

Opening Track

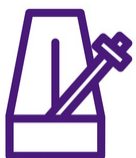


Bible Reference:
Psalm 118

The book of Psalms contains songs, prayers and poems that express the full range of human emotion. In this opening track to the series, the young people will begin exploring what the Psalms are, why they have remained important for thousands of years and how they continue to shape worship and prayer today. As they explore Psalm 118 together, they will discover that the Psalms encourage honest worship that brings every emotion and experience before God.

You will need:

- Psalms Fact Sheet
- Coloured pens and highlighters



Beat

Say:

Over the next few weeks we're going to explore the Psalms from the Old Testament. The Psalms are songs, prayers and poems that express all kinds of emotions and experiences.

Just like the music people listen to today, the Psalms speak about joy, sadness, fear, hope, anger, worship and trust. For thousands of years, both Jews and Christians have turned to these words when they struggled to express how they were feeling.

Ask:

- What song do you listen to when you are feeling happy?
- What song do you listen to when you are feeling sad?
- What song do you listen to when you need motivation?
- What song helps you relax or switch off?

Leader's notes:

Give the young people time to discuss the questions together. Encourage them to think about why certain songs stay with us and how music can connect with particular emotions, memories or situations in life. Some young people may want to share meaningful lyrics or playlists they return to during different seasons or experiences.

**Bridge****Ask:**

- Why do you think people often turn to music when they are struggling to express how they feel?
- What might this suggest about why the Psalms have remained important for so many people across history?

Amplify

Say:

Many people can share a favourite psalm, even those who do not profess to believe, since this extensive book of Old Testament poetry communicates the whole range of human emotion. For centuries, Jews and Christians alike have used the book of Psalms as an integral part of their prayer life and worship.

Leader's notes:

Give each member of the group a Psalms Fact Sheet.

Say:

Over the next few weeks we will explore psalms of heartbreak and desolation, along with psalms filled with joy and praise.

Leader's notes:

Review the key information about the Psalms and discuss the facts as you go through the sheet. There are additional questions and verses to explore on the sheet, but the main aim is to gain an overall understanding of the Psalms.

Ask:

- What surprised you about the Psalms?
- Why do you think the Psalms have remained so important to people across history?





Bridge

Leader's notes:

The following optional clip is quite long but provides a helpful overview of the Psalms. If your group would enjoy exploring the Psalms in more depth, watch the clip together and discuss the ideas it raises afterwards.

Watch:

Psalms: The Bible Explained – Spoken Gospel (11:22)

www.youtube.com/watch?v=L6NSw20AkJQ



Sound Check

Say:

Earlier in the session we discovered that the overarching theme of the book of Psalms is praise and thanksgiving. Many of the songs in this book give us an opportunity to worship God. Psalm 118 is a song of thanksgiving to God.

Leader's notes:

Read through Psalm 118 together. Make sure you're all using the same version! The group could read a couple of verses each.

Once you have read through the psalm together, divide the young people into smaller groups. Encourage them to annotate their copy of Psalm 118 by identifying the different emotions, experiences and themes found throughout the psalm. They may want to underline sections, highlight repeated ideas, or use symbols, colours or pictures to represent different emotions and themes within the passage.

Ask:

- What range of emotions are found in this psalm of thanksgiving?
- Which verses stand out to you the most? Why?
- What do you notice about the way the psalmist speaks to God?
- What does this psalm suggest about the relationship between the psalmist and God?

Say:

Although Psalm 118 is filled with praise and celebration, it also speaks about fear, pressure, struggle and rescue. The psalmist reflects honestly on difficult experiences while continuing to trust God.

Ask:

- Does this psalm bring to mind any modern worship songs that we sing today? If so, which ones?
- Which worship songs connect with real struggles or emotions in a similar way?
- Why do you think honesty is such an important part of worship and prayer?

Say:

The Psalms remind us that worship is not just about pretending everything is fine. The psalmists brought real emotions, struggles, questions and celebrations before God.

**Ask:**

- What can we learn from the psalmist?
- How can we use what we have discovered in our own prayer and worship?

Selah

Leader's notes:

Invite the young people to keep their copy of Psalm 118 in front of them. Ask for volunteers to read the following verses: Psalm 118:1-2; 16-17; and 22-24.

Ask:

- What do these verses reveal about who God is?
- Which words and phrases stand out to you the most?

Say:

Psalm 118 reminds us that God is good, faithful and worthy of praise. Even in the middle of struggle and uncertainty, the psalmist continues to trust God and give thanks.

Leader's notes:

As the song plays, encourage the young people to reflect quietly on the truths about God found in these verses. You may wish to invite them to use the words and themes from Psalm 118 to shape a simple prayer of praise, trust or thanksgiving.

Watch:

Psalm 118 – 'Give Thanks To The Lord (For He Is Good)' – Francesca LaRosa (Official Lyric Video) (3:54)

www.youtube.com/watch?v=bZ5CtayuRT4

Coda

Say:

In a piece of music, the coda brings the different aspects of the melody, harmonies and bassline to a conclusion. It pulls together the different themes and often, but not always, brings resolution to a piece of music.

Ask:

- As you reflect on everything you have learned today, what is your coda?
- What is the one thing you have discovered about the Psalms that you didn't know before?

Leader's notes:

Give the young people a moment to think about your question and briefly share their coda with the group before the session comes to an end.



Psalms Fact Sheet

Many people are able to share a favourite psalm, even those who do not profess to believe, as this extensive book of Old Testament poetry communicates the whole range of human emotion. For centuries Jews and Christians alike have used the Psalms as an integral part of their prayer life and worship. Over the coming months we will explore psalms of heartbreak and desolation along with psalms filled with joy and praise.

Title

The Hebrew title - Tehillim (praises)
The Greek title - Psalmoi (songs usually sung to instrumental accompaniment)
The English title - Psalms (or the Psalter)
All these titles suggest that this book is full of songs, both accompanied and unaccompanied. that came to play an important part in the life and worship of the early Church. The book of Psalms is basically a songbook!

Inspiration

Although the psalmists used their own words, the way they expressed their praises and prayers (and complaints) to God was inspired by the Holy Spirit. Through their words they passed on God's wisdom, reflected on the challenges of Life and shared the thoughts and feelings of their community with God. The book of Psalms that we read today was collated and gathered together over a period of many years.

'I love the intensity of the Psalms. No one ever sounds bored about God or about life in the Psalms'
- MATT REDMAN

Authors

Although David is the most well-known author of the Psalms, he is not the only one! The book of Psalms was written over a time period of 1,200 years. The oldest psalm was possibly written by Moses (Psalm 90), but other authors include David, Solomon, Asaph, Ethan, Hemon and quite a few whose identity we will never know.

Structure

The Psalms are divided into five smaller books. Look up the verses listed underneath each title. What theme do they have in common?

Book 1: Psalms 1 to 41

Psalm 41:13

Book 2: Psalms 42 to 72 Psalm 106:48

Psalm 72:18-20

Book 3: Psalms 73 to 89

Psalm 89:52

Book 4: Psalms 90 to 106

Psalm 106:48

Book 5: Psalms 107 to 150

Psalm 150

As you look at the verses in bold, what do you think the overall theme of the book of Psalms is?

At the end of each book there is a Doxology. A Doxology is a statement and declaration of praise to God and they can be found throughout the Old and New Testaments.

What's your response to Matt Redman's thoughts about the Psalms?