

# Psalm

OF CELEBRATION

Small Group Booklet  
April - May 2016



#bmcJubileeyear

# *Psalms of Celebration!*

As South Africans, we celebrate some important dates in March and April. We are celebrating Family day, Passover, Freedom day, Worker's day, Mother's day and Pentecost. BMC has decided that for our Jubilee Year we will use some well-known Psalms to assist our spiritual reflection on the way we follow Jesus within the life of our nation. The Psalms are the Hymn Book of the Bible, and have been in use for many thousands of years. The word Psalms comes from the Hebrew word *tehillim*, which means "praise".

We hope that this Series will encourage you to praise God for His presence and protection in the deepest and most difficult times in our lives. We are also encouraged to celebrate the Grace of God and the gift of the Holy Spirit as we live our daily lives. His love and encouragement precedes us!

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- WEEK 1:           **CELEBRATE GOD'S PRESENCE** in our family & Church  
**PSALM 23** - 28 March: Family Day
- WEEK2:           **CELEBRATE GOD'S GRACE** in our past (Repentance & Restoration)  
**PSALM 51** - 22 April: Passover
- WEEK 3:           **CELEBRATE GOD'S ENCOURAGEMENT** in our future  
**PSALM 42** - 27 April: Freedom Day (Holiday)
- WEEK 4:           **CELEBRATE GOD'S PROTECTION**  
**PSALM 121** - 1 May: Worker's Day
- WEEK 5:           **CELEBRATE GOD'S FAITHFULNESS**  
**PSALM 139** - 8 May: Mother's Day
- WEEK 6:           **CELEBRATE THE SPIRIT**  
**PSALM 100** - 15 May: Pentecost

**PLEASE FIND YOUR DAILY DEVOTIONS AT THE BACK OF THE BOOKLET**

# WEEK ONE

Celebrate  
GOD'S  
Presence

## PSALM 23



**Prayer/Worship:** Spend time together in Prayer and Worship. **Song:** YouTube: No longer slaves – Jenn Johnson.

### What does the Bible say?



#### **Psalm 23:1-6** *New King James Version (NKJV)*

*The LORD the Shepherd of His People  
A Psalm of David.*

<sup>1</sup>The LORD is my shepherd;  
I shall not want.

<sup>2</sup>He makes me to lie down in green pastures;  
He leads me beside the still waters.

<sup>3</sup>He restores my soul;  
He leads me in the paths of righteousness  
For His name's sake.

<sup>4</sup>Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,  
I will fear no evil;  
For You are with me;  
Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.

<sup>5</sup>You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies;  
You anoint my head with oil;  
My cup runs over.

<sup>6</sup>Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me  
All the days of my life;  
And I will dwell in the house of the LORD  
Forever



Psalm 23 is probably one of our most well-known Psalms. This Psalm draws on the experiences of a shepherd to describe our relationship with God. We can imagine King David, who began his life as a shepherd, offering this song to God. David faced severe conflict, setbacks, temptation, violence and the grief of losing his son Absalom. Like David, we live in a broken world where we yearn for safety, comfort, and rest for our souls, hearts and tired bodies. Psalm 23 offers us a prayer of hope when we feel overwhelmed, scared or in pain. Not only can we experience a personal encounter with God, but we can meet God in our biological families and in the Church (our spiritual family). While sometimes these places are the

opposite of what God intended full of conflict, hatred, jealousy, politics and confrontation, the family and the Church can be places of support, love and comfort. Psalm 23 offers ways in which our church and families can become places of safety:

- 1. Follow the Good Shepherd.** The first three verses depict God as a shepherd looking after his sheep. The shepherd leads the flock to all they need and gives them rest, refreshment and restoration. We all need a place/space where we can just be with God and soak in His presence. Find a place in your home that is your “spot” to talk to God. When you seek God, He will be there waiting for you with open arms. Here you will find guidance and comfort. Create “God Moments” with your family – at the dinner table, at story-time, or looking at a sunset together. In the same way, the Church needs to be a place to find and follow God. It should be filled with compassion and love, creating opportunities for people to love others as God asks us to “look after His sheep”. There need to be places and spaces for people to worship and serve God, individually and corporately, without judgement.
- 2. Know that the Shepherd accompanies us.** In verse four David speaks of God as a companion, one that comforts and protects, even in the most dangerous and scary circumstances. Just as the shepherd carries a rod and a staff – the instruments of his trade to protect his sheep - so God is prepared to protect those who submit to being the sheep of God. Difficulties in our lives are not God’s punishment! This Psalm says that God is with us through our difficult times.
- 3. Copy the Example of the Shepherd.** In the last few verses David depicts God as a generous host to the guest. The table speaks of the shepherd’s task in ensuring that the sheep have food. The oil refers to the salve that a good shepherd will place onto the insect bites and other wounds incurred by the sheep. The cup is the small flask carried by a shepherd to assist the lost, dehydrated sheep. Here the Good Shepherd’s love and mercy is poured out to overflowing, bringing comfort and healing, quenching our spiritual thirst and dispensing mercy.

Godly families can be the place where God’s presence restores our brokenness and reconciles us with others. In families, God teaches us to care for one another. In Church we are the body of Christ – sisters and brothers – and God is our good Shepherd. God says where two or more are gathered in my name, I will be there (Matt 18:20). God is already waiting for us when the church gathers. The words we hear and sing and the rituals we use become familiar and we can draw on them to remind us of God’s presence in our daily lives. A small group is an excellent way to get to know God and yourself better. Offering our time and energy in serving others is also a way of encountering God. We will encounter God’s presence in the eyes of those we serve.

When we actively seek God and His will in our lives He promises that goodness and mercy will follow us all the days of our lives. Even more than that, when we die – we will live in the Lord’s house forever. Nothing can separate us from God’s love. God comforts, renews, guides and gives us courage. Praise be to God!

## Questions for Discussion:



1. How do you deal with stress? How is this working for you?

- A: Take it out on others
- B: Channel it: Eat/Shop/Work
- C: Do something that relaxes you
- D: Pray



2. Which verse in Psalm 23 “speaks” to you right now? What is your family in need of: rest, protection, comfort & care, peace or guidance? Why? How can you bring God’s love and promises into this situation today?
3. When you attend church on a Sunday or during the week do you feel God’s presence? Why or why not? What can **you** do to ensure you feel God’s presence more? What can **BMC** do to make God’s presence felt more? Please email [nadjaa@bmc.org.za](mailto:nadjaa@bmc.org.za) with your suggestions.
4. We serve an awesome God. Each person, write one sentence of praise to God on a piece of paper (whatever you want to thank or praise him for). Then put it all together as a group. You have just written a Psalm! Read it out loud and celebrate His presence!

← LIVE IT OUT →

- ✓ Do you worry excessively? Draw circles on a piece of paper and put all your worries in the centre of each circle. Write a bible verse next to each that tells you of God’s promises and look at it whenever you feel overwhelmed.
- ✓ Help others to feel God’s presence. We need to be God’s hands, heart and feet in this world. Who in your family is going through a rough patch at the moment? What practical thing can you do for them that will make them feel loved?



# WEEK TWO

Celebrate  
GOD'S  
Grace

## PSALM 51



**Prayer/Worship:** Spend time together in Prayer and Worship. **Song:** YouTube: The Stand – Hillsong.

**What does the Bible say?**



### Psalm 51 New King James Version (NKJV)

*A Prayer of Repentance*

*To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David when Nathan the prophet went to him, after he had gone in to Bathsheba.*

<sup>1</sup> Have mercy upon me, O God,  
According to Your lovingkindness;  
According to the multitude of Your tender mercies,  
Blot out my transgressions.

<sup>2</sup> Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity,  
And cleanse me from my sin.

<sup>3</sup> For I acknowledge my transgressions,  
And my sin is always before me.

<sup>4</sup> Against You, You only, have I sinned,  
And done *this* evil in Your sight—  
That You may be found just when You speak,  
And blameless when You judge.

<sup>5</sup> Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity,  
And in sin my mother conceived me.

<sup>6</sup> Behold, You desire truth in the inward parts,  
And in the hidden *part* You will make me to know wisdom.

<sup>7</sup> Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean;  
Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.

<sup>8</sup> Make me hear joy and gladness,  
*That* the bones You have broken may rejoice.

<sup>9</sup> Hide Your face from my sins,  
And blot out all my iniquities.

<sup>10</sup> Create in me a clean heart, O God,  
And renew a steadfast spirit within me.

<sup>11</sup> Do not cast me away from Your presence,  
And do not take Your Holy Spirit from me.

<sup>12</sup> Restore to me the joy of Your salvation,  
And uphold me *by* Your generous Spirit.

<sup>13</sup> Then I will teach transgressors Your ways,  
And sinners shall be converted to You.

<sup>14</sup> Deliver me from the guilt of bloodshed, O God,  
The God of my salvation,  
And my tongue shall sing aloud of Your righteousness.

<sup>15</sup> O Lord, open my lips,  
And my mouth shall show forth Your praise.

<sup>16</sup> For You do not desire sacrifice, or else I would give it;  
You do not delight in burnt offering.

<sup>17</sup> The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit,  
A broken and a contrite heart—  
These, O God, You will not despise.

<sup>18</sup> Do good in Your good pleasure to Zion;  
Build the walls of Jerusalem.

<sup>19</sup> Then You shall be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness,  
With burnt offering and whole burnt offering;  
Then they shall offer bulls on Your altar.



Passover or *Pesach* will be celebrated this coming week. It is an important Jewish festival remembering God's Grace in setting the Israelites free from slavery in Egypt. It reminds the Jewish nation of their collective past. This story of Grace is brought into living memory in order to praise God and celebrate spiritual freedom today. This week we would like to celebrate God's Grace in forgiving us for our past and setting us free as individuals and a nation. Psalm 51 is a useful aid to doing this.

When we think of King David we recall a man who was a shepherd, poet, giant-killer, king, and ancestor of Jesus. But he was also a betrayer, liar, adulterer, and murderer! Sin takes us further and further away from God. Sometimes it is easy for us to recognize when we have sinned and we do not hesitate to say that we were wrong, but other times we have blind spots and we need other people to help us see the things in our lives we don't see. In Psalm 51 David gives us an example of how we approach God when we realize we have sinned:

1. **Recognize our failures.** David points out that this is what God wants: "You desire truth in the inward parts". We know when there is something separating us from God: our "bones grow old through our groaning all day long" and our "vitality turns to drought". We know when we have strayed.
2. **Ask for forgiveness.** Although he sinned, David's confession was from the heart and his repentance genuine. The message throughout this Psalm is that if we know God and love Him with our heart and soul, body and mind, we will experience joy in forgiveness: "Restore to me the joy of Your salvation".
3. **Turn your forgiveness into Service.** God's forgiveness does not absolve us from the consequences of our actions: Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the German pastor and teacher, writes about the "Cheap Grace" of accepting forgiveness without wanting to accept

responsibility for the damage caused by the sin. He urges instead that we embrace the “Costly Grace” of reparation. David had to live with the results of his adultery and repair the damage he had caused to his family and nation. We too need to own up to the consequences of our actions, apologizing to the people we have hurt and repairing relationships that have been broken.

We do not need forgiveness on an individual level only, we also need to repent as a nation. We have done (or not done) things in the past that created the reality we live now. We inherit the anger of our apartheid past and we are distracted by the cultural and racial categories invented by our ancestors. We need to ask God to forgive us for our past and in His Grace embrace the freedom that can be ours as we walk in His love. The past can be a gift to change the future as we make different choices today.

Sometimes certain dates or situations take us back to the places of slavery we used to live in, but we should and can see it as a day of celebration for we have been set free! It is part of our story just like Passover is for the Israelites.

### Questions for Discussion:

1. Unconfessed sin, guilt and shame tap our strength and leave us weak, vulnerable and lonely then separate us from God. Which picture below would you use to describe the distance between you and God today? Please explain.



2. Do you need a “Truth and Reconciliation Committee” to help you deal with your past? Who are the people you would have to confront? Please share with the group a confession that you feel comfortable sharing. If you live free of your past, please share with the group what you did to get to this place of forgiveness of self and others and how this has impacted your life.
3. David makes a promise in verse 13 “Then I will teach transgressors Your ways, and sinners shall be converted to You”. Is this true for you? Do you pass on the message of forgiveness from a real sinner (you) with humility to others? Does your love make forgiveness an option for others? Please discuss how you can help others forgive.
4. Contemplate verse 10-12 in silence for a few minutes. Pray to God expectantly, asking Him to restore you in His Grace, praising Him for His love and presence in your life.

# ← LIVE IT OUT →

- ✓ Write all your “sins” (those things that separate you from God) on rice paper and then put them in a bowl of water. See them dissolve as if they were never there. That is what God does with our sins!
- ✓ Who has “sinned” against you? Pray to God to help you forgive this person/people.

## WEEK THREE

Celebrate  
GOD'S  
Encourage-  
ment

### PSALM 42



**Prayer/Worship:** Spend time together in Prayer and Worship. **Song:** YouTube: Robin Mark - As the deer



#### What does the Bible say?

#### Psalm 42 New King James Version (NKV)

Yearning for God in the Midst of Distresses To the Chief Musician. A Contemplation of the sons of Korah.

42 As the deer pants for the water brooks,  
So pants my soul for You, O God.

<sup>2</sup> My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.  
When shall I come and appear before God?

<sup>3</sup> My tears have been my food day and night,  
While they continually say to me,  
“Where is your God?”

<sup>4</sup> When I remember these *things*,  
I pour out my soul within me.  
For I used to go with the multitude;  
I went with them to the house of God,  
With the voice of joy and praise,  
With a multitude that kept a pilgrim  
feast.

<sup>5</sup> Why are you cast down, O my soul?  
And *why* are you disquieted within me?  
Hope in God, for I shall yet praise Him  
For the help of His countenance.

<sup>6</sup> O my God, my soul is cast down within me;  
Therefore I will remember You from the land of the Jordan,  
And from the heights of Hermon,  
From the Hill Mizar.

LIFE ALWAYS  
OFFERS YOU A  
SECOND CHANCE.  
IT'S CALLED  
TOMORROW.

<sup>7</sup> Deep calls unto deep at the noise of Your waterfalls;  
All Your waves and billows have gone over me.

<sup>8</sup> The LORD will command His lovingkindness in the daytime,  
And in the night His song *shall be* with me—  
A prayer to the God of my life.

<sup>9</sup> I will say to God my Rock,  
“Why have You forgotten me?  
Why do I go mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?”

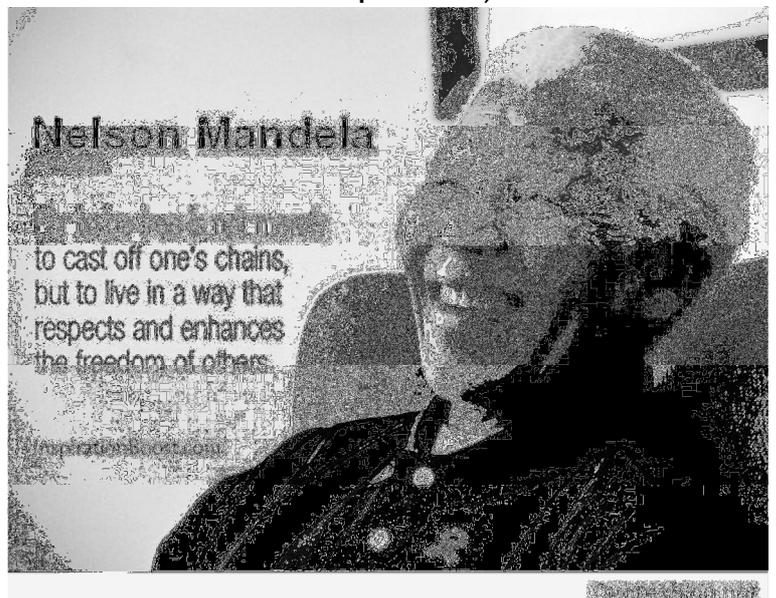
<sup>10</sup> As with a breaking of my bones,  
My enemies reproach me,  
While they say to me all day long,  
“Where is your God?”

<sup>11</sup> Why are you cast down, O my soul?  
And why are you disquieted within me?  
Hope in God; For I shall yet praise Him,  
The help of my countenance and my God.

**“For I know the plans I have  
for you,” declares the Lord,  
“plans to prosper you and not  
to harm you, plans to give you  
hope and a future”.**  
**Jeremiah 29:11**



This week we will celebrate Freedom day. South Africans will commemorate the day in 1994 when our first democratic election was held. It celebrates the liberation of our country and her people from our past (a long period of colonialism and apartheid) and celebrates a better future. This day should remind us that freedom is not guaranteed. In order to maintain freedom we need to remain permanently vigilant against corruption and the erosion of our values. We need to actively be part of building a free country. We can only do this if we as its citizens are free. We need to be set free from our past - our anxiety and depression - in order to live with hope for our own and South Africa's future.

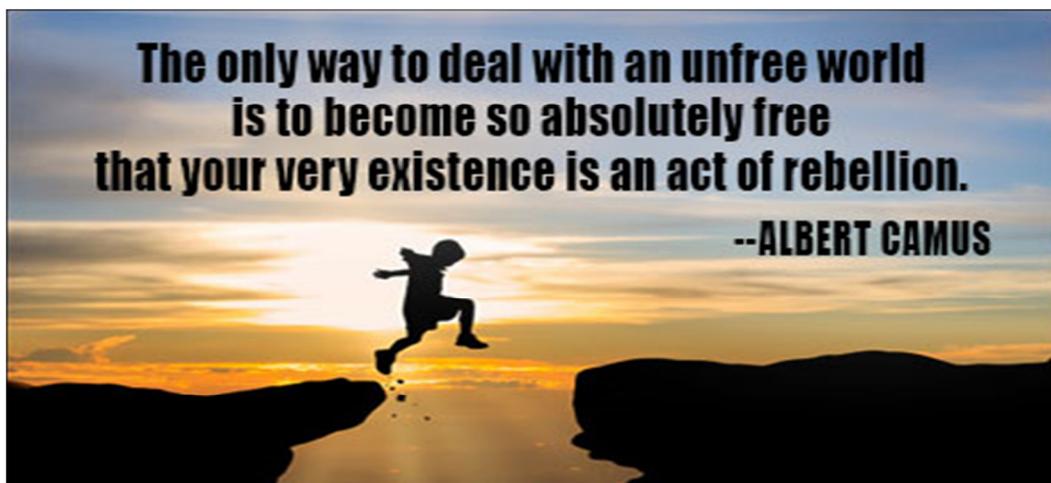


Although we celebrate how far we have come as a country and as her people, we still have lots of issues and challenges, and sometimes it feels as if God is just not “here” and we feel hopeless and depressed – far from God. The normal ups and downs of life mean that everyone feels sad or has “the blues” from time to time. Sometimes our journey brings us to dark places of depression, anxiety or deep sadness. Other times traumatic things happen to us that make it tough to function and be hopeful. Just getting through the day can be overwhelming. When these feelings take over our life in a negative way, we need to make

use of professionals that can help us on the road to recovery. Visit or phone [www.sadag.org](http://www.sadag.org), 080 021 2223 to get help for depression, or contact our Care Centre at BMC (011) 463 2333.

Maybe you feel like David today– your soul “pants” with thirst for God. **Feelings are real and need to be felt, but they do not always reflect the truth.** It helps to talk to other people who might have been through similar circumstances, but in the end there is only one place that we can go to get peace. We need to talk to God about all our feelings – yes, even the negative ones. It is alright to feel misjudged, overwhelmed and far from God. Let’s look at how the psalmist was encouraged.

1. **He spends time with God in prayer.** He feels deeply and thinks about his life. Sometimes it is good to analyze why you are feeling a certain way and to reflect on what led to you feeling the way you do. Have you felt like this before? Pour out your heart to God, be real and honest. You are talking to “the God of my life”: no-one else knows you like He does. This is your moment.
2. **He thinks about God and His promises.** Once you are empty, let God fill you up. The second part of the Psalm promises “*The Lord will command His loving kindness in the daytime, and in the night His song shall be with me*”. We know that God would never give us anything we cannot handle. David’s faith is greater than his doubt – he knows that his faith is not in how he feels at the moment, but it is in the God who is in every feeling. He remembers God’s infinite mercy, faithfulness and presence in the past where God has heard his cries and answered him with His truths - a God so constant cannot have changed. David is not just a helpless victim of his emotions; he thinks about things rationally.
3. **He takes action.** There are things we can put into action ourselves that increase our hope. Think of what has worked in the past, or hear how other people got back on the road to recovery. It is difficult to take action if we do not know God intimately and believe that God is for us! We need to seek God’s presence and will, with all we are so that we can make discerning decisions. The Psalmist prays with his trust and hope in God. True encouragement and peace comes from hoping in God for the future! Yes, it takes courage...but God is with you!



## Questions for Discussion:

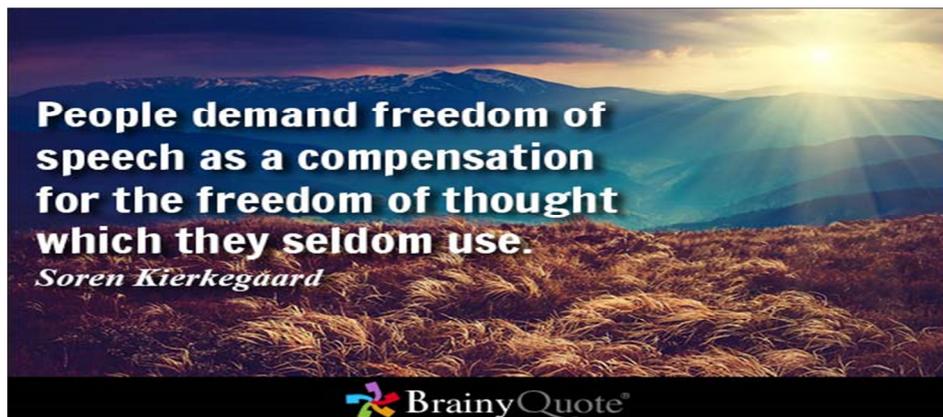


1. When you call on your best friend for help, what do you need most? Why?
  - A. A listening ear?
  - B. A handout?
  - C. A detailed game plan?
  - D. Companionship?



Do you spend as much time with God as you do with your friends? Do you share how you feel with God first?

2. Real Christians cannot be depressed. Please Discuss.
3. What would your life look like if you had no worries, guilt or sadness? What is holding you back to live the life you have described?
4. In order to live in a free country we need to remember the mistakes of the past and actively fight against corruption and the erosion of our values. What can you as a person or you as a group do to make sure we do not take our freedom for granted?



⇐ LIVE IT OUT ⇒

- ✓ Perform an act of kindness. Kindness triggers the release of serotonin, so it has an anti-depressant effect. It also calms stress and helps reduce pain. Even watching others perform acts of kindness can have a positive effect. Small acts of kindness that you do repeatedly can help you feel more connected.
- ✓ Listen to the song from Paul Baloché with Kathryn Scott - "My Hope" and meditate on the words.
- ✓ How do you bring hope to the world? Think of a way that you can change the influence of the world in your own and others daily life. Maybe just being positive when those around you aren't can make a big difference!

# WEEK FOUR

Celebrate  
**GOD'S**  
Protection

**PSALM**  
**121**



**Prayer/Worship:** Spend time together in Prayer and Worship. **Song:** YouTube: In Christ Alone – Travis Cottrel.

**What does the Bible say?**



## **Psalm 121 New King James Version (NKJV)**

*God the Help of Those Who Seek Him*  
*A Song of Ascents.*

<sup>1</sup> I will lift up my eyes to the hills—  
From whence comes my help?

<sup>2</sup> My help comes from the LORD,  
Who made heaven and earth.

<sup>3</sup> He will not allow your foot to be moved;  
He who keeps you will not slumber.

<sup>4</sup> Behold, He who keeps Israel  
Shall neither slumber nor sleep.

<sup>5</sup> The LORD is your keeper;  
The LORD is your shade at your right hand.

<sup>6</sup> The sun shall not strike you by day,  
Nor the moon by night.

<sup>7</sup> The LORD shall preserve you from all evil;  
He shall preserve your soul.

<sup>8</sup> The LORD shall preserve your going out and your coming in  
From this time forth, and even forevermore.

because  
I said  
I would.



Worker's Day started out as "May Day" - born out of the industrial struggle for an eight hour day. After our elections in 1994, 1 May is observed in celebration of those who are workers. On this day we remember all who struggle for equality and basic human rights and commit ourselves to a world of justice and righteousness.

David reminds us in Psalm 121 that God is the creator of all things on earth and in heaven and that we live in His keeping power. No matter in which era we live, He has been there before us and will continue to be there after we are gone. He has a plan for the world; He is involved in the world's issues and struggles. Each generation sits with similar issues that they need to struggle

through in order to grow to become Christ-centred. Some people or institutions can keep us safe from danger or promise us safety for some of the time, but we find time after time that people and institutions let us down. There is only One that we can trust to deliver on His promises – One who can protect us from the world - the One who created everything and us.

Psalm 121 gives us great promises to live by:

- When you put our trust in God, you are in His protection, no evil shall befall you. Your soul is in His hands forever. He will not allow your foot to be moved.
- He is always by your side – He never sleeps or rests. He is your shade at your right hand. He protects you in the day, in the night, all the time, forevermore.

We never outgrow our need for God's untiring protection over our lives. We need to expectantly recommit ourselves to God's care and protection every day.

## Questions for Discussion

1. What is your first port of call when you are in trouble? Why?

- A: Family & Friends
- B: Financial Advisor
- C: DIY books
- D: The Bible



2. What makes, or will make you feel vulnerable? Being alone, having no money, being jobless, not having friends, living in a non-Christian country? How do you, or would you, protect yourself?
3. Do you believe that the Lord preserves you from all evil always? Please explain.
4. Have you felt God's protection in specific situations before? Please share with the group.

**God taught us the Lord's Prayer when we do not know what to pray. You can listen to it (see the version from Andrea Bocelli below) or pray it together as a group.**

*YouTube: Andrea Bocelli - The Lord's Prayer:  
Live From The Kodak Theatre, USA / 2009.*

# The Lord's Prayer

Our father which art in heaven,  
hallowed by thy name. Thy kingdom come,  
Thy will be done. On earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread.  
And forgive us our trespasses;  
As we forgive those who trespass against us.  
And lead us not into temptation, But deliver us from evil:  
for thine is the kingdom,  
and the power, and the glory, for ever  
Amen.

← LIVE IT OUT →

- ✓ Who needs protection in your sphere of influence? Children, the elderly, the marginalized, the forgotten, the hungry? Make a list of things that you can do to offer some kind of protection to those in your environment.



# WEEK FIVE

Celebrate  
GOD'S  
Faithful-  
ness

## PSALM 139



**Prayer/Worship:** Spend time together in Prayer and Worship. **Song:** YouTube: He knows my name – Tommy Walker.

### What does the Bible say?



#### **Psalm 139** *New King James Version (NKJV)*

*God's Perfect Knowledge of Humanity*

*For the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David.*

<sup>1</sup> O LORD, You have searched me and known *me*.

<sup>2</sup> You know my sitting down and my rising up;  
You understand my thought afar off.

<sup>3</sup> You comprehend my path and my lying down,  
And are acquainted with all my ways.

<sup>4</sup> For *there is not a word on my tongue,*  
*But behold, O LORD, You know it altogether.*

<sup>5</sup> You have hedged me behind and before,  
And laid Your hand upon me.

<sup>6</sup> *Such knowledge is too wonderful for me;*  
*It is high, I cannot attain it.*

<sup>7</sup> Where can I go from Your Spirit?  
Or where can I flee from Your presence?

<sup>8</sup> If I ascend into heaven, You *are there;*  
If I make my bed in hell, behold, You *are there.*

<sup>9</sup> *If I take the wings of the morning,*  
*And dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea,*

<sup>10</sup> Even there Your hand shall lead me,  
And Your right hand shall hold me.

<sup>11</sup> If I say, "Surely the darkness shall fall on me,"  
Even the night shall be light about me;

<sup>12</sup> Indeed, the darkness shall not hide from You,  
But the night shines as the day;  
The darkness and the light *are both alike to You.*

<sup>13</sup> For You formed my inward parts;  
You covered me in my mother's womb.

<sup>14</sup> I will praise You, for I am fearfully *and wonderfully made;*  
Marvelous are Your works,  
And *that* my soul knows very well.

<sup>15</sup> My frame was not hidden from You,  
When I was made in secret,  
And skillfully wrought in the lowest parts of the earth.

<sup>16</sup> Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed.  
And in Your book they all were written,

The days fashioned for me,  
When *as yet* there were none of them.

<sup>17</sup> How precious also are Your thoughts to me, O God!  
How great is the sum of them!

<sup>18</sup> *If* I should count them, they would be more in number than the sand;  
When I awake, I am still with You.

<sup>19</sup> Oh, that You would slay the wicked, O God!  
Depart from me, therefore, you bloodthirsty men.

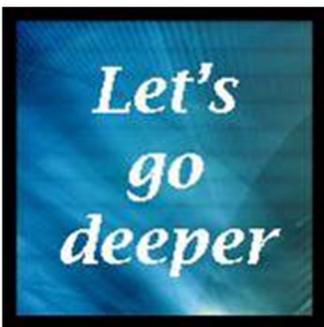
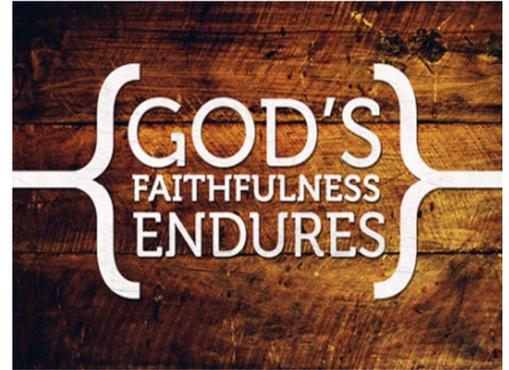
<sup>20</sup> For they speak against You wickedly;  
Your enemies take *Your name* in vain.

<sup>21</sup> Do I not hate them, O LORD, who hate You?  
And do I not loathe those who rise up against You?

<sup>22</sup> I hate them with perfect hatred;  
I count them my enemies.

<sup>23</sup> Search me, O God, and know my heart;  
Try me, and know my anxieties;

<sup>24</sup> And see if *there is any* wicked way in me,  
And lead me in the way everlasting.



The celebration of Mother's Day began in the United States in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. On this day we honour mothers, as well as motherhood, maternal bonds, and the influence of mothers in society. Some of us have been lucky enough to have mothers who showed us God's nurturing forgiving side. Others have experienced other special "mothers" in their lives who have loved them deeply. There is nothing better on this earth than to be loved for who you are – warts and all. Some of us might have had a very negative parental example and that makes it a bit more difficult to understand and comprehend the unconditional love God has for his children. Psalm 139 shows us just how deeply God knows us and how faithful He stays to us. We can use the image of a good mother to understand the love of God: like a true mother, God will love us until we know we are loved.

Our relationship with God is the ultimate love - intimate, honest, joyful, open, loving, caring, appreciative, protective, and honouring. This Psalm tells us that God loves us unconditionally, and we really don't have to do anything to earn it! God sees what we do, God knows what we think, and still God loves us! We are wonderfully and fearfully made (verses 13-16). I am an original artwork of creation. God planned me: my body, mind, psychology, emotions, circumstances and relationships. However, there are moments when I do not live up to the dreams that God has for my life. For this reason the concluding words of this Psalm (vs 21-24) are a helpful reminder of my need to admit to my failings and make peace. This is not only making peace with God – but also with the people around us.

We can only improve our earthly relationships once we have mastered the most important relationship we will ever have – our relationship with God.

At this time when we remember our mothers – be grateful for the mother who partnered with God in bringing you into this world.

## Questions for Discussion

1. Do you believe that you are fearfully and wonderfully made – God’s gift to humanity? Please explain. 
2. Do you feel comfortable celebrating who you are with others? Please explain.
3. May Christians be proud of who they are? Why or why not?
4. Write your name at the top of a page. Give this page to the person on your right. Every member write one sentence of affirmation to the one whose name is on the page, and keep sending it to the person on your right, until you have your page in front of you again. How blessed we are to be affirmed like this. Thank God for each other and affirm Him in your closing prayer.

← LIVE IT OUT →

- ✓ When is the last time that you spent 30 minutes in silence with God? Please book a date with God this week and honour your commitment to spend time with Him. Just be still and know that He is God.



# WEEK SIX

Celebrate  
the  
HOLY  
SPIRIT

## PSALM 100



**Prayer/Worship:** Spend time together in Prayer and Worship. **Song:** YouTube: It is well – Bethel.

### What does the Bible say?



#### **Psalm 100** New King James Version (NKJV)

*A Song of Praise for the LORD's Faithfulness to His People  
A Psalm of Thanksgiving.*

<sup>1</sup> Make a joyful shout to the LORD, all you lands!

<sup>2</sup> Serve the LORD with gladness;

Come before His presence with singing.

<sup>3</sup> Know that the LORD, He is God;

*It is He who has made us, and not we ourselves;*

*We are His people and the sheep of His pasture.*

<sup>4</sup> Enter into His gates with thanksgiving,

*And into His courts with praise.*

Be thankful to Him, *and* bless His name.

<sup>5</sup> For the LORD is good;

His mercy is everlasting,

*And His truth endures* to all generations.



At Pentecost we celebrate the coming of the Holy Spirit to the early followers of Jesus (see Acts Chapter 2). It is remembered as the day on which the church was started. The Spirit brings the church into existence and enlivens it. Psalm 100 is a Psalm that helps us give thanks for Pentecost. We are reminded that on the day of Pentecost people

came together with a “joyful noise” (vs 1). They were invited by Peter to “serve the Lord with gladness” and reassured that they were God’s people (vs 3). The early church was formed around the central principle that the Spirit of God leads us into all truth (vs 5) and that this same Spirit has held the church together through “all generations”. On Pentecost we celebrate the Lord’s covenant of love and faithfulness through all generations. We remember His Presence in our lives, we also realize that we have an opportunity to show that we live with the Holy Spirit, by living our lives differently. We can do this as we are now one with God by His Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit helps us grow the church. It unites us as the body of Christ. We serve the church gladly together in relationship. Celebrating who He is and what He has done for us. Finally, the Holy Spirit equips us. There are various places in the Bible that mention spiritual gifts (see table below). These are given so that we can “serve the Lord with gladness” (vs 2).

Romans 12: 6-8	I Corinthians 12: 8-10	I Corinthians 12: 28	Ephesians 4: 11	I Peter 4: 11
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prophecy</li> <li>• Serving</li> <li>• Teaching</li> <li>• Exhortation</li> <li>• Giving</li> <li>• Leadership</li> <li>• Mercy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Word of wisdom</li> <li>• Word of knowledge</li> <li>• Faith</li> <li>• Gifts of healings</li> <li>• Miracles</li> <li>• Prophecy</li> <li>• Distinguishing between spirits</li> <li>• Tongues</li> <li>• Interpretation of tongues</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Apostle</li> <li>• Prophet</li> <li>• Teacher</li> <li>• Miracles</li> <li>• Kinds of healings</li> <li>• Helps</li> <li>• Administration</li> <li>• Tongues</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Apostle</li> <li>• Prophet</li> <li>• Evangelist</li> <li>• Pastor</li> <li>• Teacher</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Whoever speaks</li> <li>• Whoever renders service</li> </ul>



### Questions for Discussion

1. Look at the table above. What do you think your Spiritual gifts are? Discuss this with the group and affirm the gifts you see in each other. 
2. How do you use your spiritual gifts? Give practical examples. If you don't – ask the group to hold you accountable for one action you will undertake this week.
3. Are you living your life in such a way that you leave space for God? What can you do to celebrate and affirm God's presence in your life more.



- ✓ Do a church retreat. Learn to spend time with God in solitude and silence.
- ✓ Action your Spiritual gift by serving someone else this week.

## DAILY DEVOTIONS

### Week 1:

- Sunday: Genesis 48: 15. God always knows what we need.  
Monday: Micah 7:14. We are God's special flock.  
Tuesday: Luke 15:4-6. Jesus will go out looking for you until he finds you.  
Wednesday: John 10:11. The good shepherd lays down his life for his sheep.  
Thursday: John 10:27. God knows us intimately.  
Friday: Jeremiah 2:6. God leads us through shadow and death.  
Saturday: Psalm 95:7. We are safe in God's hand.

### Week 2:

- Sunday: Matthew 6:14-15. Forgive others and God will forgive you.  
Monday: 2 Samuel 12:13. The Lord has put away your sin, you shall not die.  
Tuesday: Psalm 119:30. Choose the way of truth.  
Wednesday: Job 28:28. To do good is to understand God.  
Thursday: Psalm 24:3-5. When you belong to the Lord you will have a pure heart.  
Friday: Luke 22:31-33. God prays for us and our faith.  
Saturday: Psalm 51:12. God's grace brings joy.

### Week 3:

- Sunday: Psalm 32:8. God guides us in the way we should go.  
Monday: Deuteronomy 29:29. God will reveal to us what we need to do.  
Tuesday: 1 Thessalonians 5:11. Encourage one another.  
Wednesday: Jeremiah 29:11. God has a future planned for you.  
Thursday: Jeremiah 31:17. There is hope in our future.  
Friday: Micah 4:6. God looks after the marginalized.  
Saturday: Deuteronomy 3:28. Encourage and strengthen our leaders.

### Week 4:

- Sunday: Psalm 104:23. We need to work.  
Monday: 1 Samuel 2:9. We cannot do it in our own strength.  
Tuesday: Psalm 16:8. Put the Lord before everything.  
Wednesday: Psalm 73:2. We need to watch out to not stumble.  
Thursday: Psalm 28:2. The Lord hears our cries.  
Friday: Psalm 42:6. Remember God when you are down.  
Saturday: Psalm 73:23. God is always with us – holding on to us.

### Week 5:

- Sunday: Luke 16:10. We need to be faithful in all we do.  
Monday: Deuteronomy 7:9. God keeps His covenant with us.  
Tuesday: Jeremiah 3:23. Our freedom comes from God.  
Wednesday: 1 Samuel 26:23. The Lord shall reward us for faithfulness and righteousness.  
Thursday: 2 Chronicles 19:9. Be loyal in heart.  
Friday: Nehemiah 9:8. God has always been faithful.  
Saturday: Psalm 4:1. The Lord hears our prayers.

### Week 6

- Sunday: Hebrews 13:15. Praise and thank God.  
Monday: Psalm 43:4. God is our joy.  
Tuesday: John 14:26. God will send a helper that will be our teacher.  
Wednesday: Isaiah 63:11. God puts His spirit within us.  
Thursday: Colossians 4:2. Be vigilant, pray and give thanks.  
Friday: 1 Thessalonians 5:18. Give thanks in everything.  
Saturday: Daniel 4:9. The Holy Spirit gives us peace.