

# PRAYING THE PSALMS



## PLAN OVERVIEW

This spring/summer, we as a church are committed to “redeeming the times” (Ephesians 5:16) by reading Scripture and praying together. We will be reading a total of sixty psalms from the book of Psalms; and in addition to reading them, we will be praying the Psalms, asking God to transform us in the ways we think, feel, and act.

In this 12-week journey, we invite everyone to read one psalm a day, for a total of five each week. While the plan is designed to be read Monday through Friday, it can be read any five days of the week! (Weekends are set aside for catching up on missed readings from the week.) This journey is also designed to be multi-generational, so we invite parents to include their children in the daily readings! (There is a book called Psalms for Young Children that corresponds with the majority of the psalms we will be reading.)

For a deeper experience of this reading/prayer plan, we invite you to spend the weekend doing one or all of the following: (1) revisiting one of the psalms from the previous week’s plan and meditating on it, (2) spending time memorizing Psalm 146, a psalm the church is invited to memorize together, (3) fasting for a period of time on Saturday, and/or (4) joining others for prayer at the weekly church-wide prayer gathering (Saturdays at 10AM).

WEEK 1	WEEK 2	WEEK 3	WEEK 4	WEEK 5	WEEK 6
<i>May 4 – May 10</i>	<i>May 11 – May 17</i>	<i>May 18 – May 24</i>	<i>May 25 – May 31</i>	<i>June 1 – June 7</i>	<i>June 8 – June 14</i>
Psalm 1 <i>Psalm 3</i> Psalm 4 Psalm 5 Psalm 8	Psalm 9 Psalm 13 <i>Psalm 16</i> Psalm 18 <i>Psalm 19</i>	<i>Psalm 22</i> Psalm 23 <i>Psalm 24</i> Psalm 25 Psalm 27	Psalm 28 <i>Psalm 31</i> Psalm 32 Psalm 34 <i>Psalm 35</i>	<i>Psalm 37</i> <i>Psalm 40</i> Psalm 42 Psalm 46 Psalm 47	Psalm 51 <i>Psalm 55</i> Psalm 61 <i>Psalm 62</i> Psalm 63
WEEK 7	WEEK 8	WEEK 9	WEEK 10	WEEK 11	WEEK 12
<i>June 15 – June 21</i>	<i>June 22 – June 28</i>	<i>June 29 – July 4</i>	<i>July 5 – July 11</i>	<i>July 12 – July 19</i>	<i>July 20 – July 26</i>
Psalm 69 Psalm 70 <i>Psalm 73</i> Psalm 74 Psalm 84	Psalm 85 Psalm 86 <i>Psalm 88</i> Psalm 89 <i>Psalm 90</i>	Psalm 91 Psalm 95 Psalm 98 Psalm 100 <i>Psalm 101</i>	Psalm 103 Psalm 104 Psalm 108 Psalm 113 Psalm 116	Psalm 117 <i>Psalm 118</i> <i>Psalm 121</i> Psalm 125 Psalm 130	Psalm 136 <i>Psalm 137</i> Psalm 139 Psalm 143 Psalm 150

NOTE: All of the listed Psalms (EXCEPT for the ones in *italics*) can be found in Psalms for Young Children.

## FOR DAILY REFLECTION AND PRAYER

1. What does this Psalm reveal about God?
2. How is my life being touched by this passage?
3. What does this Psalm tell me about the world?
4. What might God be inviting me to today?
5. Spend some time responding to God.\*\*

## EACH DAY, BEFORE YOU READ...

Remember that there are a number of things you can do on a daily basis to help your mind, heart, and body, enter a time of intentionality with God! For some of you, this might mean dimming the lights, beginning with a few minutes of silence, or listening to music. For others of you, it might mean lighting a candle, practicing a mindfulness activity, or finding a quiet and routine place to regularly read/pray Scripture. Whatever it may be, we encourage you to establish a daily ritual to help you experience solitude with God. And each time you begin, begin by inviting God to speak to you and to remind you of God's loving presence.

## SUGGESTIONS FOR HOW TO RESPOND AFTER READING A PSALM

There are numerous ways we can respond to God after reading a psalm. Below is a list of ideas to get you started. Please note that items 10-17 are the most family-friendly!

- 1. LINGER OVER THE WORDS.** Is there a particular verse that is particularly relevant to your life right now? Chew on it. Read it over and over, with a different emphasis on each word.
- 2. RE-WRITE THE PSALM.** Simply rewrite (word-for-word) the psalm you just read. There is something memorable and powerful about the process of writing words on paper.
- 3. READ THE PSALM ALOUD.** Read the psalm aloud to yourself. Listen to the words as you say them aloud. Don't rush through the reading; instead, emphasize certain words and pause for moments of silence throughout your reading.
- 4. IMAGINE JESUS PRAYING THE PSALM.** Read the psalm once through and on the second reading, imagine Jesus praying the psalm. Imagine what the words would mean coming out of Jesus' mouth as both a human and God, in His suffering and in His glory. He said that all the Psalms are about Him (Luke 24:44).
- 5. IMAGINE SOMEONE ELSE PRAYING THE PSALM.** Identify someone who shares a different social identity than you (i.e., someone of a different gender, race, political affiliation, social class, etc.) and imagine that person praying the psalm. Imagine what the psalm might mean to them-- which words might resonate more deeply and what sort of experiences might be evoked.
- 6. PRACTICE CENTERING PRAYER.** Identify a word or short phrase from the psalm and use that word/phrase as a focus word/phrase for silent prayer. Meditate by focusing your thoughts around that word/phrase. Pay attention to any thoughts, feelings, images, and associations that come up during this time, and when your mind gets distracted, simply return to your original word/phrase-- your anchor. Do this for several minutes.
- 7. PRACTICE SUBTRACTION PRAYER.** Identify a short verse from the psalm. Begin by saying (praying) the whole verse. Repeat the verse, except each time you repeat it, slowly "subtract" a word or phrase from the original verse you selected. Keep repeating this process until you are left with just one or two words from the verse. (Ex: The Lord is my shepherd// The Lord is my// The Lord is// The Lord.)
- 8. GO ON A PRAYER WALK.** Take a walk outside and ask God to guide your walk-- to help you take notice of the people, places, or things you may otherwise not pay close attention to. Pray for the people and places you pass by.
- 9. RESPOND WITH WORSHIP AND THANKSGIVING.** Make a list of things you feel grateful for. First, write down everything that is easy to thank God for. Then, press yourself to make a list of simple, small things that you are also grateful for—things you don't think of naturally or very easily. Finally, review your list and thank God for all the ways that God has shown God's love to you.
- 10. READ ALOUD WITH ANOTHER PERSON.** Pair up with someone else and take turns reading the psalm aloud to one another. You can take turns reading the entire psalm or take turns reading the psalm once through (breaking up the psalm into multiple sections).
- 11. MAKE A LIST.** Depending on the psalm, make a list of emotions that the psalmist expressed, a list of attributes of God that were highlighted, a list of personal confessions, etc.
- 12. CULTIVATE CURIOSITY.** Write a list of questions that you have. Why do you think the psalmist wrote the words he did? What questions do you have for the psalmist? What questions do you have for God?
- 13. PARTICIPATE IN CREATIVE WRITING.** Re-write a portion of the psalm in your own words from your own perspective and personal context. Or, pretend you are God writing a response to the psalmist. Whatever the scenario, write a creative response to the psalm.
- 14. PARTICIPATE IN CREATIVE EXPRESSION.** Imagine what this psalm would sound like as a song, look like as a painting, or feel like as a performance! Consider turning your reflection into a creative piece! (Ex: Sculpt a response with clay, draw with markers, write using prose or poetry, create a response through music using an instrument of your choice)
- 15. CREATE A VISUAL REMINDER.** Did a particular word or verse stand out to you? Write the word(s) or verse(s) on a piece of paper and place the paper in a visible place so that you can be reminded of God's truth each time you see it.
- 16. MEMORIZE.** Identify a verse (or verses) you want to memorize! Rehearse the verse(s) over and over aloud until you can recite the verse(s) by memory.
- 17. LISTEN TO A SONG.** Find a song that matches some aspect of the psalm that you just read (ex: the mood, theme, words, imagery, etc.). Listen to that song and ask God what God might be inviting you to hear.
- 18. SHARE YOUR REFLECTIONS.** After a time of solitude, share your personal and authentic reflections with a friend or family member! If it is with someone who did not grow up going to church, avoid using familiar Christian terms and share it using language that he/she can access!

# MEMORIZING PSALM 146 - TOGETHER!

NEW LIVING TRANSLATION

**Instructions:** During this 12-week journey, we are inviting the whole church (adults and children) to memorize the following psalm! Here is a suggested memorization schedule. We look forward to reciting it together this summer!

**Week 1:** Praise the Lord! Let all that I am praise the Lord. (verse 1)

**Week 2:** I will praise the Lord as long as I live. I will sing praises to my God with my dying breath. (verse 2)

**Week 3:** Don't put your confidence in powerful people; there is no help for you there. When they breathe their last, they return to the earth, and all their plans die with them. (verses 3-4)

**Week 4:** Don't put your confidence in powerful people; there is no help for you there. When they breathe their last, they return to the earth, and all their plans die with them. (verses 3-4 REVIEW)

**Week 5:** But joyful are those who have the God of Israel as their helper, whose hope is in the Lord their God. (verse 5)

**Week 6:** Review verses 1-5

**Week 7:** He made heaven and earth, the sea, and everything in them. He keeps every promise forever. (verse 6)

**Week 8:** He gives justice to the oppressed and food to the hungry. The Lord frees the prisoners. (verse 7)

**Week 9:** The Lord opens the eyes of the blind. The Lord lifts up those who are weighed down. The Lord loves the godly. (verse 8)

**Week 10:** The Lord protects the foreigners among us. He cares for the orphans and widows, but he frustrates the plans of the wicked. (verse 9)

**Week 11:** The Lord will reign forever. He will be your God, O Jerusalem, throughout the generations. Praise the Lord! (verse 10)

**Week 12:** Review verses 1-10. WE DID IT!!

## Psalm 146

1 Praise the Lord!

Let all that I am praise the Lord.

2 I will praise the Lord as long as I live.  
I will sing praises to my God with my dying breath.

3 Don't put your confidence in powerful people;  
there is no help for you there.

4 When they breathe their last, they return to the earth,  
and all their plans die with them.

5 But joyful are those who have the God of Israel as their helper,  
whose hope is in the Lord their God.

6 He made heaven and earth,  
the sea, and everything in them.  
He keeps every promise forever.

7 He gives justice to the oppressed  
and food to the hungry.

The Lord frees the prisoners.

8 The Lord opens the eyes of the blind.  
The Lord lifts up those who are weighed down.  
The Lord loves the godly.

9 The Lord protects the foreigners among us.  
He cares for the orphans and widows,  
but he frustrates the plans of the wicked.

10 The Lord will reign forever.  
He will be your God, O Jerusalem, throughout the generations.

Praise the Lord!

# FASTING ON SATURDAYS

As we begin our 12-week journey, we invite you to consider engaging in the spiritual discipline of fasting!

## WHY FASTING?

The Bible presents fasting as something that is good, profitable, and beneficial. In Acts, the believers fasted before they made important decisions (Acts 13:2; Acts 14:23). And in other books of the Bible, fasting and prayer were linked together for preparation (Exodus 34:28, Luke 5:33) or included in God's call to repentance (Joel 2:12). In a world where "our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms" (Ephesians 6:12), prayer and fasting are more than "nice" activities for Christians to do. Instead, they are God's greatest weapons for our spiritual lives and spiritual world! Prayer and fasting not only draw us closer to God, but they also unleash God's power into our world!

## NEWCOM'S FAST

As a church, we will be fasting weekly on Saturdays\*. The fast will begin on Saturday, May 9 and continue each Saturday thereafter (or a total of 12 weeks). Everyone is invited to participate in the weekly Saturday morning prayer meeting (at 10AM) for encouragement and prayer accountability!

*\*While the duration of the fast will vary from person to person, we suggest beginning the fast at 10AM on Saturday and breaking the fast either during communion on Sunday or at the conclusion of Sunday service.*

## BEFORE YOU FAST

Before you begin your fast, please consider the following:

1. Identify what you will be abstaining from. (Ex: food, TV, social media, electronics, common activity, etc.)
2. Determine how long you will be abstaining from that item or activity. (Ex: 6 hours, 24 hours, etc.)
3. Determine how you want to engage in prayer during your time of fasting. (Use The 4 R's to guide your fast)

## THE 4 R'S TO GUIDE YOUR FAST

- 1. REFLECTION** • While fasting always involves abstaining from something, the goal of spiritual fasting is not abstaining; rather, it is an invitation to take our eyes off ourselves so that we can focus them completely on God. Fasting can help us refocus our attention on God and on what's most important. Tip: Spend some time reading over texts, lifting up prayers, or asking yourself questions that will help you draw near to God and surrender to God's will.
- 2. REPENTANCE** • Self-examination is crucial. As we reflect on who God is and the people we are called to be, we are inevitably going to notice areas we've fallen short: areas we are prideful, self-sufficient, etc. But Christian self-examination should always bring us back to the reminder of God's grace. Tip: Lift up prayers of repentance. Identify areas of your life that are out of sync with God's will- and lift up prayers of apology.
- 3. RESOLUTION** • As the time of fasting progresses and concludes, it's helpful to take notice of what is surfacing in you and what you're being challenged to surrender. This may lead to making a certain kind of decision you weren't ready to make before. This may lead to feeling a greater resolve to do something that you didn't feel as resolved to do before. Tip: Identify one resolution-- even if it's small-- at the end of the fast.
- 4. RELAX** • Fasting is not a type of punishment! It can feel hard, but it's not meant to be a burdensome discipline. Also, if you fail to fast from the item/activity as long as you intended to-- remember not to get discouraged. If you fail, try again. (Pr 24:16). Remember to focus on Jesus. It is all about who Christ is and what Christ did for us on the cross.

As we begin to fast together, we remember that we cannot control the outcomes of our fast; but we may find through the process that our prayer time with God becomes something we deeply desire; we may even feel a deeper connection with the Holy Spirit or a sharpened understanding of God's will! Whatever the case, we wait expectantly for God to meet us in fast and trust that God will truly meet us where we are.