desires he's pouring out to God.

32. What are the three requests the psalmist is crying out for in this psalm?

	Verses	Requests
1	vv. 1-3	
2	vv. 7-8	
3	vv. 10-11	

What was the psalmist experiencing? What were the circumstances of his pleas? We don't know. Sometimes I think there's a beauty in the absence of explanation. Without knowing his specific struggles, we're free to insert our present struggles into the stanzas. We step in and cry out.

33. After every request, David shares a glimpse of the character of God as grounds for his requests being heard. Search the following verses for any sentences that begin with "For You..." and write them below.

	Verses	"For you..." Statement
1	vv. 4-6	
2	vv. 9	
3	vv. 12	

34. What does this exchange (requests followed by "for you" statements) show us about David's relationship with God?

35. What area of your life do you need to respond to God in this way today?

Write a request to God followed by a "For you..." statement claiming what you know about His character.

Re-read Psalm 5:11-12.

36. Fill in the blanks for the verses of Psalm 5 (ESV) below and take comfort:

But let \_\_\_\_\_ who \_\_\_\_\_ in you rejoice;

let them ever sing for \_\_\_\_\_, and spread your \_\_\_\_\_

over them, that those who \_\_\_\_\_ your name may exult in you. For you \_\_\_\_\_

the righteous, O Lord; and you \_\_\_\_\_ him with favor as with a \_\_\_\_\_.

37. Go back and re-read your answer for #9 in Day 1. Who claimed to be the Way?

Read Romans 3:22. How can we achieve true righteousness before God?



What do you think God is revealing to you today? Write a few sentences as a response to Him.

## God Reveals | We Respond

38. In the back of this participant guide, locate the **Appendix: God Reveals | We Respond**. Complete the “My Psalm” section for Lesson 2.

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## LESSON 2 - LECTURE NOTES

### 1. \_\_\_\_\_

<sup>i</sup> Eugene H. Peterson, Answering God (New York: HarperCollins, 1991) p.5

<sup>ii</sup> Nance deClaissé-Walford, Rolf A. Jacobson, Beth LaNeel Tanner; The Book of Psalms: The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2014) p.61

<sup>iii</sup> Ken Carson, "Psalms - Survey of the Old Testament: The Writings," gcfweb.org, last modified fall 2006, [http://www.gcfweb.org/institute/writings/psalms-1.php#\\_ftn2](http://www.gcfweb.org/institute/writings/psalms-1.php#_ftn2)

<sup>iv</sup> deClaissé-Walford, Jacobson, and Tanner; p.65

<sup>v</sup> Anne LaMott, Help, Thanks". Wow (London, England: Penguin Books, 2012)

<sup>vi</sup> "Psalm 5: Relying on God," InterVarsity Press, accessed on 7/27/15, <http://www.ivpress.com/bible/study.php?study=47>

<sup>vii</sup> Peterson; p.65