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DISCOVER TOGETHER BIBLE STUDY SERIES

Psalms: Discovering Authentic Worship

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A *Discover Together*
BIBLE STUDY

Psalm

Discovering Authentic Worship

Sue Edwards



 **Kregel**
Publications

Psalms: Discovering Authentic Worship

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How to Get the Most Out of a Discover Together Bible Study

Women today need Bible study to keep balanced, focused, and Christ-centered in their busy worlds. The tiered questions in *Psalms: Discovering Authentic Worship* allow you to choose a depth of study that fits your lifestyle, which may even vary from week to week, depending on your schedule.

Just completing the basic questions will require about one and a half hours per lesson, and will provide a basic overview of the text. For busy women, this level offers in-depth Bible study with a minimum time commitment.

“Digging Deeper” questions are for those who want to, and make time to, probe the text even more deeply. Answering these questions may require outside resources such as an atlas, Bible dictionary, or concordance; you may be asked to look up parallel passages for additional insight; or you may be encouraged to investigate the passage using an interlinear Greek-English text or *Vine’s Expository Dictionary*. This deeper study will challenge you to learn more about the history, culture, and geography related to the Bible, and to grapple with complex theological issues and differing views. Some with teaching gifts and an interest in advanced academics will enjoy exploring the depths of a passage, and might even find themselves creating outlines and charts and writing essays worthy of seminarians!

This inductive Bible study is designed for both individual and group discovery. You will benefit most if you tackle each week’s lesson on your own, and then meet with other women to share insights, struggles, and aha moments. Bible study leaders will find free, downloadable leader’s guides for each study, along with general tips for leading small groups, at www.discovertogetherseries.com.

Through short video clips, Sue Edwards shares personal insights to enrich your Bible study experience. You can watch these as you work through each lesson on your own, or your Bible study leader may want your whole study group to view them when you meet together. For ease of individual viewing, a QR code, which you can simply scan with your smartphone, is provided in each lesson. Or you can go to www.discovertogetherseries.com



and easily navigate until you find the corresponding video title. Woman-to-woman, these clips are meant to bless, encourage, and challenge you in your daily walk.

Choose a realistic level of Bible study that fits your schedule. You may want to finish the basic questions first, and then “dig deeper” as time permits. Take time to savor the questions, and don’t rush through the application. Watch the videos. Read the sidebars for additional insight to enrich the experience. Note the optional passage to memorize and determine if this discipline would be helpful for you. Do not allow yourself to be intimidated by women who have more time or who are gifted differently.

Make your Bible study—whatever level you choose—top priority. Consider spacing your study throughout the week so that you can take time to ponder and meditate on what the Holy Spirit is teaching you. Do not make other appointments during the group Bible study. Ask God to enable you to attend faithfully. Come with an excitement to learn from others and a desire to share yourself and your journey. Give it your best, and God promises to join you on this adventure that can change your life.



Why Study the Psalms?

Today, faithful believers all over the world will open their Bibles to the Psalms—and some will burst into song or prayer. They will sing with others or pray alone. The Psalms speak when we are full of joy but also when unexpected circumstances block the sunshine.

Today in a hospital, at this very hour, someone is whispering into the ear of a dying loved one or a faithful friend,

The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. (Psalm 23:1 KJV)

Somewhere a woman is curled up in a large stuffed chair, tears staining her Bible as she reads,

I waited patiently for the LORD;
he turned to me and heard my cry.
He lifted me out of the slimy pit,
out of the mud and mire;
he set my feet on a rock
and gave me a firm place to stand.
He put a new song in my mouth,
a hymn of praise to our God. (Psalm 40:1–3)

Are they tears of joy or tears of sorrow? They could be either.

Someone experiences forgiveness or sees their newborn for the first time, and the Psalms give wings to their worship as they express their gratitude to God. Someone has just learned they have cancer or that someone they love has preceded them in death. And almost instinctively, as one who is drowning grasps for a lifeline, the Christian reaches for the Psalms.

The Psalms give us permission to express and process our emotions. Psalms is a unique volume in the library of Scripture. In the other books there is more of *God speaking to man*, but in Psalms we mostly have *man speaking to God*. And man is here speaking to God under almost every possible condition and position, and *speaking acceptably*, thus showing us

The great biblical scholar Saint Augustine was so taken with the role of the psalms in the New Testament story of our Lord Jesus Christ that he termed Jesus *iste cantator psalorum*, “He, the singer of the psalms.”

—Ronald Allen
(*Lord of Song*, 39)



Some years ago, I worked my way through the Psalms, labeling each one as either praise, lament, royal, imprecatory, faith-builder, thanksgiving, or wisdom. Knowing the theme helps me select a psalm to sing or pray depending on my spiritual need at that moment. —Sue



how *we* may speak acceptably to God under every condition and in every position of life. This is the crux of true and profitable devotional experience (Jensen, *Psalms*, 14).

The Psalms were the songbook of the temple. David, Isaiah, and Jeremiah sang them. Military leaders in the Old Testament celebrated their victories with psalms. At Passover, Jesus sang psalms with his family and later with his disciples. Paul exhorted the Christians at Ephesus and Colossae to “teach and admonish one another with . . . psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit” (Colossians 3:16; see also Ephesians 5:19). When we pray or sing the Psalms, we sense the oneness of the church.

And the Psalms will be the songbook of heaven. One day we will gather with the saints of the ages and sing psalms together as we praise our majestic God. What a glorious day that will be! What an incentive to study them, sing them, pray them, and love them.



Introduction to Studying the Psalms (11:54 minutes).

The 150 psalms are penned by different authors: Moses (1), Heman (1), Ethan (1), Solomon (2), Hezekiah (10), Sons of Korah (11), Asaph (12), orphan psalms (39), and David (73), although David probably wrote some of the orphan psalms.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In the middle of your Bible is a songbook. The Psalms are lyrical poetry, full of imagery and figurative language. No other book has as many authors as the Psalms. David wrote about half of the 150 songs. Other authors include Moses, Solomon, and some of the song leaders in the temple.

They can be grouped into categories: songs of praise, lament, faith building, thanksgiving, and wisdom. Some are royal psalms because they celebrate earthly kings as well as the King of the Universe. Others are called imprecatory psalms. Their message is “Go get ‘em, God,” pronouncing curses on one’s enemies—not very “Christian.” But God wants us to process even these kinds of emotions before we act inappropriately. Consider creating your own system to categorize each psalm so that you can access them later according to your need.

OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to deepen your worship of Almighty God. What is worship? The term encompasses many aspects of the Christian life—singing, praying, and serving. In essence, worship is responding to God because he alone is worthy. When we worship, we celebrate God’s character, works, and plans. We rejoice in our intimate relationship with him. We participate in declaring his majesty and splendor.

Worship can be private or within a community. Some of us raise our hands, sway, and bellow with gusto. Others of us close our eyes, sit in contemplation, sing softly, or kneel. God recognizes and enjoys a variety of worship forms. However, true worship requires that our heart is engaged and our senses are focused on God.

Roadblocks to worship distance our hearts from God. What are typical roadblocks to worship? Discouragement, fear, ignorance, a refusal to deal with sin, distractions, and harboring an unforgiving spirit. Women who worship God freely are hopeful and secure in their identity. They are not plagued by fear. They live productively each day, refusing to allow cares and trials to dissuade them from praising God. They understand redemption and the glorious future that awaits them. Each lesson in our study will tackle one of these roadblocks to help us overcome hindrances to authentic, unbridled worship.

In these busy days, it would be greatly to the spiritual profit of Christians if they were more familiar with the Book of Psalms, in which they would find a complete armory for life's battles, and a perfect supply for life's needs. Here we have both delight and usefulness, consolation and instruction. For every condition there is a psalm, suitable and elevating. The Book supplies the babe in grace with penitent cries, and the perfected saint with triumphant songs. Its breadth of experience stretches from the jaws of hell to the gate of heaven.

—Charles Spurgeon
(*Psalms*, vol. 2, 16)