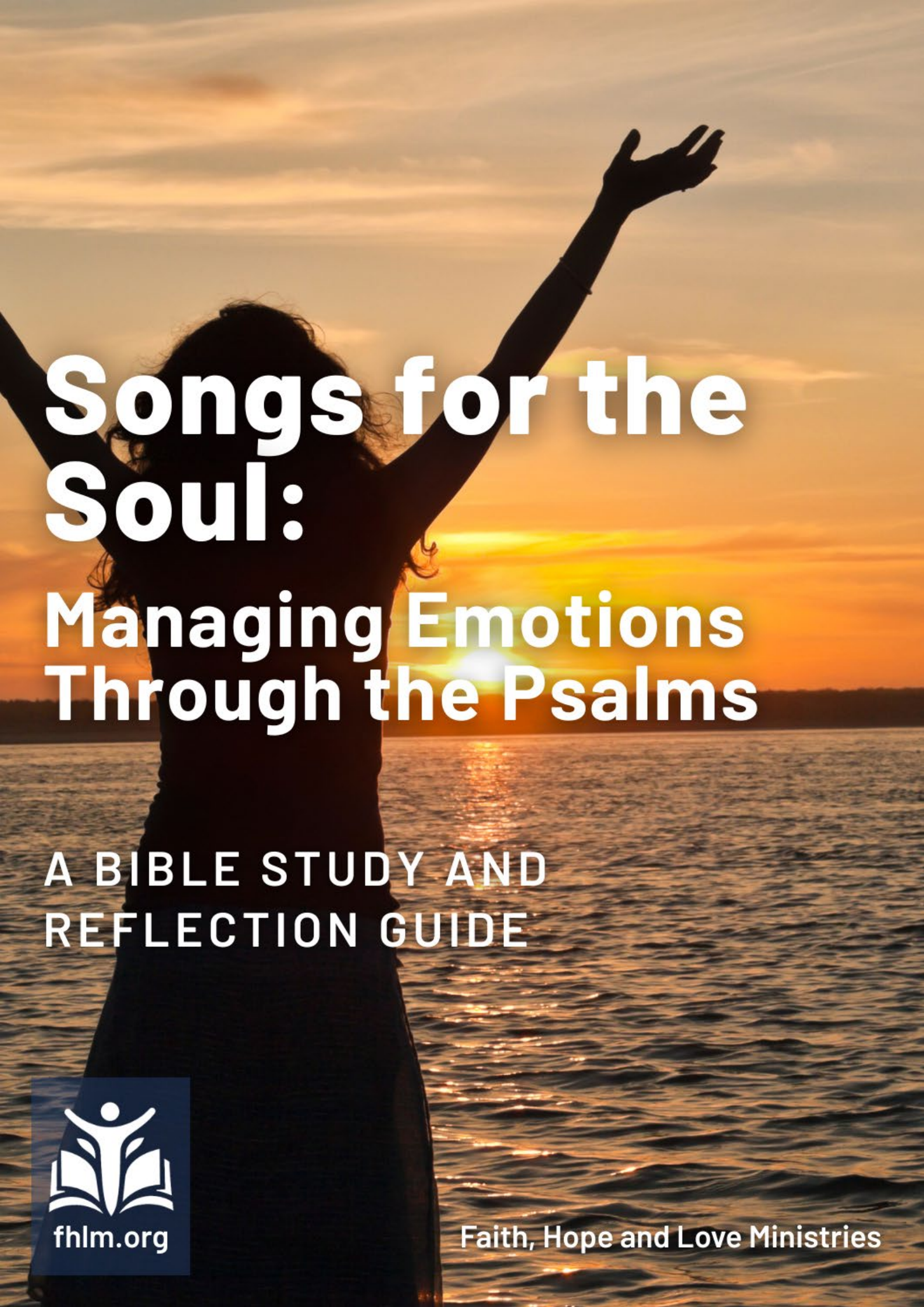




Songs for the Soul:

Managing Emotions Through the Psalms

**A BIBLE STUDY AND
REFLECTION GUIDE**



fhlm.org

Faith, Hope and Love Ministries

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About Us

At FHLM, we are dedicated to nurturing faith, fostering hope, and spreading love. We provide both spiritual and practical guidance to Christians, students, and Christian leaders. We are not a church, and we do not offer financial support.

We are a small ministry with a simple hope: to put warm, thoughtful, Bible-centred resources into the hands of anyone who wants to grow closer to Jesus — whether you are gathering a group around a kitchen table or sitting quietly with a cup of tea and an open Bible. Everything we make is offered freely, in the hope that it will be a blessing and passed on.

Core Values

Our mission is grounded in the values of unconditional love and unity. We prioritise inclusion and diversity over dogmatism and division, reaching out to people right where they are, and trying our best to follow the example of Jesus.

Contents

This guide is organised into three main sections:

- Leaders Guide
- Bible Study Notes
- Worksheet

Note

This guide is formatted for double-sided printing, to save paper and make for a nicer reading experience.

Stay in Touch

We would love to keep company with you. Do come and explore our growing library of Bible study and reflection guides, all free to use and share, and let us know how you get on. You can find everything, and say hello, at <https://fhlm.org>.

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Leader's Guide

Songs for the Soul: Managing Emotions Through the Psalms

Introduction for Leaders and Solo Readers

Dear Friends,

Welcome to “Songs for the Soul: Managing Emotions Through the Psalms,” from all of us at Faith, Hope, and Love Ministries. Whether you are leading a group or making this journey on your own, we are so very glad you are here. Over the coming sessions we are going to do something the people of God have done for three thousand years: we are going to bring the whole of our inner life — the light and the shade of it — to Him, and let the Psalms teach us how.

The Psalter has often been called the prayer book of the Bible, and with good reason. Here is the full range of the human heart set to music: soaring gladness and bitter grief, calm trust and honest fear, gratitude, loneliness, even flashes of anger. Nothing is tidied away or hidden. That, we think, is a great mercy. It tells us that God is not waiting for us to feel the right things before we come to Him; He invites us just as we are, and He meets us there.

A quick word about that little phrase in our title, “managing emotions.” We do not mean bottling feelings up, or pretending them away, or gritting our teeth until they pass. We mean something warmer: learning to feel deeply and faithfully at once — to name what stirs in us, to carry it to God without flinching, and to let Him gently reshape it. The Psalms rarely leave an emotion where they found it: they start where we start, and then, more often than not, they turn.

Each session takes up a particular feeling and a psalm (or two) that gives it words. Please make this guide your own. Rearrange the sessions, linger on the one your group needs most, set a discussion aside if it isn’t serving you. You know the people in the room, and we trust you with them. The material is a starting point, never a script.

You will also find a short prayer at the beginning and end of every session. Treat these the same way — pray them as they stand, reword them, or lay them aside and pray from your own heart. And do be gentle: some of these themes go tender and deep, and folk may need a little quiet, or a kind word, more than another question.

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A word on Scripture: the verses in this guide are taken from the Berean Standard Bible (BSB), used with kind permission. Please read along in whichever translation you love best — we are not endorsing any single one. The Psalms in particular sing a little

differently from version to version, and it is well worth hearing them in more than one voice.

Our prayer is that this study would do more than inform you. May you learn to pour out your heart before the God who is near to the brokenhearted, and find, session by session, that your soul is being quieted in His company.

In the love of Christ,

Faith, Hope and Love Ministries

Session 1: An Honest Heart – Bringing Every Emotion to God

Opening Prayer:

“Heavenly Father, before we say anything at all, You already know our hearts. As we begin this study, give us the courage to be honest with You – to bring the whole of ourselves, and to trust that You will meet us kindly. Amen.”

Key Scripture:

Psalms 62:8 (BSB) “Trust in Him at all times, O people; pour out your hearts before Him. God is our refuge. Selah”

Supplementary Scripture:

- Psalm 139:23–24 (BSB) “Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my concerns. See if there is any offensive way in me; lead me in the way everlasting.”
- Psalm 34:18 (BSB) “The LORD is near to the brokenhearted; He saves the contrite in spirit.”

Discussion Points:

1. Permission to Be Honest:

- The psalmist tells us to “pour out” our hearts before God – not to tidy them up first. What do you think tends to keep us from being that honest with Him?
- Are there feelings you have quietly assumed God would rather you didn’t bring to Him? What might change if you brought them anyway?

2. A God Who Comes Near:

- Psalm 34:18 says the Lord is near to the brokenhearted. When has God felt nearest to you – in the bright times, or the hard ones?
- How does knowing that God already searches and knows our hearts (Psalm 139:23–24) make honesty with Him easier, rather than more frightening?

Desired Outcomes:

By the end of this first session, we hope everyone will feel a real sense of permission – that there is no emotion too big, too dark, or too messy to bring to God, and that honesty is the doorway to the whole journey ahead, not a hurdle to clear before it begins.

Closing Prayer:

“Lord, thank You that we don’t have to pretend with You. Teach us, over these weeks, to pour out our hearts and find You near. We hand this study, and ourselves, into Your keeping. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.”

Session 2: When the Soul Is Downcast – Sorrow and Lament

Opening Prayer:

"God of all comfort, some of us come carrying sorrow we haven't known what to do with. Meet us here. Teach us that grief is not the opposite of faith, and that You are near even when the light seems far off. Amen."

Key Scripture:

Psalms 42:11 (BSB) "Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why the unease within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise Him, my Savior and my God."

Supplementary Scripture:

- Psalm 42:3 (BSB) "My tears have been my food both day and night, while men ask me all day long, 'Where is your God?'"
- Psalm 30:5 (BSB) "For His anger is fleeting, but His favor lasts a lifetime. Weeping may stay the night, but joy comes in the morning."

Discussion Points:

1. Talking to Your Own Soul:

- In Psalm 42 the writer turns and speaks to himself: "Why are you downcast, O my soul?" What do you think he is doing when he questions his own heart like this?
- When sadness settles on you, what do you usually tell yourself? What might it look like to gently preach hope to your own soul instead?

2. Tears Are Not Faithlessness:

- The psalmist admits his tears have been his food, day and night (Psalm 42:3). Why do you think Scripture makes such generous room for grief?
- Psalm 30:5 promises that "joy comes in the morning." How can we hold honest sorrow and real hope together, without rushing past either one?

Desired Outcomes:

We hope people will leave knowing they are allowed to grieve — that lament is a form of faith, not a failure of it — and will begin to learn the psalmist's rhythm of pouring out sorrow honestly while turning, again and again, to put their hope in God.

Closing Prayer:

"Father, thank You that You collect our tears and do not despise them. When we are downcast, lift our eyes to You. We will yet praise You — our Saviour and our God. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen."

Session 3: When I Am Afraid – Fear and Anxiety

Opening Prayer:

“Lord, You know the fears we don’t say out loud — the ones that wake us in the night. As we come to Your Word, steady our hearts, and teach us to trust You right in the middle of what frightens us. Amen.”

Key Scripture:

Psalms 56:3 (BSB) “When I am afraid, I put my trust in You.”

Supplementary Scripture:

- Psalm 27:1 (BSB) “The LORD is my light and my salvation— whom shall I fear? The LORD is the stronghold of my life— whom shall I dread?”
- Psalm 34:4 (BSB) “I sought the LORD, and He answered me; He delivered me from all my fears.”

Discussion Points:

1. What We Do With Fear:

- David doesn’t say “I am never afraid,” but “when I am afraid, I put my trust in You.” What’s the difference between those two, and why does it matter?
- What are the fears that tend to visit you most often? What might “trusting God in the middle of them” actually look like this week?

2. Bigger Than What We Dread:

- Psalm 27:1 answers fear with a question: “whom shall I fear?” How does remembering who God is cut our fears back down to their proper size?
- Psalm 34:4 speaks of being delivered “from all my fears.” Have you known God to meet you in an anxious season? Share it, if you’re happy to.

Desired Outcomes:

We hope everyone will come away with something to actually do with their fear — not a command to stop feeling it, but the psalmist’s well-worn path of turning fear straight into trust — and with a fresh sense that the God who holds them is far bigger than anything they dread.

Closing Prayer:

“Lord, You are our light and our salvation; whom shall we fear? When anxiety rises, remind us that You are near, that You hear, and that You hold us fast. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.”

Session 4: Angry, Yet Without Sin – Anger and the Longing for Justice

Opening Prayer:

“Righteous Father, You care about what is wrong in the world far more deeply than we do. Take our anger – the fair and the unfair of it – and teach us to bring it to You before we let it loose on anyone else. Amen.”

Key Scripture:

Psalms 4:4 (BSB) “Be angry, yet do not sin; on your bed, search your heart and be still. Selah”

Supplementary Scripture:

- Psalm 37:8 (BSB) “Refrain from anger and abandon wrath; do not fret—it can only bring harm.”
- Psalm 103:8 (BSB) “The LORD is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in loving devotion.”

Discussion Points:

1. Angry, Yet Without Sin:

- Scripture says, “be angry, yet do not sin.” Where do you think the line runs between anger that is right and honest, and anger that turns harmful?
- Psalm 4:4 tells us to “search your heart and be still.” What does it look like to take your anger to God, rather than pour it out on the people around you?

2. Handing Over the Verdict:

- Psalm 37 keeps saying “do not fret” over those who do wrong. Why can it be such a relief to leave justice in God’s hands instead of carrying it in our own?
- God Himself is “slow to anger” (Psalm 103:8). How does His patience with us shape the way we might handle our own?

Desired Outcomes:

We hope this session helps people see that anger itself isn’t the enemy – that it can be brought honestly to God, examined in the quiet, and entrusted to the one true Judge – so that it stops driving them, and starts, where it should, turning them towards mercy and towards what is right.

Closing Prayer:

“Lord, we hand You the things that make us burn – the wrongs done to us, and the wrongs we’ve done. Search our hearts, still our spirits, and make us, like You, slow to anger and rich in love. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.”

Session 5: Create in Me a Clean Heart – Guilt, Shame, and Repentance

Opening Prayer:

"Merciful God, we come as we are — with the things we've done and left undone, and the shame we've carried too long. Thank You that You do not turn away a broken and contrite heart. Wash us, and make us new. Amen."

Key Scripture:

Psalms 51:10 (BSB) "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me."

Supplementary Scripture:

- Psalm 32:5 (BSB) "Then I acknowledged my sin to You and did not hide my iniquity. I said, 'I will confess my transgressions to the LORD,' and You forgave the guilt of my sin. Selah"
- Psalm 103:12 (BSB) "As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us."

Discussion Points:

1. The Weight We Carry:

- David asks God to "create" a clean heart — something only God can do. Why can't we simply resolve or tidy our own way out of guilt?
- What's the difference between guilt that leads us home to God, and shame that drives us into hiding from Him?

2. Forgiveness That Really Frees:

- In Psalm 32:5, the moment David stops hiding his sin, he finds it forgiven. Why do you think honest confession brings such relief?
- Psalm 103:12 says our sins are removed "as far as the east is from the west." What would it mean, day to day, to actually live as a forgiven person?

Desired Outcomes:

We hope everyone will come away able to tell the difference between healthy, homeward-leading conviction and the crushing weight of shame — and will taste the deep relief of confession, and of a forgiveness so complete that God Himself puts our sins out of sight.

Closing Prayer:

"Father, thank You that the sacrifice You want is a broken and honest heart, and that You will never despise it. Create in us clean hearts, and let us walk out from under our shame, forgiven and free. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen."

Session 6: How Long, O Lord? – Loneliness and Feeling Forsaken

Opening Prayer:

"Lord, there are seasons when You feel far away, and we feel very alone. Thank You that even 'how long?' is a prayer You welcome. Draw near to us now, and remind us we are not forgotten. Amen."

Key Scripture:

Psalms 13:1-2 (BSB) "How long, O LORD? Will You forget me forever? How long will You hide Your face from me? How long must I wrestle in my soul, with sorrow in my heart each day? How long will my enemy dominate me?"

Supplementary Scripture:

- Psalm 25:16 (BSB) "Turn to me and be gracious, for I am lonely and afflicted."
- Psalm 13:5-6 (BSB) "But I have trusted in Your loving devotion; my heart will rejoice in Your salvation. I will sing to the LORD, for He has been good to me."

Discussion Points:

1. Praying the "How Long?"

- Four times in two verses David cries "how long?" Does it surprise you to find that kind of prayer in the Bible? Why, or why not?
- When God feels distant or silent, what do you tend to do? What might it look like to keep talking honestly to Him right through it?

2. The Turn Towards Trust:

- The very psalm that opens "how long?" closes "I will sing to the LORD" (Psalm 13:5-6). What do you make of that turn — and how do you think David got there?
- Psalm 25:16 brings loneliness straight to God. Is there someone God might be nudging you to reach out to this week — or to let reach out to you?

Desired Outcomes:

We hope people will leave with permission to pray their loneliness honestly, rather than bury it — following David from "how long?" towards "I will sing" — and will take one small, brave step out of isolation and towards God and one another.

Closing Prayer:

"Father, when we feel forgotten, remind us that You have not forgotten us. Turn to us in our loneliness, hold our right hand, and put a new song in our mouths. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen."

Session 7: Out of the Depths – Discouragement and Waiting on God

Opening Prayer:

“Patient Lord, waiting is hard, and discouragement wears us down. As we open Your Word, lift our eyes from what we can see to what You have promised, and renew our strength while we wait. Amen.”

Key Scripture:

Psalms 130:5 (BSB) “I wait for the LORD; my soul does wait, and in His word I put my hope.”

Supplementary Scripture:

- Psalm 130:1-2 (BSB) “Out of the depths I cry to You, O LORD! O Lord, hear my voice; let Your ears be attentive to my plea for mercy.”
- Psalm 27:14 (BSB) “Wait patiently for the LORD; be strong and courageous. Wait patiently for the LORD!”

Discussion Points:

1. Crying from the Depths:

- The psalmist prays “out of the depths” — not once he has climbed safely out of them. What does that teach us about when, and from where, we’re free to pray?
- Discouragement often whispers that nothing will ever change. How does putting our hope “in His word” (Psalm 130:5) answer that whisper?

2. The Long Work of Waiting:

- Psalm 27:14 tells us twice to “wait patiently for the LORD.” Why do you suppose we need telling more than once?
- Waiting can feel like wasted, empty time. Where have you seen God do something worthwhile in you during a season of waiting?

Desired Outcomes:

We hope this session leaves the weary a little less alone and a little more hopeful — seeing that God is at work even in the waiting, that we may cry to Him straight from the depths, and that hope anchored in His word can outlast the longest discouragement.

Closing Prayer:

“Lord, out of the depths we cry to You; hear our voice. While we wait, make us strong and take heart, for our hope is in Your word, and Your word has never once failed. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.”

Session 8: A Troubled Heart – Envy and Comparison

Opening Prayer:

“Lord, we so easily measure our lives against everyone else’s, and lose our peace in the comparing. Bring us into Your presence, set our eyes back on You, and teach us that You are more than enough. Amen.”

Key Scripture:

Psalms 73:2-3 (BSB) “But as for me, my feet had almost stumbled; my steps had nearly slipped. For I envied the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.”

Supplementary Scripture:

- Psalm 73:16-17 (BSB) “When I tried to understand all this, it was troublesome in my sight until I entered God’s sanctuary; then I discerned their end.”
- Psalm 73:25-26 (BSB) “Whom have I in heaven but You? And on earth I desire no one besides You. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.”

Discussion Points:

1. The Slippery Ground of Comparison:

- Asaph confesses that he “nearly slipped” from envying others their good fortune. Where does comparison tempt you most – money, status, family, health, something else?
- What does envy do to the way we see God, and the way we see our own life, when we let it run unchecked?

2. A Change of Vantage Point:

- Everything shifts for Asaph “until I entered God’s sanctuary” (Psalm 73:16-17). Why do you think being in God’s presence reorders our thinking so completely?
- The psalm lands on God as “the strength of my heart and my portion forever” (Psalm 73:25-26). What would it mean, honestly, to treasure Him as more than enough?

Desired Outcomes:

We hope everyone will come away quicker to spot envy for the thief it is, and readier to do what Asaph did – to carry a comparing heart into God’s presence, where God Himself proves to be the portion it was really longing for.

Closing Prayer:

“Father, forgive us for the times we’ve envied what others have and overlooked what You’ve given. Be the strength of our hearts and our portion forever – and let that be enough. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.”

Session 9: Bless the Lord, O My Soul – Gratitude and Joy

Opening Prayer:

"Giver of every good gift, it is so easy to forget Your kindnesses and remember only our troubles. Open our eyes to Your goodness, and put a fresh song of thanks in our mouths today. Amen."

Key Scripture:

Psalms 103:1-2 (BSB) "Bless the LORD, O my soul; all that is within me, bless His holy name. Bless the LORD, O my soul, and do not forget all His kind deeds—"

Supplementary Scripture:

- Psalm 100:4 (BSB) "Enter His gates with thanksgiving and His courts with praise; give thanks to Him and bless His name."
- Psalm 16:11 (BSB) "You have made known to me the path of life; You will fill me with joy in Your presence, with eternal pleasures at Your right hand."

Discussion Points:

1. Preaching Gratitude to Yourself:

- Once again the psalmist talks to his own soul — this time to "bless the LORD." Is gratitude something we can genuinely choose, even on a grey and difficult day?
- He tells himself not to "forget all His kind deeds." What are some of God's kindnesses that you're especially prone to forget?

2. Joy That Runs Deeper Than Mood:

- Psalm 16:11 locates our fullest joy "in Your presence." How is that joy different from happiness that rises and falls with how the day is going?
- Psalm 100:4 pictures us coming to God "with thanksgiving." What small habit might help thanksgiving become your first response rather than your last?

Desired Outcomes:

We hope people will leave having practised gratitude as something you can choose, not just feel — learning to preach God's kindnesses back to their own forgetful hearts — and having tasted a joy that is anchored in God's presence and so runs deeper than any passing mood.

Closing Prayer:

"Lord, we bless You with all that is within us. Thank You for kindnesses too many to count. Fill us with the joy of Your presence, and let thankfulness become the habit of our hearts. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen."

Session 10: A Calmed and Quieted Soul – Peace, Trust, and Rest

Opening Prayer:

"Shepherd of our souls, we have brought You so much over these weeks. Now teach us simply to rest — to still and quiet our hearts in Your presence, and to trust You not just for what You give, but for who You are. Amen."

Key Scripture:

Psalms 131:2 (BSB) "Surely I have stilled and quieted my soul; like a weaned child with his mother, like a weaned child is my soul within me."

Supplementary Scripture:

- Psalm 62:1 (BSB) "In God alone my soul finds rest; my salvation comes from Him."
- Psalm 23:2-3 (BSB) "He makes me lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside quiet waters. He restores my soul; He guides me in the paths of righteousness for the sake of His name."

Discussion Points:

1. A Quieted Soul:

- The psalmist says he has "stilled and quieted" his soul, like a weaned child resting with its mother. What does that picture stir in you?
- A weaned child rests without needing to be fed — content simply to be held. What would it mean to be at peace with God for who He is, not only for what He gives?

2. Rest for the Whole Journey:

- Looking back over this study, which emotion have you found hardest to bring to God — and has anything shifted in how you carry it?
- Psalm 23 promises a Shepherd who leads us beside quiet waters and restores our soul. What's one way you'll keep letting Him do that, long after this study ends?

Desired Outcomes:

We hope this final session sends everyone out with a soul more at rest — not because life has grown easier, but because they have learned to quiet their hearts before a good Shepherd, and to trust Him for who He is.

Closing Prayer:

"Father, in You alone our souls find rest. Thank You for walking with us through every emotion of these weeks. Still us, quiet us, and keep leading us beside quiet waters all our days. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen."

Songs for the Soul: Managing Emotions Through the Psalms

*What might change in us if we learned to bring every feeling we carry
— the joy and the ache, the fear and the fury — honestly to God, and
let the Psalms teach us how to pray it?*

Session 1 – An Honest Heart: Bringing Every Emotion to God

There is a reason the Psalms have been the companion of God's people for three thousand years. They give us words when we have none of our own. Here, gathered into one book at the very heart of Scripture, is the whole weather of the human soul — joy and grief, trust and terror, praise and protest — and none of it is hushed up or smoothed over. And running underneath it all is one quiet, astonishing permission: "Trust in Him at all times, O people; pour out your hearts before Him. God is our refuge" (Psalm 62:8). Pour out your hearts. Not present them neatly. Not wait until they are respectable. Pour them out, the way you would empty a jug — all of it, holding nothing back.

It helps to remember where many of these songs were written. David composed some of them in caves, hunted and afraid; others in the glad relief of rescue, or the grey ache of guilt. The Psalms were not written in a study by someone with everything sorted. They came out of real lives, lived at full stretch, and that is exactly why they still fit ours so well. Whatever you are feeling as you begin this study — and some of us are carrying rather a lot — you will very likely find it somewhere in these pages, already turned into prayer.

And here is the heart of the matter: we do not pour out our hearts into thin air, but before Someone. "The LORD is near to the brokenhearted; He saves the contrite in spirit" (Psalm 34:18). He is not a distant judge, waiting for us to compose ourselves before we approach. He comes close, especially to the ones whose hearts are in pieces. Nor do we need to dress up our inner life for His benefit; He knows it already, better than we do. "Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my concerns," the psalmist prays — "see if there is any offensive way in me; lead me in the way everlasting" (Psalm 139:23-24). That is not the prayer of someone hiding. It is the prayer of someone who has discovered that being fully known by God is a mercy, not a threat.

So this is where our journey begins, and everything else grows from it. Before we take up any single emotion — the sorrow, the fear, the anger, the joy — we simply come, as the deer that "pants for streams of water" comes thirsting to the brook (Psalm 42:1-2), bringing our real selves to our real God. There is no feeling too dark to name in His hearing, and no part of you He would rather you left at the door. Come honestly, and come often. That is the whole art of it.

Discussion and Reflection Questions

An Honest Heart: Bringing Every Emotion to God

Here are some questions to guide your discussion and quiet reflection. There's no need to rush through them all — linger wherever God seems to be at work.

1. What drew you to a study on the emotions, and is there a particular feeling you're hoping to learn to handle better?
2. Psalm 62:8 invites us to "pour out" our hearts before God. What tends to hold you back from being that honest with Him?
3. Are there emotions you've quietly assumed are "unspiritual" or unwelcome in prayer? Where do you think that idea came from?
4. Many psalms were written in caves and crises. Does it change anything for you to know the Bible's prayer book came out of real, hard lives?
5. Sit with Psalm 34:18. When has God felt nearest to you — and was it in a good season or a painful one?
6. Psalm 139:23-24 asks God to search and know us. Is being fully known by God a comfort to you, a discomfort, or a bit of both? Why?
7. What's the difference between venting our feelings to anyone who'll listen and pouring out our hearts before God?
8. Is there something you've been carrying that you've never really put into words before God? Could this study be the time to begin?
9. How might reading a psalm out loud help you pray when you can't find your own words?
10. As you begin, what would you most like God to do in your inner life over these weeks?

Session 2 – When the Soul Is Downcast: Sorrow and Lament

Sooner or later, sorrow comes to every life, and when it does, faith can feel strangely far away. The person who wrote Psalm 42 knew the feeling from the inside. “My tears have been my food both day and night,” he writes, “while men ask me all day long, ‘Where is your God?’” (Psalm 42:3). Notice that Scripture does not scold him for this, or hurry him past it. It gives his grief a page, and a voice, and a place in the songbook of God’s people. That alone is worth pausing over. Whatever else lament is, it is not a lack of faith. It is faith carrying its sorrow to the only One who can bear the weight of it.

What the psalmist does next is quietly profound. He turns and speaks to his own downcast heart: “Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why the unease within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise Him, my Savior and my God” (Psalm 42:11). He does not simply listen to his feelings; he talks back to them. He preaches hope to himself. This is not pretending to feel better than he does — the sorrow is real and he says so plainly — but it is refusing to let the sadness have the last word. “I will yet praise Him.” Not yet, perhaps, but yet. There is a whole world of faith in that little word.

It comforts me to know how tenderly God treats our tears. He is not embarrassed by them. “You have taken account of my wanderings,” says another psalm; “put my tears in Your bottle — are they not in Your book?” (Psalm 56:8). Every tear is counted, kept, remembered. “He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds” (Psalm 147:3) — and healing, as anyone who has grieved knows, is rarely quick. It is the slow, patient work of a gentle God, and He does not rush us through it.

So we are invited to do a hard and holy thing at once: to grieve honestly and to hope genuinely, and not to let go of either. “Weeping may stay the night,” the psalmist promises, “but joy comes in the morning” (Psalm 30:5). The night is real; he does not deny it. But it is a night, not the whole of time — and morning is coming. If you are in the dark just now, you need not force a smile you do not feel. Simply keep turning your wet face towards God, and wait with Him for the light.

Discussion and Reflection Questions

When the Soul Is Downcast: Sorrow and Lament

Here are some questions to guide your discussion and quiet reflection. There's no need to rush through them all — linger wherever God seems to be at work.

1. How comfortable are you, honestly, with sadness — your own, and other people's?
2. The psalmist admits his "tears have been my food both day and night" (Psalm 42:3).
Why do you think Scripture makes such room for grief?
3. In Psalm 42:11 the writer speaks to his own soul. What do you usually tell yourself when you're low — and is it true?
4. What might it look like, in practice, to gently "preach hope" to your own heart without denying the sadness?
5. Sit with Psalm 56:8 — God keeping our tears in His bottle. How does it feel to know your tears are counted and remembered?
6. Why is lament a form of faith rather than a failure of it?
7. Psalm 30:5 says "weeping may stay the night, but joy comes in the morning." How do we hold honest grief and real hope together?
8. Is there a loss or sorrow you've felt you had to hide or hurry past? What would it mean to bring it openly to God?
9. How can we sit with someone in their sorrow without rushing to fix it or explain it away?
10. What's one honest thing you'd like to say to God about a sadness you're carrying right now?

Session 3 – When I Am Afraid: Fear and Anxiety

Fear is one of the most human things about us, and the Bible never once pretends otherwise. David — soldier, king, giant-killer — was well acquainted with it. Writing at a time when his very life was in danger, he does not put on a brave face. He simply says, “When I am afraid, I put my trust in You” (Psalm 56:3). Read that slowly, because it is doing something remarkable. He does not say “if I am afraid,” as though fear were a rare failing, nor “because I trust You, I am never afraid.” He says when. Fear will come. The question is what we will do with it once it does.

And what David does is turn. Fear points his eyes downward, at the danger; trust lifts them upward, to God. He does not wait for the fear to pass before he prays — he prays in the very middle of it, fear and trust held in the same trembling hand. This is such a relief, if you think about it. We are not asked to manufacture a calm we do not feel. We are asked only to take the fear we do feel and carry it, then and there, to the One who is stronger than what frightens us.

The Psalms help by turning our gaze to who God actually is. “The LORD is my light and my salvation — whom shall I fear? The LORD is the stronghold of my life — whom shall I dread?” (Psalm 27:1). Fear shrinks a little when it is measured against a God like that. And He is not only mighty; He is attentive. “I sought the LORD, and He answered me; He delivered me from all my fears” (Psalm 34:4). Many of us can look back and see it — seasons when the thing we dreaded either never came, or came, and God carried us straight through the middle of it.

None of this is a promise that the anxious feelings will vanish on command; anyone who has lain awake at three in the morning knows they rarely do. But there is real comfort here, of a sturdier kind. “When anxiety overwhelms me, Your consolation delights my soul” (Psalm 94:19). So we do the one thing we always can: “Cast your burden upon the LORD and He will sustain you” (Psalm 55:22). Hand Him the weight of it, as many times a day as you need to, and let Him carry both the fear and you.

Discussion and Reflection Questions

When I Am Afraid: Fear and Anxiety

Here are some questions to guide your discussion and quiet reflection. There's no need to rush through them all — linger wherever God seems to be at work.

1. What's the difference between David saying "when I am afraid" (Psalm 56:3) and expecting himself never to feel fear at all?
2. What are the fears that tend to visit you most often — in the daylight, or in the small hours?
3. David turns fear straight into trust. What might "trusting God in the middle of the fear" look like for you this week?
4. Sit with Psalm 27:1. How does remembering who God is cut a particular fear of yours down to size?
5. Have you known God to meet you in an anxious season (Psalm 34:4)? Share it, if you're willing.
6. Psalm 94:19 speaks of God's "consolation" in the middle of anxiety. Where have you found real comfort when worry has overwhelmed you?
7. What does it look like, practically, to "cast your burden upon the LORD" (Psalm 55:22) — perhaps more than once a day?
8. How can we tell the difference between wise, God-given caution and the kind of anxiety that steals our peace?
9. How might a trusted friend, or a doctor, be part of God's care for us when anxiety is heavy? Why can it be hard to ask?
10. What's one specific fear you'll deliberately hand over to God this week, and how will you remind yourself to keep doing it?

Session 4 – Angry, Yet Without Sin: Anger and the Longing for Justice

Of all our emotions, anger is perhaps the one we least expect to find welcomed in Scripture — and yet the Psalms are full of it. There are songs here that name injustice bluntly, that cry out against cruelty, that long for God to set the world to rights. The Bible does not treat anger as automatically sinful. Often it is the proper response of a heart that loves what is good to seeing something genuinely wrong. The danger is never simply that we feel it, but what we do with it once we do.

Which is exactly where the Psalms are so wise. “Be angry, yet do not sin,” says Psalm 4:4; “on your bed, search your heart and be still. Selah.” There is a whole method tucked into that one verse. Feel the anger, yes — but take it somewhere quiet, lay it out honestly before God, and let it be examined rather than unleashed. The bed at night, the searched heart, the deliberate stillness: this is anger brought to God before it is aimed at anyone else. And that little word Selah seems to say, pause here; don’t rush on.

The great temptation, when we have been wronged, is to appoint ourselves judge, jury, and enforcer. The Psalms gently take the gavel out of our hands. “Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for Him; do not fret when men prosper in their ways” (Psalm 37:7). And again: “Refrain from anger and abandon wrath; do not fret — it can only bring harm” (Psalm 37:8). To entrust justice to God is not to pretend the wrong did not matter. It is to believe that it matters so much it is safest left in the hands of the only Judge who always gets it right.

And there is one more thing, easily missed, that changes everything. When we bring our anger to God, we come to a God who is Himself “compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in loving devotion” (Psalm 103:8). He is slow to anger with us — patient where we would have given up on ourselves long ago. Sitting for a while in the warmth of that patience is, I think, what finally loosens the grip of our own resentment. Hard hearts do not soften by being scolded. They soften by being loved.

Discussion and Reflection Questions

Angry, Yet Without Sin: Anger and the Longing for Justice

Here are some questions to guide your discussion and quiet reflection. There's no need to rush through them all — linger wherever God seems to be at work.

1. Does it surprise you that the Psalms make so much room for anger and the cry for justice? Why, or why not?
2. Where do you think the line runs between anger that is right and honest, and anger that turns harmful?
3. Sit with Psalm 4:4. What does it look like to “search your heart and be still” instead of acting on anger straight away?
4. What's the value of taking your anger to God in private before you take it to the person you're angry with?
5. Psalm 37 twice says “do not fret” about wrongdoers. Why is it such a relief to leave justice in God's hands rather than our own?
6. Is there a wrong — done to you, or to someone you love — that you're finding hard to entrust to God? What makes it hard?
7. How is entrusting justice to God different from pretending the wrong didn't matter?
8. God is “slow to anger” with us (Psalm 103:8). How does sitting in His patience change the way you carry your own anger?
9. When has anger actually moved you to do something good — to protect, to speak up, to put a wrong right?
10. Is there a step towards peace, or towards justice, that God might be asking of you this week?

Session 5 – Create in Me a Clean Heart: Guilt, Shame, and Repentance

There is a kind of heaviness that no amount of busyness quite lifts — the weight of something done, or left undone, that we cannot seem to put down. Psalm 51 was written from inside that weight. It is David's prayer after his sin with Bathsheba had been dragged into the light, and it begins not with excuses but with a plea for mercy: "Have mercy on me, O God, according to Your loving devotion; according to Your great compassion, blot out my transgressions" (Psalm 51:1). He throws himself entirely on God's kindness. It is often the only place left to go, and it turns out to be the best place of all.

What David asks for next is telling. "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me" (Psalm 51:10). Create — the same word used of God making the world out of nothing. David knows he cannot scrub his own heart clean by trying harder; a new heart is something only God can make. And the God who receives him is not looking for a grand performance of remorse. "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise" (Psalm 51:17). Our tears of repentance are never turned away at the door.

It is worth naming the difference between two things that often get tangled together: guilt and shame. Healthy guilt says, "I have done something wrong," and points us home to God to put it right. Shame whispers, "I am something wrong," and drives us into hiding, convinced we are beyond help. The Psalms lead us out of hiding. "Then I acknowledged my sin to You and did not hide my iniquity... and You forgave the guilt of my sin" (Psalm 32:5). The very moment the psalmist stops covering up, he finds himself covered by grace: "Blessed is he whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered" (Psalm 32:1).

And the forgiveness God gives is no half-measure. "As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us" (Psalm 103:12) — which is to say, immeasurably, irretrievably far. "If You, O LORD, kept track of iniquities, then who, O Lord, could stand? But with You there is forgiveness" (Psalm 130:3-4). None of us could stand on our record. Thank God we do not have to. The invitation this week is simply to stop hiding, to bring the heavy thing into the light, and to let yourself be forgiven — and then, harder still and just as important, to live as someone who truly is.

Discussion and Reflection Questions

Create in Me a Clean Heart: Guilt, Shame, and Repentance

Here are some questions to guide your discussion and quiet reflection. There's no need to rush through them all — linger wherever God seems to be at work.

1. Why can't we simply resolve or tidy our own way out of guilt (Psalm 51:10)? What does it mean that only God can "create" a clean heart?
2. How would you describe the difference between guilt that leads us home to God and shame that drives us into hiding?
3. Psalm 51:17 says God will not despise "a broken and a contrite heart." Does that match the picture of God you carry? Why or why not?
4. In Psalm 32:5, confession brings immediate relief. Have you experienced that? What makes honest confession so freeing?
5. What tends to keep us hiding our failures — from God, and from one another — rather than bringing them into the light?
6. Sit with Psalm 103:12. What would it mean to truly believe your sins are removed "as far as the east is from the west"?
7. Why do we sometimes keep punishing ourselves for things God has already forgiven?
8. "With You there is forgiveness" (Psalm 130:4). How might your daily life look different if you lived as a fully forgiven person?
9. Is there someone you need to forgive, or ask forgiveness of, as part of your own repentance?
10. What's one thing you've been carrying that you could bring into the light before God this week?

Session 6 – How Long, O Lord? Loneliness and Feeling Forsaken

Some of the loneliest words ever prayed are in the Psalms. “How long, O LORD? Will You forget me forever? How long will You hide Your face from me? How long must I wrestle in my soul, with sorrow in my heart each day?” (Psalm 13:1-2). Four times over, in the space of two short verses, that ache repeats: how long, how long, how long. If you have ever felt forgotten by God — prayers rising and seeming to fall back unanswered, everyone else apparently fine while you sit alone in the dark — then here is your prayer, waiting for you in Scripture, put there by God Himself.

That God would give us words like these tells us something wonderful: He is not offended by our “how long?” Far from it. He has made room for it in His own book of prayer. And there is deeper comfort still. On the cross, the Lord Jesus took the opening line of another such psalm onto His own lips — “My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?” (Psalm 22:1). Our Saviour Himself has prayed the prayer of the forsaken. When you feel most alone, you are, in fact, in the company of Christ, who has been all the way down into that darkness ahead of you.

And watch what happens across the short span of Psalm 13. The very song that begins “how long?” ends like this: “But I have trusted in Your loving devotion; my heart will rejoice in Your salvation. I will sing to the LORD, for He has been good to me” (Psalm 13:5-6). Nothing in the psalmist’s circumstances has obviously changed between the first verse and the last. What has changed is the direction he is facing. He has talked his way, in prayer, from staring at his loneliness to leaning on God’s steadfast love — and that turn is available to us too, though it is rarely quick and never forced.

There is also something quietly practical here. “Turn to me and be gracious,” prays Psalm 25:16, “for I am lonely and afflicted.” Bringing our loneliness plainly to God is the first step; but often He answers it, in part, through other people. So it may be worth asking this week whether there is someone He is nudging you towards — someone to telephone, sit beside, or simply be honest with — or whether there is a hand already reaching towards you that pride or weariness has kept you from taking. We were not made to carry loneliness alone.

Discussion and Reflection Questions

How Long, O Lord? Loneliness and Feeling Forsaken

Here are some questions to guide your discussion and quiet reflection. There's no need to rush through them all — linger wherever God seems to be at work.

1. Does it surprise you to find a prayer like Psalm 13:1-2 — four times “how long?” — in the Bible? What does its presence tell you?
2. When God feels distant or silent, what do you usually do? What might it look like to keep talking honestly to Him through it?
3. Jesus prayed “My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?” (Psalm 22:1). How does it help to know our Saviour has been in that darkness?
4. What's the difference between loneliness (being without company) and feeling forsaken (being without God)? Have you known either lately?
5. Psalm 13 travels from “how long?” to “I will sing.” How do you think the psalmist got from one to the other?
6. Nothing in David's circumstances obviously changed across Psalm 13. What did change — and can that same turn happen in us?
7. Psalm 25:16 brings loneliness straight to God. Is there someone God might be nudging you to reach out to this week?
8. Is there a hand already reaching towards you — an invitation, a friendship — that weariness or pride has kept you from taking?
9. How can a church family be part of God's answer to loneliness? What makes it hard to be honest about feeling alone?
10. What's one small, brave step out of isolation you could take before the next session?

Session 7 – Out of the Depths: Discouragement and Waiting on God

“Out of the depths I cry to You, O LORD! O Lord, hear my voice; let Your ears be attentive to my plea for mercy” (Psalm 130:1-2). What strikes me most about that opening is the word out. The psalmist does not wait until he has climbed up out of the pit before he starts to pray; he prays from the very bottom of it. Discouragement has a way of convincing us that we should tidy ourselves up before we approach God – that we’ll pray again once we’re feeling stronger. Psalm 130 says otherwise. The depths are not a reason to stay silent; they are precisely where the crying out begins.

Discouragement whispers a particular lie: nothing will ever change, so why bother hoping? The psalmist answers that lie not by looking at his circumstances, which had not improved, but by looking to God’s character, which never alters. “I wait for the LORD; my soul does wait, and in His word I put my hope” (Psalm 130:5). Hope built on how things happen to look this morning will rise and fall like the tide. Hope anchored in God’s word holds, because His word holds. That is a foundation the storms cannot shift.

But we must be honest: the waiting is hard. Perhaps that is why Psalm 27 bothers to say it twice, like a hand on the shoulder: “Wait patiently for the LORD; be strong and courageous. Wait patiently for the LORD!” (Psalm 27:14). Waiting on God is not the same as doing nothing. It is a strong, deliberate, courageous thing – the daily choice to keep trusting when we would rather have answers, to keep showing up when nothing seems to be happening. It takes more backbone than most of our busyness ever does.

And God is never idle in our waiting, even when it feels like wasted, empty time. “Those who sow in tears will reap with shouts of joy” (Psalm 126:5). The seed lies hidden in the dark ground for a long while before there is anything at all to see – and then, in its season, comes the harvest. If you are discouraged today, take heart. You are not forgotten, and you are not standing still. You are waiting on a God who has never once failed to keep His word, and the morning of joy is on its way.

Discussion and Reflection Questions

Out of the Depths: Discouragement and Waiting on God

Here are some questions to guide your discussion and quiet reflection. There's no need to rush through them all — linger wherever God seems to be at work.

1. The psalmist cries “out of the depths” (Psalm 130:1) — not once he’s climbed out. Why do we so often wait to feel better before we pray?
2. What lies does discouragement tend to whisper to you? How might Scripture answer them?
3. Psalm 130:5 puts hope “in His word.” How is hope anchored in God’s word steadier than hope pinned to our circumstances?
4. Why do you think Psalm 27:14 says “wait patiently for the LORD” twice over?
5. How is waiting on God different from simply doing nothing? What makes it, as the psalm says, a matter of being “strong and courageous”?
6. Where in your life are you waiting on God right now? How are you finding it?
7. “Those who sow in tears will reap with shouts of joy” (Psalm 126:5). Where have you seen God bring a harvest out of a hard, hidden season?
8. What helps you keep showing up — in prayer, in church, in ordinary faithfulness — when nothing seems to be happening?
9. How can we encourage one another through long seasons of waiting without offering empty platitudes?
10. What’s one promise of God you could hold on to this week, when discouragement says nothing will change?

Session 8 – A Troubled Heart: Envy and Comparison

Psalm 73 is one of the most honest things in the whole Bible, and one of the most freeing. Its writer, Asaph, comes clean about a struggle most of us would rather not admit to: “But as for me, my feet had almost stumbled; my steps had nearly slipped. For I envied the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked” (Psalm 73:2-3). He looked around at people with no time for God who seemed to have everything — ease, success, untroubled lives — and it very nearly knocked his faith clean off its feet. If you have ever scrolled through someone else’s highlight reel and felt your own life curdle a little, you know exactly the ground he is standing on.

Envy is a peculiarly corrosive thing. It sours our view of our own life, which a moment before seemed perfectly good, and it sours our view of God, whose goodness we suddenly begin to doubt. Asaph is refreshingly candid about how tangled up he became: “When I tried to understand all this, it was troublesome in my sight.” And then comes the hinge on which the whole psalm turns: “until I entered God’s sanctuary; then I discerned their end” (Psalm 73:16-17). Everything changes not when his circumstances improve, but when he comes back into the presence of God, and the whole picture is suddenly lit from a truer angle.

From inside God’s presence, the comparison that had so troubled him quietly falls apart. He remembers what actually lasts, and what does not. And he discovers what had been true the whole time, even at the height of his envy: “Yet I am always with You; You hold my right hand” (Psalm 73:23). While he had been staring at what others had, God had never once let go of him.

And so the psalm arrives at one of the most contented sentences in all of Scripture: “Whom have I in heaven but You? And on earth I desire no one besides You. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever” (Psalm 73:25-26). A portion is your share, your inheritance, the thing that is truly yours. Asaph realises that God Himself is his portion — and that this is more, by far, than anything he had been envying. The cure for comparison is not getting more, but seeing again that the One we already have is more than enough.

Discussion and Reflection Questions

A Troubled Heart: Envy and Comparison

Here are some questions to guide your discussion and quiet reflection. There's no need to rush through them all — linger wherever God seems to be at work.

1. Asaph confesses he “nearly slipped” from envy (Psalm 73:2–3). Where does comparison tempt you most — money, status, family, health, something else?
2. What does envy do to the way we see our own life? And to the way we see God?
3. Be honest: how does comparing ourselves to others online or in person affect your contentment?
4. Everything shifts for Asaph “until I entered God’s sanctuary” (Psalm 73:17). Why does being in God’s presence reorder our thinking so completely?
5. Asaph realises God was holding his hand the whole time (Psalm 73:23). What might you be overlooking about God’s faithfulness to you?
6. Sit with Psalm 73:25–26. What would it mean to treasure God Himself as your “portion” — your truest inheritance?
7. Why is “getting more” such a poor cure for envy? What actually breaks its grip?
8. When has envy stolen your joy in something that was genuinely good? Looking back, what would have helped?
9. How can gratitude be a practical antidote to comparison in everyday life?
10. Whose good news could you choose to genuinely rejoice in this week, rather than measure yourself against?

Session 9 – Bless the Lord, O My Soul: Gratitude and Joy

After so many sessions spent in the harder emotions, it is a joy to arrive here. “Bless the LORD, O my soul; all that is within me, bless His holy name. Bless the LORD, O my soul, and do not forget all His kind deeds” (Psalm 103:1-2). And once again we find the psalmist doing that characteristic thing — talking to his own soul, calling it to attention. Gratitude, it turns out, does not always well up on its own. Sometimes it has to be summoned, chosen, preached to ourselves on purpose. “Bless the LORD, O my soul” is a man rousing his own heart to thankfulness, whether or not it happened to feel like it that morning.

This matters, because it means gratitude is not merely a mood we must wait around to be visited by. It is, at least in part, a decision — something we can do even on a grey and difficult day. The particular danger the psalmist names is forgetfulness: “do not forget all His kind deeds.” Our hearts are leaky things. Troubles we remember all too well; kindnesses slip through and are gone by teatime. So gratitude often begins with the simple, deliberate act of remembering — counting God’s mercies back over, one by one, until the heart catches up with what is already true.

The Psalms make thanksgiving almost like a doorway we walk through to reach God. “Enter His gates with thanksgiving and His courts with praise; give thanks to Him and bless His name” (Psalm 100:4). And the reason given is not our good fortune but God’s good character: “For the LORD is good, and His loving devotion endures forever; His faithfulness continues to all generations” (Psalm 100:5). This is why thankfulness can survive even hard seasons — it rests not on how life is going, but on how good God is, which does not change.

And notice where the psalmists locate their deepest joy. Not in things going well, but in God Himself: “You have made known to me the path of life; You will fill me with joy in Your presence, with eternal pleasures at Your right hand” (Psalm 16:11). Happiness rises and falls with our circumstances; this joy runs underneath them, fed by a spring that never dries up, because its source is the presence of God. This week, then, a gentle challenge: keep a short account of God’s kindnesses, and say them back to Him. You may be surprised how quickly a grumbling heart, given something to thank God for, begins to sing.

Discussion and Reflection Questions

Bless the Lord, O My Soul: Gratitude and Joy

Here are some questions to guide your discussion and quiet reflection. There's no need to rush through them all — linger wherever God seems to be at work.

1. The psalmist tells his own soul to “bless the LORD” (Psalm 103:1). Is gratitude something we can genuinely choose, even on a grey day?
2. He warns himself not to “forget all His kind deeds.” What kindnesses of God are you especially prone to forget?
3. Why do you think troubles stick so firmly in our memory while blessings slip away so quickly?
4. What's the difference between happiness that depends on circumstances and the joy “in Your presence” of Psalm 16:11?
5. Psalm 100 roots our thanks in God's character, not our good fortune. Why does that make gratitude possible even in hard seasons?
6. What simple habit might help thanksgiving become your first response rather than your last?
7. Have you known joy in a difficult season? What was its source?
8. How does giving thanks out loud, or in writing, differ from just feeling vaguely grateful?
9. Who is someone you could thank this week — God, and a person — for a kindness you've been taking for granted?
10. What three of God's “kind deeds” would you name in thanks right now, before you leave this session?

Session 10 – A Calmed and Quieted Soul: Peace, Trust, and Rest

We come, at last, to rest. Over these weeks we have carried a great deal to God — our honesty and our sorrow, our fear and our anger, our guilt and loneliness, our discouragement and envy, and finally our gratitude. And it seems right to end where Psalm 131 ends, with one of the most peaceful pictures in all of Scripture: “Surely I have stilled and quieted my soul; like a weaned child with his mother, like a weaned child is my soul within me” (Psalm 131:2). Note the words: the psalmist has stilled and quieted his soul. Peace, here, is not something that simply happened to him; it is something he did, gently, with his own restless heart — the fruit of everything the Psalms have been teaching.

The image is worth lingering over. A very young baby at its mother’s breast is content only when it is being fed; a weaned child has learned a deeper contentment — it can rest against its mother simply for the comfort of being held, wanting nothing but her nearness. That, says the psalmist, is what his soul has become before God. It is the difference between loving God for what He gives and loving Him for who He is. “In God alone my soul finds rest; my salvation comes from Him” (Psalm 62:1). In Him alone — not in Him plus the answered prayer, or Him plus the sorted circumstances. Him.

And the reason we can rest like this is the One in whose care we lie. “The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want” (Psalm 23:1). “He makes me lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside quiet waters. He restores my soul; He guides me in the paths of righteousness for the sake of His name” (Psalm 23:2-3). A good shepherd knows when his sheep need to lie down, and where the still water is. Even the darkest stretch of the road is no exception: “even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for You are with me” (Psalm 23:4). It is His company, not the absence of shadows, that stills our fear.

So as this study draws to a close, let it not really close at all. “Be still and know that I am God” (Psalm 46:10) is a practice for a lifetime, not a single afternoon. “I have set the LORD always before me. Because He is at my right hand, I will not be shaken” (Psalm 16:8). Whatever you are feeling tomorrow, or next month, or next year — and you will feel the whole range of it, for that is what it is to be alive — you now know what to do with it. Bring it to God. Pour out your heart. Let Him still and quiet your soul. He is a good Shepherd, and He will lead you beside quiet waters all the way home.

Discussion and Reflection Questions

A Calmed and Quieted Soul: Peace, Trust, and Rest

Here are some questions to guide your discussion and quiet reflection. There's no need to rush through them all — linger wherever God seems to be at work.

1. The psalmist has “stilled and quieted” his soul (Psalm 131:2). What does that picture stir in you — and does peace feel like something you do, or something that happens to you?
2. A weaned child rests simply to be held. What would it mean to be at peace with God for who He is, not only for what He gives?
3. Sit with Psalm 62:1 — “in God alone my soul finds rest.” What things do you tend to add to God in the search for peace?
4. Psalm 23 pictures a Shepherd who leads us beside quiet waters. Where do you most need Him to “restore” your soul just now?
5. “Even though I walk through the valley... You are with me” (Psalm 23:4). How is God's company, rather than the absence of trouble, the real source of peace?
6. Looking back over this whole study, which emotion have you found hardest to bring to God — and has anything shifted?
7. Which session or psalm has stayed with you most? Why do you think that one landed?
8. “Be still and know that I am God” (Psalm 46:10). What helps you actually be still — and what gets in the way?
9. What's one practice from these weeks — pouring out your heart, preaching hope to your soul, counting God's kindnesses — you'd like to keep?
10. As this study ends, what one way will you keep letting the Good Shepherd lead you beside quiet waters?

Worksheet for “Songs for the Soul: Managing Emotions Through the Psalms”

For Group Leaders and Solo Readers

This worksheet is a supplementary resource for personal engagement with the study. Here's how you might use it:

- **If you're leading a group:** Hand out copies for people to take home. Explain that it's meant for personal reflection and for putting the study into practice, and that finishing it is a blessing but never a requirement. When you gather, invite people to share whatever they're comfortable sharing — what they're learning, where they're struggling, what God has been doing. With themes as tender as these, be ready to go gently, and to listen more than you speak.
- **If you're studying on your own:** Use it as a companion to help the study sink in and take root. It's designed to help you sit with each emotion a little longer, and to carry the Psalms into the ordinary ups and downs of daily life.

A word for everyone: this worksheet is a practical tool to help you bring your real emotions to a real God, the way the Psalms do. It offers ten simple steps — not a test to pass, but a gentle path to walk. Take them at your own pace, and be kind to yourself as you go. If any of these themes stirs up something heavy that you can't carry alone, please do reach out to a trusted friend, pastor, or professional; asking for help is itself a step of wisdom and faith.

Ten Steps Towards a Soul at Rest

None of these steps is complicated, and you don't have to do them all at once. Take them slowly, lean on God's grace, and let them bring your whole heart to God.

1. Pour out your heart, unedited (Psalm 62:8)

Begin your prayers by telling God exactly how you feel today — no tidying up first. Honesty is the doorway; walk through it daily.

2. Preach hope to your own soul (Psalm 42:11)

When you're downcast, gently ask your heart, "Why so downcast?" — then answer with the truth: "Put your hope in God."

3. Turn fear straight into trust (Psalm 56:3)

When fear rises, make it your signal to pray: "When I am afraid, I put my trust in You."

4. Take your anger to God first (Psalm 4:4)

Before you act on anger, take it somewhere quiet, lay it before God, and "be still" — let Him examine it before you aim it at anyone.

5. Stop hiding, and confess (Psalm 32:5)

Bring one thing you've been covering up into the light before God. Then receive His forgiveness — and live as forgiven.

6. Pray your "how long?" honestly (Psalm 13)

When God feels far off, don't go silent. Tell Him plainly how long it's felt — and keep talking until you can say, "I will trust."

7. Wait on the Lord without giving up (Psalm 130:5)

Name where you're waiting on God, and anchor your hope in a promise from His word rather than in how things look today.

8. Trade comparison for God's presence (Psalm 73:17)

When envy creeps in, step into God's presence — in prayer, Scripture, or worship — and let Him reset your view of what really lasts.

9. Count God's kindnesses out loud (Psalm 103:2)

Keep a short daily list of God's "kind deeds," and say them back to Him in thanks. Watch a grumbling heart begin to sing.

10. Still and quiet your soul (Psalm 131:2)

Take a few unhurried minutes each day simply to be with God — wanting nothing but His nearness — like a child resting content in a parent's arms.

May these steps help you carry every emotion to God, and find in His company a soul calmed and quieted at last — for the God who welcomes our tears also fills us with joy in His presence.

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With Thanks

We're deeply grateful to all who have supported and prayed for these guides. Special thanks go to:

- Ptr Bob Hall, Anglican Church in Sofia, Bulgaria — <https://www.facebook.com/AnglicanSofia>
- Ptr Lida Dias, Aquila Foundation in Zambia — <https://aquilafoundation.org>
- Ptr Rudi Ferreira, Gospel Addicts Global Church in South Africa — <https://gospeladdictsglobal.org>

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