

Pour Out Your Heart Before Him

A Study for Youth on Prayer and Praise in the Psalms

Curriculum Scope and Sequence

Though God is the Supreme Ruler of the universe, He also dwells with His people in close, intimate fellowship and understands every emotion of our human experience. In this curriculum, students are taught the three-fold pattern in the psalms of pouring out our hearts before God, lifting our eyes to *Yahweh* and remembering who He is, and opening our mouths in praise to Him as He turns our fearful and despairing emotions into faith-filled, hopeful determination to trust Him.

Students learn to use simple Bible study tools, and intentional observation, interpretation, and application of the psalms as they prepare to understand the inductive Bible study method. Each lesson provides the opportunity to use these tools as they work through various passages, marking the verses in the Student Notebook.



Lesson 1: God in the Psalms: The Supreme Ruler of the Universe

Key Verse: Psalm 90:2

This opening lesson presents God as the all-powerful Creator of the universe, who spoke all things into existence and rules all creation with supreme authority. Since God's rule extends over all peoples and all things, it is foolish to place our confidence in anyone or anything but God. The only reasonable response toward God is worship and complete dependence on Him.

Lesson 2: God in the Psalms: *Yahweh*, the Covenant-Keeping God of Israel

Key Verse: Exodus 19:5

God has not hidden His existence, but has revealed Himself to all people through His creation. He has also revealed Himself more specifically through His Word. To the people of Israel, God made a specific covenant to be their God and to make of them a holy nation.

Lesson 3: Israel's Rebellion and Ours

Key Verses: Psalm 14:2-3

Rejecting the promises and blessings of God's covenant, Israel foolishly rejected God's rule over them, bringing consequences upon themselves. Though we see the foolishness of Israel, we too have rebellious hearts and are in need of God's rescue.

Lesson 4: The Messiah: Israel's Hope and Ours

Key Verse: Psalm 118:22

Though Israel had broken covenant with God and lost the covenant blessings with no means of rescue, the covenant-keeping God of Israel gave hope to His people through promised rescue. We see hints of this rescue throughout the book of Psalms, which foretells the coming of the Messiah. Those who submit to and worship the Son will escape the wrath of God and inherit the covenant blessings.

Lesson 5: You Are My God

Key Verses: Psalm 139:23-24

God is interested in being a God of covenant relationship with individuals of all nations through the new covenant established by His Son. Psalm 139 shows that David's response to the intimate knowledge that God has of him was to acknowledge God's greatness, goodness, and love, leading him to worship God. Just as David asked God to continue to gaze into his life to reveal any wickedness in him, so we too can have such an intimate relationship with God that causes us to cling to Him and flee wickedness.

Lesson 6: A Story on Three Levels

Key Verse: 1 Corinthians 10:11

Though the book of Psalms was the prayer and worship book of Israel, it was also written for our instruction. It gives us a preview of the nature and work of Jesus as the coming King and Priest. We can identify with the psalms because Israel's rebellious heart reflects our own rebellious hearts. We have felt the same emotions as the psalmists expressed and can learn from them how to navigate those emotions in a godly manner. The physical enemies of Israel are a reflection of our spiritual enemies. Thus, the book of Psalms is not just Israel's song and prayer book, but ours as well.

Lesson 7: Pour Out Your Heart: Honesty

Key Verses: Psalm 62:7-8

In this lesson, students are reminded of the experience of either being understood or misunderstood when they honestly express their thoughts and emotions to another person. But Psalm 142 shows us that God's children can always safely express their feelings and thoughts honestly to God. God is a refuge for His people no matter what their situation, and those who trust in Him will not be shaken.

Lesson 8: Pour Out Your Heart: Praying the Psalms*Key Verse: Psalm 95:1*

The psalms can take our feelings and put them into words for us. They also give us expressions of praise and prayer, teaching us to pray thoughtfully as we seek God.

Lesson 9: Lift Up Your Eyes: See God*Key Verses: Psalm 121:1-2*

Students are taught in this lesson that rather than being controlled by our emotions, Christians are given the blessing of bringing them to God—pouring out our hearts before Him—recognizing that our help comes from Him. In opening our eyes to the greatness and goodness of God, we are able to trust His sovereign hand in the circumstances of our lives recognizing that He is our “keeper,” or protector and refuge.

Lesson 10: Open Your Mouth: Praise God*Key Verse: Psalm 40:10*

Remembering who God is and what He has done for the Christian through Jesus gives us reason to praise Him, no matter the circumstances of our lives. Though God may not change the circumstances, He always brings true deliverance from the danger to our souls. When we trust in God, His favor is upon us, and He enables us to praise Him.

Lesson 11: From Longing to Satisfaction*Key Verse: Psalm 63:1*

The writer of Ecclesiastes searched for satisfaction in numerous things but realized that the treasures of this world are temporary and empty. Psalm 42 points us to the secret to true and lasting satisfaction that is found in relationship with the living God. This lesson ends by encouraging students to passionately pursue God.

Lesson 12: From Worry to Peace*Key Verse: Psalm 46:10a*

Christians are not isolated from danger but are held securely in the shelter of God’s almighty arms in the midst of troubles. Having a personal relationship with God enables us to rest in Him as a refuge and to experience His constant comforting presence.

Lesson 13: From Fear to Trust*Key Verses: Psalm 56:3-4*

Our fears can control us, or we can control our fears by deciding to trust God, focusing on His greatness and goodness rather than on our fearful circumstances. Making the commitment to trust God gives us the perspective of seeing all things against the backdrop of the all-knowing, sovereign, all-powerful, good God, and to say with confidence, “This I know, that God is for me” (Psalm 56:9b).

Lesson 14: From Depression to Comfort*Key Verses: Psalm 77:11-12 or Psalm 77:13-14*

It is tempting to be self-focused, seeing our circumstances only in light of our personal desires and expectations. However, we must look beyond ourselves to remember God’s past faithfulness in our lives and in history, recognizing that He is an unchanging, sovereign, covenant-keeping God. When we see our lives within the bigger picture of history or “His story,” we recognize that we are part of God’s bigger story being worked out throughout the ages of time. Thus self-focused, tunnel vision depression is defeated by looking at the bigger picture of who God is and remembering His work in the world.

Lesson 15: From Despair to Hope*Key Verse: Psalm 130:5*

In Psalm 130, the psalmist cries to God “out of the depths” for mercy—undeserved kindness. This humble prayer is made from a heart that recognizes both unworthiness before God and confidence in God’s forgiveness. This kind of grateful faith engenders hope and confident patience—something all of us must strive for in the midst of despairing situations.

Lesson 16: From Distress to Deliverance*Key Verse: Psalm 18:2*

From looking at David’s situation in Psalm 18:1-5, students are taught to call upon God in distressing circumstances. We have the assurance that God will not forsake His people; He is a covenant-keeping God who has pledged Himself to care for His children. Though His deliverance may seem slow in coming, it is sure. He has already accomplished the greatest rescue in delivering His people from eternal wrath through the death of His Son on the cross.

Lesson 17: From Weariness to Praise*Key Verses: Psalm 92:1-2*

Psalm 71 is about finishing well, and not growing weary and giving up. The psalmist’s confidence in God’s help is based on his experience of God’s faithfulness in the past. As students see the psalmist’s determination to praise God in spite of his weariness, the lesson challenges them to trust God and make the choice to praise Him for His faithfulness.

Lesson 18: From Brokenness to Forgiveness*Key Verses: Psalm 32:1-2*

Psalm 32 demonstrates that the result of hiding sin is guilt and misery. But the person who acknowledges his sin and confesses it receives forgiveness. The lesson ends by encouraging students to repent while God may be found.

Lesson 19: From Envy to Contentment*Key Verses: Psalm 73:25-6*

The psalmist in Psalm 73 wrote of almost slipping by envying the prosperity of the wicked. His envy continued until he sought the Lord and realized that the wicked only prosper for a short time on their way to eternal destruction. This led the psalmist to repentance and gratitude to God for His faithfulness. The lesson ends by encouraging students to find contentment in God and to take the eternal view of life.

Lesson 20: From Anger to Justice*Key Verses: Psalm 9:7-8*

Though imprecatory psalms call down God's judgment on injustice with very strong words, the nature of poetic literature is to exaggerate to make a point or paint a picture. The tone of these psalms is not one of revenge, but rather anger that God's law has been broken and grief that God has been dishonored. This concern for justice and for God's name is a righteous anger that desires justice from the God who judges injustice and evil.

Lesson 21: God Himself Is Judge*Key Verse: Psalm 50:23*

Though in this world the justice system is not foolproof, God's judgment is without error. In Psalm 50, God condemns insincere worship and hypocrisy, which flow from hearts that do not consider God, but "forget God." The warning to offer thanks and obey God is connected to the promise that God will give salvation to those who heed the warning. At the end of the lesson, students are challenged to consider how they will fare in the court of heaven.

Lesson 22: Do Not Harden Your Heart*Key Verses: Psalm 25:4-5*

Psalm 95:1-7a invites us to "worship and bow down," to "kneel before our Maker"—to trust Him as the One who created us to know what is best for us and to care for us. Following these verses, the psalmist gives us a warning not to harden our hearts, highlighting the consequences to the Israelites for hardening their hearts. The urging in this lesson is not to be like the Israelites, but to be teachable before the Lord, praying that God will make His ways known, teach us His paths, and lead us in His truth.

Lesson 23: The Righteous Will Never Be Moved*Key Verse: Psalm 112:1*

Though God gives good gifts to all mankind, there is a particular blessing that God showers on the righteous. This lesson shows that the heart of God overflows with generosity, giving blessing after blessing to His people and not withholding anything that is good for them. This particular kind of abundant blessing is reserved for those who fear the LORD and greatly delight in His commandments.

Lesson 24: Praise from One Generation to the Next*Key Verse: Psalm 78:1*

Psalm 78 urges us listen to the teaching of the past—"the glorious deeds of the LORD, and his might, and the wonders that he has done." He commands each generation to pass down the "testimony in Jacob" and the "law in Israel" to their children, so that they "should set their hope in God and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments." This is the foundation of Lesson 24, which then proceeds to highlight the Ephraimites who had heard the stories of God's faithfulness but didn't trust God. In the same way, the students can know about God but not know Him personally or trust in Him. The lesson ends with a plea for the students to examine their own relationship with God.

Lesson 25: Bless the LORD—Part 1*Key Verses: Psalm 103:1-2*

We bless the LORD when we remember all His benefits—His kindnesses and His mercy. By intentionally remembering God's goodness, we can be motivated to speak of His grace to others—the greatest of which is His kindness to undeserving sinners in sending His Son to accomplish the salvation of those who trust in Him. This lesson then instructs students very specifically in the elements of the Gospel to challenge their own hearts and to give them an articulate presentation of the Gospel to share with others.

Lesson 26: Bless the LORD—Part 2*Key Verses: Psalm 103:13-14*

God's love for His children is infinitely immense. He shows them great compassion, recognizing their weakness. David contrasts the brevity of man's life with the everlasting nature of God's love and righteousness. The lesson draws these two points together by helping students understand that we should be in awe of a God who rescues from sin and death, while also fearing the same God who can punish, condemn, and kill eternally in hell. The challenge is given to students to recognize that God's Kingdom rules over all and to question whether they are in awe of Him or whether they ignore or disrespect Him.

Lesson 27: Your Testimonies Are My Delight*Key Verse: Psalm 119:24*

Though the whole Bible is precious to every child of God, some portions are more precious to an individual because of experience with particular verses or passages. If we want to grow as a Christian, we must dig into the Bible and ask God to help us experience, not just read or learn, the precious truths there.

Lesson 28: The LORD Is My Shepherd

Key Verse: Psalm 23:1

David's words in Psalm 23 show he had a close, personal relationship with God. He uses the shepherd imagery in the psalm to express the care, guidance, and satisfaction he receives from the Lord, all of which cause him to trust God. This messianic psalm points us to Jesus, the Good Shepherd, who has provided a way for us to have the same kind of relationship with God as David did.

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