

The Book of Psalms



OCTOBER 2009 TEACHING PLANS

EMOTIONS ARE JUST PART OF BEING HUMAN. The beauty of the Book of Psalms is that as we experience the vast multitude of emotions life throws our way, we can easily find a psalmist who's been there. We all have similar struggles, joys, and hurts — people who lived thousands of years ago and those of us who are figuring things out today. Over the next few months, as we go deeper into the Book of Psalms, we'll discuss three different states of being: praising God, seeking His help in troubled times, and discovering His plan for our lives. As you study the Psalms, it is our prayer that God would begin to reveal to you the overall message of these passages: No matter which path you choose, God is the ultimate answer to life's many questions.

WHAT'S INSIDE ...

The goal of the *Collegiate* online features is to bring you a structured teaching plan with additional helps and relevant questions to equip you to lead a strong discussion-based lesson. Here's a breakdown of what's inside: *Getting Started* helps introduce the topic and get your students engaged in the lesson. *Need to Knows* highlights the main characters, historical context, and key verses of each lesson. *Explore the Bible* leads your students through the Scripture passages of the lesson, helping them understand the text, its historical and cultural context, and what it means to them today. *Apply to Life* gives you ideas for furthering the application of the Scripture, so students can take active steps to process what they're learning and how it impacts their lives. Be sure you also utilize the commentary provided (threadsmedia.com/collegiate) to help with your preparation and personal study of the lessons.

As always, we're here for you. Please send us your questions, thoughts, and suggestions. Let us know what we could do better and how these teaching plans could be even more relevant to your students and your ministry.

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THIS WEEK YOU'LL NEED

- A COPY OF THIS LEADER GUIDE
- THIS WEEK'S LESSON IS ON PAGE 36 OF THE FALL ISSUE OF *COLLEGIATE*.
- THE SONG "THERE WILL BE A DAY" BY JEREMY CAMP, FROM THE ALBUM *SPEAKING LOUDER THAN BEFORE*, TO PLAY FOR THE CLASS AS THEY ARRIVE.
- ENLIST SOMEONE TO SHARE ABOUT A DARK TIME OR TRAGEDY IN HIS OR HER LIFE. OR, FIND AN ARTICLE OR VIDEO CLIP TELLING THE STORY OF A TRAGEDY THAT WILL CONNECT WITH THE STUDENTS.
- MATERIALS FOR STUDENTS TO DRAW THEIR OWN PICTURES.
- MATERIALS FOR STUDENTS TO REWRITE THIS PSALM.

NEED TO KNOWS

LESSON OVERVIEW

To help young adults explain what it means for God to be their Shepherd and testify to a way God has shown His loving care for them

FOCAL PASSAGES

PSALM 23:1-6



PEACE FOR THE JOURNEY

GETTING STARTED

Have the song "There Will Be a Day" by Jeremy Camp playing in the background as students arrive.

Ask a pre-enlisted person to share about a deep valley experience. [Another option would be to find a story of tragedy in the news that will connect with your students.]

- What elements of this tragedy make it difficult to deal with?
- What do you experience when you're in the midst of tragedy?
- Why do we refer to tragedy or difficult times as being "in the valley"?

Encourage others in the class to share trials that God has helped them walk through.

DIG DEEPER

Refer to "Dig Deeper" on page 36 in the Fall issue of *Collegiate* magazine for a related quote and additional verses.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

Have someone read the introduction to the lesson on page 36 of *Collegiate* magazine.

This psalm almost reads like a children’s story with its simplicity. Many people learned this psalm as children, but the meaning of the words and the promises they give are deep and not fully understood until later in life. This psalm promises us peace and protection in all times of our lives.

1). HE GIVES PEACE (PSALM 23:1-2)

READ PSALM 23:1-2.

¹The LORD is my shepherd; there is nothing I lack.

²He lets me lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside quiet waters.

Have someone read “He Gives Peace” on page 36 of *Collegiate* magazine.

Many Christians have trouble understanding true peace. The picture painted in these verses gives a visual representation of what true peace feels like.

- What things are you the most stressed about in life?
- When was the last time you remember feeling at peace?
- What does it mean to be at peace?

Have students verbally rewrite verse two, describing what a place of complete peace would be for them.

- What would change in your life if you really believed you could find complete peace in God?

2). HE PROVIDES DIRECTION (PSALM 23:3-4)

READ PSALM 23:3-4.

³He renews my life; He leads me along the right paths for His name’s sake. ⁴Even when I go through the darkest valley, I fear no danger, for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff—they comfort me.

Have someone read “He Provides Direction” on page 36 of *Collegiate* magazine.

We, as Christians, are not promised a life in the peaceful meadow. Life is a journey that goes through meadows and valleys, but we’re always accompanied through the valleys by the same Shepherd who gave us life.

- What are the dark valleys of your life?
- Where do you need God’s direction?
- How can our attitude about God change when we go through the difficult times of life?

A shepherd used a rod along with his staff to keep his sheep walking the right path and to fight off predators of the sheep.

- How do you reconcile the struggle between a desire for independence and the idea of being guided by your Shepherd?
- What’s comforting about being guided in that way?
- What’s required of us if we want the promise of God giving us direction?
- Will God force the use of His rod and staff to give us direction? Why or why not?

3). HE BESTOWS PROTECTION (PSALM 23:5-6)

READ PSALM 23:5-6.

⁵You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. ⁶Only goodness and faithful love will pursue me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD as long as I live.

Have someone read “He Bestows Protection” on page 36 of *Collegiate* magazine.

The anointing of the oil comes in the presence of the enemies. God has not taken away the enemies; He blesses us in their presence.

- What are your greatest “enemies”?
- How can you see that God is blessing you in their presence?
- How does it change your view of your enemies?

David gives the image of “goodness and faithful love” pursuing him all of his life. “Goodness and faithful love” chase after *all* those who belong to God.

- What does it mean for you that goodness and faithful love are chasing after you?
- What does it look like (give concrete examples) for goodness and faithful love to chase after you?
- If goodness and faithful love are chasing after us, why do we still have times in the valley?

Even in the valley times, the goodness and faithful love of God never leave us. They are the constant no matter where we are in life.

- On page 37 of *Collegiate* we read, “An eternal perspective can make the things that you’re going through not seem quite as important.” Reflect on that regarding your current circumstances and struggles.

These verses give the promise that we will live our lives residing in the house of God. This is the ultimate place of protection. We are living with God, with goodness and faithfulness surrounding us, no matter what our current circumstances look like.

- What does it mean for you to “dwell in the house of the LORD” all of your life?
- What does the “house of the LORD” look like in the reality of our day-to-day lives?

THIS WEEK YOU'LL NEED

- A COPY OF THIS LEADER GUIDE
- THIS WEEK'S LESSON IS ON PAGE 38 OF THE FALL ISSUE OF *COLLEGIATE*.
- THE SONG "FRAGILE PEOPLE" BY SONSOFDAY, FROM THE ALBUM *FRAGILE PEOPLE*, TO PLAY FOR THE CLASS AS THEY ARRIVE.
- HAVE STUDENTS LOOK UP ARTICLES ABOUT PEOPLE, INCLUDING THOSE IN LEADERSHIP, WHO HAVE MADE MISTAKES. HAVE SOME EXAMPLES AVAILABLE BEFOREHAND.
- INDEX CARDS
- WAYS TO BRIGHTEN THE ROOM THROUGHOUT THE SESSION

NEED TO KNOWS

LESSON OVERVIEW

To help young adults recognize God's willingness to forgive and ask His forgiveness for specific sins in their lives

FOCAL PASSAGES

PSALM 51:1-13



REDEMPTION ... MORE THAN JUST A WORD

GETTING STARTED

Have the song "Fragile People" by Sonsofday playing in the background as students arrive.

If possible, make the classroom darker at the beginning of the lesson. As the words of the psalm lighten, we hear David's heart feel lighter as God forgives, cleanses, and renews. With each section of study, brighten the room by adding lights or candles to help students experience the psalm.

Facilitator's Note: This psalm is about bringing healing and renewal for those who are repentant and allowing God to cleanse them from their sins. It is a heavier passage of Scripture, so starting with a heavier activity will help students step into the psalm with David.

OPTION 1: Have students share their articles about people who've made mistakes. Ask them to share the basics of their story and whether they feel the person showed remorse for what they did.

- What is remorse?
- How can you tell if someone is genuinely sorry for what they've done?

Give each student an index card. Ask them to write down sins in their own lives they need to confess. Reassure students that the cards are for their own use and won't require sharing with others in the room.

Explain that it's easy for us to look outwards for what others are doing wrong, but very necessary for us to look inwards to the sin in our own lives.

OPTION 2:

Ask students to list sins people commit. Compile a list of their examples somewhere that will be visible in the room throughout the lesson.

Give each student an index card. Ask them to write down sins in their own lives they need to confess. Reassure students that the cards are for their own use and won't require sharing with others in the room.

Explain that it's easy for us to look outwards for what others are doing wrong, but very necessary for us to look inwards to the sin in our own lives.

DIG DEEPER

Refer to "Dig Deeper" on page 38 in the Fall issue of *Collegiate* magazine for quotes and further study ideas.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

Have someone read the introduction to the lesson on page 38 of *Collegiate* magazine.

1). FORGIVE ME (PSALM 51:1-5)

READ PSALM 51:1-5.

¹Be gracious to me, God, according to Your faithful love; according to Your abundant compassion, blot out my rebellion. ²Wash away my guilt, and cleanse me from my sin. ³For I am conscious of my rebellion, and my sin is always before me. ⁴Against You—You alone—I have sinned and done this evil in Your sight. So You are right when You pass sentence; You are blameless when You judge. ⁵Indeed, I was guilty when I was born; I was sinful when my mother conceived me.

Have someone read “Forgive Me” on page 38 of *Collegiate* magazine.

This prayer is written as David realizes the sin he has committed with Bathsheba. David realizes the magnitude of what he has done and is pleading with all he has for God to forgive him. We are able to feel not just the guilt, but the pain in his words. This was the heart of the most powerful man in the world breaking because of his sin.

- What does our culture typically feel and think when we do something wrong?
- What does it mean to be broken?
- What does it mean to confess?
- What are examples of someone showing true forgiveness?

When we do wrong against each other, we also sin against God.

- How does it affect our relationships with God when we do wrong against each other?

- What’s the difference between humbleness and entitlement?
- How would our lives look differently if we lived with a sense of humbleness at all times?

2). CLEANSE ME (PSALM 51:6-9)

READ PSALM 51:6-9.

⁶Surely You desire integrity in the inner self, and You teach me wisdom deep within. ⁷Purify me with hyssop, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow. ⁸Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones You have crushed rejoice. ⁹Turn Your face away from my sins and blot out all my guilt.

Have someone read “Cleanse Me” on page 38 of *Collegiate* magazine.

David has made his plea and laid his heart before God. Now he asks with confidence for God to not just forgive him, but to cleanse him. But notice that David has confidence that God will cleanse him.

Have students look back at their list of sins. Allow time for students to ask for God’s forgiveness and cleansing.

- What does it mean to be cleansed?
- What are the words David uses to describe how God cleanses him?

Have students use modern language to describe how God cleanses them.

3). RENEW ME (PSALM 51:10-13)

READ PSALM 51:10-13.

¹⁰God, create a clean heart for me and renew a steadfast spirit within me. ¹¹Do not banish me from Your presence or take Your Holy Spirit from me. ¹²Restore the joy of Your salvation to me, and give me a willing spirit. ¹³Then I will teach the rebellious Your ways, and sinners will return to You.

Have someone read “Renew Me” on page 38 of *Collegiate* magazine.

David prays not just for forgiveness and cleansing, but a renewed spirit. He wants a renewed spirit, with the Holy Spirit still speaking, that will bring back the joy of his salvation. Most importantly though, he desires to go out and teach the rebellious the ways of God and help the sinners return. He desires to take his experience and help bring others to a right relationship with God.

- What does it mean for a person to be renewed?
- What should our response be to God’s renewal?
- How can the relationships with those we have wronged be renewed?
- What is the joy of our salvation?

David asked God not only for forgiveness, but for a clean heart, a steadfast spirit, restored joy of salvation, and a heart of wisdom.

THIS WEEK YOU'LL NEED

- A COPY OF THIS LEADER GUIDE
- THIS WEEK'S LESSON IS ON PAGE 40 OF THE FALL ISSUE OF *COLLEGIATE*.
- THE SONG "DON'T GET COMFORTABLE" BY BRANDON HEATH, FROM THE ALBUM *DON'T GET COMFORTABLE*, TO PLAY FOR THE CLASS AS THEY ARRIVE.
- "GOD IS BIGGER THAN THE BOOGIE MAN" SONG CLIP BY VEGGIE TALES. PREDETERMINE WHAT PORTION YOU'D LIKE TO PLAY IN CLASS.
- INTERESTING FOOD ITEMS FOR A "FEAR FACTOR" GAME. THE INTERNATIONAL FOOD SECTIONS OF YOUR GROCERY STORE ARE EXCELLENT PLACES TO FIND SUCH FOODS.
- BROWN PAPER BAGS TO DISGUISE THE FOOD ITEMS.
- A *CHARLIE BROWN CHRISTMAS* CLIP OF LUCY COUNSELING CHARLIE BROWN AND GIVING HIS FEAR A NAME.
- NAME TAGS
- TRASH CAN OR OTHER CONTAINER WHERE YOU CAN PUT NAMETAGS

NEED TO KNOWS

LESSON OVERVIEW

To help young adults summarize the psalmist's words about dealing with fears and determine to trust God when they are afraid

FOCAL PASSAGES

PSALM 56:1-13



WHAT LIES BENEATH

GETTING STARTED

Have the song "Don't Get Comfortable" by Brandon Heath playing in the background as students arrive.

Fear is a normal human reaction to danger. To experience fear is to be human. Experts say that fear can be a necessary defense mechanism. If we didn't experience some fear, we couldn't survive. Some fears are rational; some are not. Some fears are fleeting; others are paralyzing. The question is, though, how are Christians to deal with their fears?

OPTION 1: Explain that you're going to revert to childish ways — temporarily. Play the Veggie Tales song clip "God is Bigger than the Boogie Man." Begin a discussion about students' greatest fears as children. Transition the conversation to talk about how their fears are different now.

OPTION 2: Play a version of "Fear Factor" with the different foods you've found or created. Have two teams of student volunteers come to the front. (Important: Be sure none of the volunteers have food allergies.) Have the interesting tasting foods or unidentifiable foods in a paper bag. Instruct the teams that a student will come to the bag, pull something out without looking, and eat it very quickly. The first team to finish all the items in their bag wins.

- What is the lure of a show like "Fear Factor"?

OPTION 3: Get a copy of *A Charlie Brown Christmas* and play the clip where Charlie Brown goes to Lucy to seek advice. She runs through a list of fears that he might have.

Our obsession with fear is a cultural phenomenon. Fear, however, can be very serious.

- What are common fears people face?
- Explore *phobialist.com*. What did you learn?
- What impact can fear have on our lives?
- What's your greatest fear?

DIG DEEPER

Refer to "Dig Deeper" on page 40 in the Fall issue of *Collegiate* magazine for more stats and further study ideas.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

Have someone read the introduction to the lesson on page 40 of *Collegiate* magazine.

1). FEARFUL FEELINGS (PSALM 56:1-7)

READ PSALM 56:1-7.

¹Be gracious to me, God, for man tramples me; he fights and oppresses me all day long. ²My adversaries trample me all day, for many arrogantly fight against me.

³When I am afraid, I will trust in You. ⁴In God, whose word I praise, in God I trust; I will not fear. What can man do to me?

⁵They twist my words all day long; all their thoughts are against me for evil. ⁶They stir up strife, they lurk; they watch my steps while they wait to take my life. ⁷Will they escape in spite of such sin? God, bring down the nations in wrath.

Have someone read “Fearful Feelings” on page 40 of *Collegiate* magazine.

David is open about his fear and anxiety over the looming Philistines. They want to cause him bodily harm, as well as destroy him with words. He begins this prayer by sharing his fear. Verse four attempts to have the kind of confidence he wants to have.

- What emotions are behind the words of David?
- Have you been in a similar place in life?
- What are fears that people experience on a daily basis?

In verse five, David is back to being overwhelmed with his circumstances. In verse seven, he even asks God to “bring down the nations in wrath.”

- What do you do with David’s prayer that God would bring down those who oppose him with wrath?
- Have you ever felt that way before about someone who was threatening or harming you?
- Is it wrong to be this honest with God?

David is honest with God about what he is experiencing. That same kind of open relationship with God is available to us. We can share our fears, no matter what they are. God desires for us to share what we are experiencing, from our fears to our thoughts about those who seek to harm us.

2). GOD IS FOR ME (PSALM 56:8-9)

READ PSALM 56:8-9.

⁸You Yourself have recorded my wanderings. Put my tears in Your bottle. Are they not in Your records? ⁹Then my enemies will retreat on the day when I call. This I know: God is for me.

Have someone read “God Is for Me” on page 40 of *Collegiate* magazine.

- How does it impact you to know that God is aware of every tear that you have shed and is aware of every fear that you have experienced?
- How can people sometimes confuse the way they are treated by others with the way God will treat them?

God is for you. Living with that knowledge, we are able to say in the face of fear, “What can man do to me? I will not be afraid.”

- What does it mean practically for God to be for you?
- How can you live out this kind of confidence?

3). COMMITTED DETERMINATION (PSALM 56:10-13)

READ PSALM 56:10-13.

¹⁰In God, whose word I praise, in the LORD, whose word I praise, ¹¹in God I trust; I will not fear. What can man do to me?

¹²I am obligated by vows to You, God; I will make my thank offerings to You. ¹³For You delivered me from death, even my feet from stumbling, to walk before God in the light of life.

Have someone read “Committed Determination” on page 41 of *Collegiate* magazine.

At the end of this prayer, David chooses “to walk before God in the light of life.” He chooses to thank God even in the face of fear. David is choosing to say no to the fear that seeks to control him. We have that same opportunity to say yes to praise and thanks no matter where we find ourselves in life.

- What can man do to you?
- How do you live a life without fear?
- What is our response to God’s protection?
- What difference should it make in our lives?

THIS WEEK YOU'LL NEED

- A COPY OF THIS LEADER GUIDE
- THIS WEEK'S LESSON IS ON PAGE 42 OF THE FALL ISSUE OF *COLLEGIATE*.
- THE SONG "CLOUDS" BY AFTER EDMUND, FROM THE ALBUM *HELLO*, TO PLAY FOR THE CLASS AS THEY ARRIVE.
- EACH STUDENT TO BRING ONE THING IN THE WORLD THAT STIRS UP DOUBT. IT COULD BE A QUESTION OR ARTICLE.
- INDEX CARDS

NEED TO KNOWS

LESSON OVERVIEW

To help young adults identify questions that cause people to have doubts and decide how to deal with their doubts

FOCAL PASSAGES

PSALM 73:1-5,12,13-20,25-28



GOD, I KNOW YOU'RE THERE ... BUT I'M STRUGGLING TO SEE YOU

GETTING STARTED

Have the song "Clouds" by After Edmund playing in the background as students arrive.

OPTION 1:

Start by sharing something that brings up doubt in your own life. After you have shared it, post it somewhere in the room. Ask students to share what makes them doubt. Encourage them to be honest. After they have shared, have them post their doubts around the room as well.

- What do we do with the doubts that are literally surrounding us?
- What effect do doubts have in our lives and in the lives of others seeking God?

OPTION 2:

As students enter the room, give them index cards. Ask them to write down one thing that stirs doubt in them. What are they most doubtful about concerning their faith and God? Students should not put their names on the cards. Collect the cards and read them to the group, mixing them up so that no one knows who wrote each of them.

- Why is it difficult to be honest about our doubts?

The question of why the wrong people seem to prosper and the righteous suffer is a troubling one for many people. Such questions even cause students to distrust and question God. They cannot understand why God would allow such things to happen. When students don't feel they can bring these doubts to church, they often feel they simply have to discard their faith.

DIG DEEPER

Refer to "Dig Deeper" on page 42 in the Fall issue of *Collegiate* magazine for related verses and quotes.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

Have someone read the introduction to the lesson on page 42 of *Collegiate* magazine.

1). WHY IS THIS HAPPENING? (PSALM 73:1-5,12)

READ PSALM 73:1-5,12.

¹God is indeed good to Israel, to the pure in heart. ²But as for me, my feet almost slipped; my steps nearly went astray. ³For I envied the arrogant; I saw the prosperity of the wicked. ⁴They have an easy time until they die, and their bodies are well-fed. ⁵They are not in trouble like others; they are not afflicted like most people.

.....

¹²Look at them—the wicked! They are always at ease, and they increase their wealth.

Have someone read “Why Is This Happening?” on page 42 of *Collegiate* magazine.

This is a prayer of frustration. It starts with the acknowledgement that God is good, but is followed by a list of frustrating situations the writer sees.

- What’s creating doubt in the writer’s mind?
- What unfair situations does he outline?
- Describe a time when you were in a similar situation?
- What do you think the writer of this psalm would say about the list of doubts that have already been mentioned among us?

Just like the psalmist, we can be honest about our doubts and frustrations. Obviously, people have been doing it since the very beginning of time.

2). JESUS LOVES YOU (PSALM 73:13-20)

READ PSALM 73:13-20.

¹³Did I purify my heart and wash my hands in innocence for nothing? ¹⁴For I am afflicted all day long, and punished every morning. ¹⁵If I had decided to say these things aloud, I would have betrayed Your people. ¹⁶When I tried to understand all this, it seemed hopeless ¹⁷until I entered God’s sanctuary. Then I understood their destiny. ¹⁸Indeed You put them in slippery places; You make them fall into ruin. ¹⁹How suddenly they become a desolation! They come to an end, swept away by terrors. ²⁰Like one waking from a dream, Lord, when arising, You will despise their image.

Have someone read “Jesus Loves You” on page 42 of *Collegiate* magazine.

In verse 15, the writer goes a step further to say that not only does he have doubts, but he doesn’t feel like he can voice them.

- Does church feel like a place where you can voice your doubts?
- What would it take for this group to feel able to be really honest with each other?
- How can a non-judgmental community be created?

We hear the psalmist’s frustrations, but then in verse 17 there’s a change. It’s not until he takes his questions and doubts into the sanctuary that it all becomes clear. Here he is able to see what will happen to those who are pursuing their own way. He is able to see that God really is in control.

- What happens when the writer enters the sanctuary in verse 17?

3). GOD IS IN CONTROL (PSALM 73:25-28)

READ PSALM 73:25-28.

²⁵Whom do I have in heaven but You? And I desire nothing on earth but You. ²⁶My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart, my portion forever. ²⁷Those far from You will certainly perish; You destroy all who are unfaithful to You. ²⁸But as for me, God’s presence is my good. I have made the Lord God my refuge, so I can tell about all You do.

Have someone read “God Is in Control” on page 42 of *Collegiate* magazine.

- What creates the shift in the writer’s attitude?
- What does God’s punishment look like for those who do not follow His commands?
- How do we reconcile that some people never seem to receive punishment on this earth?

The writer’s change doesn’t simply come from an understanding that God will repay those who aren’t faithful. He realizes that he had everything he needed and should want with God.

God’s presence is our good, and we should want to share that with others. It requires us to live at a whole new level of peace and contentment with where we are in life.

- Reading verse 26, how can you apply that encouragement to your day-to-day life?
- What would you say to someone else who doubted the faithfulness of God?

