

WELCOME!

Psalm 111 says 'great are the works of the Lord; they are pondered by all who delight in them.' (Psalm 111:2). In a nutshell that is what we will be aiming to do over this coming year in the Book of Psalms.

The best Bible studies are the ones where we all know the text well, so we can really understand what the text is saying. One way to do that is to prepare beforehand. This will make the study better for you and for the rest of the group. This booklet is here to help you do that.

At the beginning, you will find two pages that we will use throughout the year. Firstly, there is a place to write down everything we learn about **the Messiah**. As we will see, the Book of Psalms has a lot to say about Him! It wants to help us look forward to God's coming King, to understand what He will face, and how He will save. Use this page to make notes for yourself to look back on in the future. There is also another page for making notes on **Psalms 1-2**. These two psalms are the 'gateway to the Psalter', and so the themes here will help us understand the rest. Make notes, and then look back at this page throughout the year.

There is also **a page for each study** in the year. On those pages you will find a summary of what we have already learned and how it is relevant to the current study. It will also help you catch up if you missed a session. You will also find preparation questions for each study. It would be really helpful if you could read the passage *before* the Growth Group studies, and those questions will give you something to think about as you do. Our discussions will be better if we are all familiar with the text beforehand, so it benefit our groups if we have looked at the passage in advance. Note, your leaders may not be using these questions in the study, but they will be useful for any discussion! Finally, there is a "before next time" section. We will not have time to read every Psalm throughout the year, but it is worth doing so to get the overall flow. This section will help us do that well.

We will have **Growth Group Central** meetings when we reach the final Psalm(s) of each book. These meetings will be held together at the school. There are blank pages with titles for notes to be made there. It is really helpful to see what we have all been learning, and to learn from each other at a bigger scale.

On the last page, there is a section for writing down **questions**. Throughout the year, we will have **Topic Nights** where you can ask any questions you have. If something confuses you or raises a question, write it down there, and we will make sure it gets answered!

One last tip before we get to the main content... This booklet is yours to do with as you wish. If you prefer a printed version, we recommend printing it and filing it in a ring binder. This way, you can easily add any additional handouts we provide throughout the year. It also allows you to add extra pages for your own notes if you want. Alternatively, you can use the PDF version and add your notes digitally.

TIPS FOR READING THE PSALMS

As we come to the Book of Psalms there are a few things that will keep us orientated:

- 1. **Understand the structure:** Just like when you listen to a musical, the Psalms are meant to be experienced as a complete work. Just as individual tracks of a musical can be listened to on their own, understanding the Psalter as a whole enhances their meaning. The Psalms are not just individual poems, but a carefully arranged collection. Reading them as a whole helps us grasp their intended message.
- 2. **Know the background:** To fully grasp the meaning of the Psalms, it is helpful to be familiar with earlier parts of the Bible. The stories and teachings from Genesis 3, Genesis 49, Numbers 24, Deuteronomy 17, and 2 Samuel 7 provide important context for understanding the language used in the Psalms.
- 3. **Recognise the Messianic theme:** The authors of the Psalms, especially David, knew that a special future king (also known as the Messiah) would come from David's family line. This Messiah would bring the salvation God's people were hoping for. Keeping this in mind as you read the Psalms helps us see how they point to Jesus, the ultimate fulfilment of the Messianic promises.
- 4. **Remember the original readers:** Although the Psalms are written at different points in Israel's history, we know they are being read by people in exile and beyond. Exile was a tough time, and in particular it was a time when there was no King in Israel. That is important because it points to the anticipation of a promised future King. The original readers could find hope in these references, knowing that a King was promised to come and bring restoration and salvation.
- 5. Compare different translations: Sometimes, translations may alter the words that originally refer to the Messiah to make them more general. By comparing translations such as the English Standard Version (ESV), Christian Standard Bible (CSB), New American Standard Bible (NASB), or Legacy Standard Bible (LSB) with the one you are reading, you can gain a better understanding of the original meaning. Websites like <u>BibleGateway.com</u> or apps like YouVersion offer free access to multiple translations, making it easier to compare and gain deeper insights.

By keeping these tips in mind, you'll be better equipped to read and understand the Psalms in their intended context. Enjoy your journey through the Psalms!

THE MESSIAH



PSALMS 1-2



PSALMS 1-2

This will be a Growth Group Central session. It would be great if you could read through the passage beforehand. This way, you'll be familiar with it and can get the most out of our discussion. If anything stands out to you or if you have any questions, feel free to write them down below. Bring your notes with you to the session, and we can dive deeper into the passage together!

BEFORE NEXT TIME...

Before our next session, you can explore the Psalms further by reading Psalms 3-7. Pay attention to the themes, emotions, and messages in these Psalms and how they connect to the previous ones, as well as how they lead up to our discussion on Psalm 8.

We started the Book of Psalms seeing the promises made in Psalms 1-2. But as we read Psalms 3-7 we find David in difficulty. His son's revolt has been difficult (Psalm 3), and the Psalms following show more suffering on David's part. Yet God has enabled David to persevere through it. Here in Psalm 8, we find David praising God.

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What thoughts or questions do you have about the Psalm?

CONNECTION: Read Genesis 1-2

OLD TESTAMENT

Read Genesis 1-2. What ideas from there occur in this Psalm?

How does this Psalm connect with what came before?

How would you summarise the main message of the Psalm?

BEFORE NEXT TIME...

Why not read Psalms 9-11 before our next session. How do these Psalms follow on from Psalm 8? What themes are repeated from earlier in the book?

In a world that has a lot to say, we can find ourselves on the wrong side of public opinion. But God has said 'I have installed my king on Zion, my holy mountain' (Psalm 2:6) and that those 'whose delight is in the law of the Lord' are blessed (Psalm 1:2). Yet, for David, God's words and promises could seem under threat. Psalm 12 helps us think more about how God's word counters that.
PREP QUESTIONS What thoughts or questions do you have about the Psalm?

How does this Psalm connect with what came before?

How would you summarise the main message of the Psalr	n?
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BEFORE NEXT TIME...

Why not read Psalms 13-15 before our next session. How do these Psalms follow on from Psalm 12? What themes are repeated from earlier in the book?

In Psalm 15 we might feel like we have been left with bad news. David asks 'who may live on your holy mountain?' The answer, after reading the Psalms is 'no-one'. We are no more able to live up to its standards of blamelessness than its own author, David. Yet David has hope, and his hope is found in this Psalm.

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What thoughts or questions do you have about the Psalm?

How does this Psalm connect with what came before?

NEW TESTAMENT CONNECTION:

Read Acts 2:25-28. How does what Peter says here help us read this Psalm, and the other Psalms?

How would you summarise the main message of the Psalm?

BEFORE NEXT TIME...

Why not read Psalm 17 before our next session. Where does the King place his confidence? How does this fit with the previous Psalms?

PSALMS 18-19

Psalms 18 and 19 are similar to Psalms 1 and 2. In both sets of Psalms, the King and God's Word go together. We have seen already that David is writing about his own experience, yet in symbolic ways. David writes in a way that shows he understands who he is in God's programme, and expects another in that pattern to come (as 2 Samuel 7 promised). In Psalms 18 and 19 that idea continues.

programme, and expects another in that pattern to come (as 2 Samuel 7 promised). In Psalms 18 and 19 that idea continues.
PREP QUESTIONS
What thoughts or questions do you have about these Psalms?
What stories from previous Scripture do you spot in Psalm 18?
What repeated phrases from Psalm 18 are there in Psalm 19?
How would you summarise the main message of each Psalm?
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BEFORE NEXT TIME...

Why not read Psalms 20 and 21 before our next session. What do these Psalms add between Psalm 19 and Psalm 22?

PSALMS 22-23

Psalms 22 and 23 are some of the most famous Psalms in the Bible. Psalm 22 is quoted in the New Testament, whilst Psalm 23 is a favourite of many. Put together though, these Psalms are part of the answer to 'who may live on your holy mountain?' (Psalm 15:1), a question that has been asked since Adam and Eve were expelled from Eden (Genesis 3:23).

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What thoughts or questions do you have about these Psalms?

NEW TESTAMENT CONNECTION:

In Mark 15:33-41, Jesus quotes Psalm 22. What connections are there between Psalm 22 and Mark 15 as a whole?

Reading both Psalms 22 and 23 together, what ideas connect them?

How would you summarise the main message of each Psalm?

BEFORE NEXT TIME...

We are going to think about the whole of Book One of the Psalms together in our next session. Why not take the time to read Psalms 24-41 in preparation? Also, do not forget to make a note of any questions for your leaders!

This will be a Growth Group Central session. It would be great if you could read through the passage beforehand. This way, you'll be familiar with it and can get the most out of our discussion. If anything stands out to you or if you have any questions, feel free to write them down below. Bring your notes with you to the session, and we can dive deeper into the passage together!

BEFORE NEXT TIME...

We will look at the next Psalms in Growth Group. Why not skim back over Book One (Psalms 1-41) and write down any more thoughts.

PSALMS 42-44

We have now entered Book Two of the Psalms, which focuses on the transition from David to his son. In these Psalms, we will encounter specific points that connect to David's life as the King of Israel. As we read through these Psalms, it's important to avoid imagining serene English forest scenes with babbling brooks in the background. Instead, we should be mindful of the challenging and difficult situations that the Psalmist addresses. Let's see how the Psalmist tackles these hardships and gain a deeper understanding of their perspective.

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What thoughts or questions do you have about these Psalms?

How do these three Psalms progress?

NEW TESTAMENT CONNECTION:

Romans 8:36 quotes Psalm 44:22. How does this Psalm help Paul's argument?

How would you summarise the main message of each Psalm?

BEFORE NEXT TIME...

We covered a lot in this study. Why not read through Psalms 42-44 again and see what further detail you can spot before we get to Psalm 45 next time. How is Psalm 45 the answer to the feelings expressed in Psalms 42-44?

The wedding bells are ringing! While Psalms 42-44 expressed pain and struggle, the author intentionally placed them in this order to teach us not to get stuck in those feelings. Instead, he calls believers to keep moving forward towards the joyous wedding feast of the King of Israel, as depicted here in Psalm 45...

as depicted here in Psalm 45
PREP QUESTIONS What thoughts or questions do you have about the Psalm?
Split the Psalm into sections. What would those sections be?
How does this Psalm answer the problems posed in Psalms 42-44?
How would you summarise the main message of the Psalm?

BEFORE NEXT TIME...

We are on a roll! Next time we will look at the next three psalms that flow out of Psalm 45. If you were to plot out a timeline according to Psalms 42-45 what would you have? What do Psalms 46-48 add to that?

PSALMS 46-48

We have seen God's people waiting through suffering until the King comes. And then in Psalm 45 we saw their hopes coming about in the wedding feast of the King. And now in Psalms 46-48 it is as if we have come to the end of the world. The 'earth gives way' (Psalm 46), the nations celebrate God's reign (Psalm 47), and then they enter the city of God (Psalm 48). These Psalms beautifully capture the hope of God's people that runs through the Bible.

nations celebrate God's reign (Psalm 47), and then they enter the city of God (Psalm 48). These Psalms beautifully capture the hope of God's people that runs through the Bible.
PREP QUESTIONS What thoughts or questions do you have about these Psalms?
What does the imagery in these Psalms make you think of?
How do these Psalms connect with what came before?
How would you summarise the main message of each Psalm?

BEFORE NEXT TIME...

After a few studies tracking the Psalms in sequence we are going to jump forward a little bit. Why not read Psalms 49 and 50 in preparation, and see how we get from there to Psalm 51. What point might the Book of Psalms be making about David?

Psalm 51 recounts David's experience after he had committed adultery with Bathsheba (2 Samuel 11). It is a wonderful Psalm of confession, drawing on lots of Old Testament language. It is a prayer that every sinner needs. As you read it, note that this is the first Psalm of David that we have had in Book Two of the Psalms. After seeing the amazing rescue and salvation that God's king will bring, we snap back to think about David...

PREP QUESTIONS

What thoughts or questions do you have about the Psalm?

OLD TESTAMENT CONNECTION:

What language is David using here? (see Exodus 34, Leviticus 14:1-32, 1 Samuel 16:13-14).

What might the compiler of the Psalms be saying about King David in light of the previous Psalms?

How would you summarise the main message of the Psalm?

BEFORE NEXT TIME...

Why not read Psalms 52-68 before our next session. How would you summarise David's experience here? What themes from Psalms 1-2 come through?

As we reach the conclusion of Book Two in the Psalms, we witness a striking parallel between the beginning and end of David's life. David's journey commenced amidst persecution, and now, as we approach the end, we find him facing rejection. He laments the unjust hatred of his enemies, who seem to despise him without reason. However, despite these challenges, David's heart ultimately turns towards praise and gratitude to God.

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What thoughts or questions do you have about the Psalm?

NEW TESTAMENT CONNECTION:

How does John use this Psalm in John 2:17, and John 19:28.

How does this Psalm connect with what came before?

What about Paul in Romans 15:3?

How would you summarise the main message of the Psalm?

BEFORE NEXT TIME...

We are going to think about the whole of Book Two of the Psalms together in our next session. Why not take the time to read Psalms 70 and 71 in preparation? Also, do not forget to make a note of any questions for your leaders!

This will be a Growth Group Central session. It would be great if you could read through the passage beforehand. This way, you'll be familiar with it and can get the most out of our discussion. If anything stands out to you or if you have any questions, feel free to write them down below. Bring your notes with you to the session, and we can dive deeper into the passage together!

BEFORE NEXT TIME...

We will look at the following Psalm in our next study. Why not skim back over Book Two (Psalms 42-72) and write down any more thoughts you may have.

ended. We saw the great promises being prayed for. God's grand plan for bringing everyth He had promised was coming together with the King. However, as we delve into Psalm 73, encounter a contrasting perspective. One author says this Psalm is 'a theological, emotion and narratival whiplash'.	ing we
PREP QUESTIONS What thoughts or questions do you have about the Psalm?	

What big question is this Psalm asking? Why is it asking that?

How would you summarise the main message of the Psalm?	i
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BEFORE NEXT TIME...

Why not read Psalms 74-78 before our next session. How do these Psalms develop the ideas found in Psalm 73? What is the storyline?

In our previous study we found the Psalmist asking why God allows the world to be as we see it. As we turn to Psalm 78, we see that God's people - Israel in this case - have a history of disobedience. What should God's people expect?

disobedience. What should God's people expect?
PREP QUESTIONS What thoughts or questions do you have about the Psalm?
How does this Psalm answer the question of Psalm 73?
What does this Psalm teach us about remembering God's actions in the past?
How would you summarise the main message of the Psalm?

BEFORE NEXT TIME...

We will look at Psalm 79 in our next study. Why not read back from Psalm 72 to this point in preparation. What do you expect to happen next? What are we meant to think as we come to Psalm 79?

Remember back to Psalm 72. We saw great things being said recalling God's promises to His people throughout the Bible. Yet, the Psalmist has been saying that he does not see those things in reality. And now, as we make it to Psalm 79, we see something drastic happen: "the nations have invaded your inheritance" (Psalm 79:1).

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Should we be surprised at what this Psalm describes? What things from the previous Psalms make that the case?

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BEFORE NEXT TIME...

We are going to look at the next Psalm in our next study. In preparation, why not go back to Psalm 72 and think about the things that Psalm is looking for. What do we need?

In the midst of terrible situations what must God's people look forward to? We have seen the Psalms reflecting on what is going on in the history of God's people, and then asking what God's people should expect for their actions. But where should they place their hope for the future? That is where we find ourselves in Psalm 80.

PREP QUESTIONS

What thoughts or questions do you have about the Psalm?

NEW TESTAMENT CONNECTION:

How does this Psalm fit with what Jesus says in John 15?

How does the hope of this Psalm answer the previous ones?

How would you summarise the main message of the Psalm?

BEFORE NEXT TIME...

Why not read through Psalms 81-83 in preparation for next time. We have seen the hope of God's people resting on the coming king, how do Psalms 81-83 develop that hope?

After the bruising pain of Psalm 79, as the temple was invaded, the Psalmist took us on a tour of the future promises. In Psalm 80, God's hopes rest on the King to come. In Psalm 81, celebration erupts. In Psalms 82-83 we see pictures of judgement before we land here in Psalm 84 and see the Psalmist reflecting on the New Jerusalem. Whatever happens in the life of God's people now, they can be assured that the future is secure.

PREP QUESTIONS

How does this Psalm connect with what came before?

BEFORE NEXT TIME...

We are going to think about the whole of Book Three of the Psalms together in our next session. Why not read through Psalms 85-87 in preparation? What do they add to the picture we have been seeing in Psalms 80-84?

PSALMS 88-89

This will be a Growth Group Central session. It would be great if you could read through the passage beforehand. This way, you'll be familiar with it and can get the most out of our discussion. If anything stands out to you or if you have any questions, feel free to write them down below. Bring your notes with you to the session, and we can dive deeper into the passage together!

BEFORE NEXT TIME...

We will look at Psalm 90 next in Growth Group. Why not skim back over Book Three (Psalms 73-89) and write down any more thoughts you have as you read.

Book Three ended with the curses of the covenant falling on the people. The Davidic crown is in the dust (Psalm 89:39), the Lord is hiding His face (Psalm 89:46), the nation is dead. So what happens next? Is that the end of the story? Psalms 90-106 give us the answer!

happens next? Is that the end of the story? Psalms 90-106 give us the answer!
PREP QUESTIONS What thoughts or questions do you have about the Psalm?
How does this Psalm connect with what came before?
Why do you think we go back to Moses here in light of what has happened in Book Three?
How would you summarise the main message of the Psalm?
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BEFORE NEXT TIME...

We will look at Psalm 91 in our next session. Why not read Psalm 90 again? What does it suggest is the solution to exile?

We saw that the promises to David were in jeopardy at the close of Book Three (Ps 89). Yet, as we read Book Four, Moses suddenly appears and intercedes (Ps 90). As we come to Psalm 91 we see the hopes of the Psalmist come through onto the King to come. It is interesting to note that Psalm 91 is the Psalm Satan quotes when Jesus arrives in the gospels! (Matthew 3:6).

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PREP QUESTIONS What thoughts or questions do you have about the Psalm?
How does this Psalm connect to what we saw in Psalm 90?
How would you break this Psalm into sections?
How would you summarise the main message of the Psalm?

BEFORE NEXT TIME...

Why not read Psalms 92-94 before next time? What picture do these Psalms paint for us? Why might that be a useful thing to remember?

As we work through the Psalms the big message has been 'the King is coming'. Yet there are many challenges in believing that: people are saying the opposite; experience suggests otherwise, etc. Every time we read the Psalms we are given a choice, and that choice comes up here in Psalm 95. In anticipation of the promises God has made, Psalm 95 warns us what we should not do.

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What thoughts or questions do you have about the Psalm?

NEW TESTAMENT CONNECTION:

How does Hebrews 3 use this Psalm?

How does this Psalm connect with what came before?

How would you summarise the main message of the Psalm?

BEFORE NEXT TIME...

Why not read Psalms 96-102 before next time. What is the big message that spans these Psalms?

Book Four of the Psalms began with Moses. God's people were facing judgement and exile. Yet, despite all appearances, God still reigns. But how is God going to bring about His promises? Psalm 103 gives us the beginning of an answer.

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How does this Psalm connect with what came before?

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HOW WOULD A	ou summarise	the main	message (of the	Psalm?

BEFORE NEXT TIME...

We are going to think about the conclusion of Book Four of the Psalms together in our next session. Why not read through Psalms 104 and 105 in preparation? What is the Psalmist doing in these Psalms?

This will be a Growth Group Central session. It would be great if you could read through the passage beforehand. This way, you'll be familiar with it and can get the most out of our discussion. If anything stands out to you or if you have any questions, feel free to write them down below. Bring your notes with you to the session, and we can dive deeper into the passage together!

BEFORE NEXT TIME...

We will look at Psalm 107 next time in Growth Group. Why not skim back over Book Four (Psalms 90-106) and write down any more thoughts you have as you read.

Book Four ended with the Psalms encouraging God's people to trust God's promises. Moses said back in the Pentateuch that if the people repented and called to God, He would rescue them (Leviticus 26:40-42, Deuteronomy 4:29-31). Psalm 106 finished recalling that promise: 'Save us, LORD our God, and gather us from the nations, that we may give thanks to your holy name and glory in your praise' (Psalm 106:47). So, as we enter the final book of the Psalms, let's see what happens.

and glory in your praise' (Psalm 106:47). So, as we enter the final book of the Psalms, let's see what happens.
PREP QUESTIONS What thoughts or questions do you have about the Psalm?
How does this Psalm connect with Psalm 106?
When (time-wise) does it appear the Psalmist is speaking? Why?
How would you summarise the main message of the Psalm?

BEFORE NEXT TIME...

Why not read Psalms 108 and 109 before next time. What big theme ties these Psalms together?

Psalm 110 is the most quoted Psalm in the New Testament, and for good reason. As we read this Psalm we want to keep in mind the promises made to David back in 2 Samuel 7. God promised David a descendant who would reign forever. What will he look like?

PREP QUESTIONS

What thoughts or questions do you have about the Psalm?

OLD TESTAMENT CONNECTION:

Read Genesis 14. What does this Psalm have in connection to it?

How does this Psalm connect with what came before?

How would you summarise the main message of the Psalm?

BEFORE NEXT TIME...

This Psalm is a high point of the Book of Psalms. Why not read Psalms 111-117 and see what flows out from this Psalm?

In Psalm 110 we read about the conquering King, and then through Psalms 111-117 we read of God's deliverance (or New Exodus) brought about by that King. And here in Psalm 118 it is as if that King enters Jerusalem to the praise of his people.

PREP QUESTIONS

What thoughts or questions do you have about the Psalm?

How does this Psalm connect with what came before?

NEW TESTAMENT CONNECTION:

Matthew 21:9, 42 and 23:39 pick up on this Psalm. How does this match with what the Psalm is doing?

How would you summarise the main message of the Psalm?

BEFORE NEXT TIME...

This is a good time to pause and take stock of where we have got to before we review next time. What is the biggest thing you have learnt? What do you still not understand?

Two things are striking about Psalm 119. Firstly, it is the longest Psalm in the collection. Clearly praising God for His word. One commentator says that it points out 'that God's word applies to everything from A-Z'. Secondly, Psalm 119 sits right at the center of Book Five, so that makes it key to understanding the message of this section. We saw in Psalm 118 God's King entering Jerusalem, and now (just like Psalm 18-19) we celebrate God's word.

Jerusalem, and now (just like Psalm 18-19) we celebrate God's word.
PREP QUESTIONS
What thoughts or questions do you have about the Psalm?
What lines at viles you from this Dealms?
What lines strike you from this Psalm?
What echoes of Psalm 1 can you see in this Psalm?
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How would you summarise the main message of the Psalm?
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BEFORE NEXT TIME...

Why not read Psalms 120-131 in preparation for next time. How do these Psalms move the storyline along from Psalms 118-119?

Psalm 132 is one of the 'songs of ascents' or more literally the 'songs of going up'. The great hope of the prophets, after the Messiah comes, is for the nations to stream to Zion (see Isaiah 2), and that is what we seem to have going on here. We saw back in Psalm 89 the experience of the people, with all hopes dashed as David's crown lay 'defiled in the dust' (Psalm 89:39). Yet in this Psalm things are looking up.
PREP QUESTIONS
What thoughts or questions do you have about the Psalm?
How does this Psalm answer the cry of Psalm 89?

How would you	ı summarise the	main message	of the Psalm?
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BEFORE NEXT TIME...

Why not read Psalms 133-138 before next time. As you do that, chart out the emotions - where do they climb to, where do they dip?

Psalm 137 was another 'snap back to reality', to where the people currently stand historically. Despite Boney M's upbeat rendition, the situation is dire. Yet, as we have worked through the Psalms we have been called to trust that the King is coming. And so, in Psalms 138-145 we come back to Psalms of King David, and in Psalm 139 we see the way he reflects on this situation.

come back to Psalms of King David, and in Psalm 139 we see the way he reflects on this situation.
PREP QUESTIONS What thoughts or questions do you have about the Psalm?
What connections are there between Psalm 137 and 139?
How would you break down the structure of Psalm 139?
How would you summarise the main message of the Psalm?

BEFORE NEXT TIME...

We are going to think about the conclusion to Book Five of the Psalms together in our next session. Why not read through Psalms 140-144 before next time; where is David's confidence found?

PSALMS 145-150

This will be a Growth Group Central session. It would be great if you could read through the passage beforehand. This way, you'll be familiar with it and can get the most out of our discussion. If anything stands out to you or if you have any questions, feel free to write them down below. Bring your notes with you to the session, and we can dive deeper into the passage together!

BEFORE NEXT TIME...

We are at the end of the Book of Psalms! What do you want to remember, what do you still want to learn? Write it down now, and then do it!

QUESTIONS I HAVE...







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