

10 STUDIES
+ LEADER NOTES

PSALMS

A Song for Every Season



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Happy, sad, regretful, thankful ... For centuries Christians have found expression for their emotions in God-inspired psalms. But more than a soundtrack for life, the psalms contain God's perspective on our feelings and guidance on what a faith-filled reaction to them might be.

Ultimately, these poetic words point us to Jesus Christ, God in the flesh, who felt what we feel and showed us how to persevere with hope.

These 10 studies by pastor and author James Stone are reflective and personal, able to connect with believers facing all manner of circumstances. You will be edified as you read and reflect on Psalms 22, 23, 42, 43, 51, 55, 73, 88, 100, 136 and 150.



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A Song for Every Season

PSALMS

BY JAMES STONE



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SYDNEY • YOUNGSTOWN

A Song for Every Season

Pathway Bible Guides: Psalms

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Before you begin

The Psalms has been the songbook for the people of God for centuries. In its pages, God's people have found lyrics to match the various seasons of life. The words it contains have given expression to the full range of human emotions those seasons produce—whether that be feeling fearful and anxious or overwhelmed and stressed, feeling lonely and forsaken or feeling discouraged, feeling despondent or feeling guilty, feeling that God isn't fair or feeling thankful and joyful. There is a psalm, and often more than one, that speaks of each of these feelings. In this way, the Psalms often help us to process what we are feeling and enable us to vocalize our emotions. The very existence of these beautiful, poetic writings is an indication that God gives permission to, and even lovingly invites, his people to express the depths of their feelings to him. God wants his people to cry out to him and tell him how they are feeling and what they are going through—though, of course, he knows this already. As Psalm 139 tells us:

O LORD, you have searched me and known me!
You know when I sit down and when I rise up;
you discern my thoughts from afar.
You search out my path and my lying down
and are acquainted with all my ways.
Even before a word is on my tongue,
behold, O LORD, you know it altogether. (Ps 139:1-4)

If that were the only purpose of this extraordinary collection of writings, the Psalms would be a wonderful gift to the people of God.

But there is much more. God also desires to provide reorientation and recalibration where necessary to enable his people to view life, and their emotions and feelings, from a different perspective. This is a perspective that only he can provide and that we would be unable to have were it not for him and his revelation. The Psalms recalibrate our perspective, but they do so in a way that never minimizes or downplays what we are going through, while also lovingly preventing us from being consumed and overtaken by our situation. Thus, the Psalms encourage us to join our feelings to faith, and to process whatever our situations and circumstances might be through the lens of the character and actions of God. We may be feeling fearful and anxious, but what might a response of faith look like in such a situation? How might God desire us to react to feeling lonely and forsaken? In what way does trusting God and his promises impact our feelings of guilt? This is true even in what is arguably the darkest of psalms (Psalm 88), even though it may not be as immediately obvious.

Ultimately, of course, these songs point us to the Lord Jesus Christ. At various points throughout his earthly life, Jesus clearly made use of this songbook to express his own feelings, to rightly view his experiences and circumstances through the lens of faith, and to understand and teach about his role as the Messiah. In Jesus, God in the flesh, we have “one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin” (Heb 4:15). We have one who experienced the full range of feelings and emotions, situations and circumstances, that we go through. As such, he shows us that we have a God we can turn to whatever we might be going through; we have a God who lovingly calls on us to respond to him in faith, through whatever feelings we might be experiencing.

It is my prayer that this collection of psalms will speak into whatever season of life you may be going through now, and also that it will help to prepare you for whatever might come your way in the future.

1. When I'm feeling fearful and anxious

PSALM 23



Getting started

What makes you feel fearful or anxious? If you are able, share about a particular time in your life when you have felt this way.



Light from the Word

Read Psalm 23.

1. Reflect on what is meant by each of the following words or phrases from verse 1:
 - “The LORD”
 - “My shepherd”
 - “I shall not want”
2. From verses 2 and 3, what does David say that the Lord does as his shepherd?

6. In what way might the truths of verse 5 help us when we are feeling fearful or anxious?

7. What is David's confident hope for the rest of his days, and even on into eternity?

8. How does this hope help us when we are feeling fearful and anxious?



To finish

Read John 10:7-18.

What makes Jesus, our good shepherd, so worthy of our trust?

Do you believe Jesus is enough and can be trusted, even through your fears and anxiety? What might cause us to think otherwise?



Give thanks and pray

- Praise God that, when we know him as our shepherd, we don't have to fear evil even when we walk through the darkest of times.
- Pray that God would help you to trust in Jesus as your good shepherd in the face of your fears and anxieties.