

Breathe

40 DAYS OF PRAYER
THROUGH THE PSALMS

**A journey through the ascent
of the Psalms: learning to
breathe in God's mercies and
breathe out His praise... just as
we breathe in air.**

Hey Sister,

Take a deep breath in. Now breathe out. That breath you just took sustained your very life for a brief second. While reading this sentence you have taken several more breaths without having to remind yourself to keep breathing. The ability to breathe is what makes you alive. In the very beginning when God created the world, the only thing He specifically breathed into was man. “Then the LORD God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature” (Genesis 2:7). The breath from the nostrils of Yahweh God filled Adam’s body and gave him a soul. The same breath that filled Adam’s lungs fills your lungs as well. When God knit you together in your mother’s womb, He gave you the ability to breathe and to live. Breath is necessary for life.

In the spiritual life of every believer, prayer is like breathing. Just as you cannot survive in this world without breathing air into your lungs, you cannot survive spiritually without praying and staying close to the heart of God. Praying should be second nature in your walk with Christ, just like breathing—a natural inclination that is done all the time without even thinking.

1 Thessalonians 5:17 instructs us to “pray without ceasing” and Philippians 4:6 tells us, “Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.” Prayer is a gift. It is how we communicate with our Maker. It is also our lifeline to Him.

Martin Luther once said, “To be a Christian without praying is no more possible than to be alive without breathing.” This is why I am calling this 40-day devotional “Breathe.” As believers, having a fervent, vibrant prayer life is not an option; it is a necessity to living a life that flourishes in Christ and is intimate with Him. As we walk together over the next 40 days through various Psalms, it is my prayer that your heart would be woven more intimately with the Lord’s as you dive into Scripture and talk to your Maker. Prayer is a precious gift to us. Let us strive to be women of prayer, boldly and humbly approaching the throne of grace each and every day.

Take one more deep breath in, now breathe out, and rest in the Lord’s embrace.

Thank You, Father, for the incredible privilege of prayer. We admit that we don’t pray enough. Forgive us for neglecting such a precious gift. Teach us to pray bold, kingdom-focused prayers. Show us how to believe Your Word and breathe out prayer as we go throughout our days. As we study, sit, and pray, meet with us, Father. We want to know You more.

In Jesus’ Name, Amen (So Be It).

**breathing in His mercies,
breathing out His praise.**

Gretchen Saffers

founder of
Well-Watered
Women Co.



Table of Contents

Introduction to the Study.....	06
Introduction to the Psalms	07
How to Pray the Psalms.....	08
Example Prayer from Matthew 6.....	09
Psalm 1	10
Book 1 - Genesis	12
Psalm 4	14
Psalm 8	15
Psalm 13.....	16
Psalm 19.....	17
Psalm 27.....	18
Psalm 34.....	19
Psalm 37.....	20
Psalm 40	21
Book 2 - Exodus	23
Psalm 42.....	25
Psalm 45.....	26
Psalm 51.....	27
Psalm 55.....	28
Psalm 62	29
Psalm 63.....	30
Psalm 67.....	31
Psalm 70	32
Book 3 - Leviticus.....	34
Psalm 73	36
Psalm 77	37
Psalm 78.....	38
Psalm 84.....	39
Psalm 85.....	40
Psalm 86	41
Psalm 88.....	42
Psalm 89.....	43
Book 4 - Numbers	45
Psalm 90.....	47
Psalm 91.....	48
Psalm 95.....	49
Psalm 96	50
Psalm 101	51
Psalm 103	52
Psalm 104.....	53
Psalm 106.....	54
Book 5 - Deuteronomy.....	56
Psalm 107.....	58
Psalm 115.....	59
Psalm 118.....	60
Psalm 119:89-104	61
Psalm 121	62
Psalm 139.....	63
Psalm 142.....	64
Psalm 150	65
References.....	68

Introduction to the Study

In the 17th century, there was a woman named Susanna Wesley who was the mother of nineteen children. In order for her to spend coveted moments alone in prayer, she would throw her apron over her head to signal to her children that she was spending time with the Lord.¹ We can learn from this simple, yet powerful gesture when coming to Scripture in prayer. Susanna Wesley knew she couldn't make it through the day without recognizing her weaknesses and her need for God's strength. She communed with Him in the mess and chaos. She knew it was better to meet with the Lord under an apron than not to meet with Him at all. Her very example refutes our claims that we don't have enough time in the day to pray. Prayer is so vital in the life of the believer that we cannot afford to neglect praying. Like Susanna Wesley, we must learn to "throw the apron over our heads" throughout the day as we come before the throne of grace in our need to worship God.

Martin Luther also grasped the necessity for daily prayer in the Christian life. He once said, "I have so much to do that I shall spend the first three hours in prayer." Luther understood the need for the child of God to breathe in God's grace through the power and privilege of prayer. Throughout the next 40 days, we will learn to "throw the apron over our heads" in prayer as we walk through the Psalms. We will look to Jesus in the Word and pray the promises of God with expectation and adoration. The truth is, the busier we become in life, and the more we add to our daily tasks, the more we need to be women and men who pray.

We must always remember that the kingdom of God is inside out and upside down. Sometimes the most productive and powerful thing we could do in our day is not to be more efficient and focused, but to be more prayerful. When words escape us as we pray, the best thing we can do is come to Scripture and read it back to the Lord who authored and inspired every word. When we come to a full reliance on His Word, we will be changed from the inside out and have eyes to see the hand of God at work all around us.

GOD, HELP US SEE THE IMPORTANCE OF PRAYER AND THE GREAT GRACE YOU HAVE OFFERED TO US IN SPEAKING WITH YOU. WE WANT TO THROW THE APRON OVER OUR HEADS AND COME TO YOU THROUGHOUT OUR DAY, LEANING ON YOUR PROMISES, HOPING IN YOUR WORD, AND PRAISING YOU FOR WHO YOU ARE. IN CHRIST'S NAME WE PRAY, AMEN. READY? LET'S BREATHE TOGETHER.

Introduction to the Psalms

Psalms, cushioned at the center of your Bible, is one of the most commonly studied books of Scripture because of how closely it relates to the human experience. In this book, every human emotion and feeling is touched and expressed. J. Vernon McGee beautifully explained that the Psalms “play upon the keyboard of the human soul with all the stops pulled out.”² If we come to the Psalms with our ears attuned to the worship of God, we will hear a beautiful melody that sings praises to Jesus Christ.

The book of Psalms is also known as the “Book of Praises.” Throughout the journey of the Psalms, prophecies are sung to Christ our Savior. A prophecy is a foretelling of what is to come. Even before Christ was born, God was proclaiming to the world about the coming King, Jesus Christ. As we study various Psalms, we will have our eyes opened to find Christ our Savior woven throughout them. Just as Christ is the subject of the Psalms, He should also be the focus of our life and prayers.

Several authors contributed to this “Book of Praises.” King David was a main contributor; however, Moses, Solomon, the Sons of Korah, Asaph, Heman, Ethan, and Hezekiah also penned various Psalms. This book contains hymns and songs that were meant to be sung by the Israelites, as well as prayers, confessions, praises, historical accounts, poetry, and even laments and petition for salvation.

This book was not put together aimlessly, but rather has a specific layout and composition. There are five sections in the book of Psalms that correlate with the Torah. The Torah is the first five books of the Bible: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. Each section of the Psalms ends with a doxology, or a praise to God. This study has been divided according to these five books; we will be studying and praying eight Psalms in each section.

God is the main focus in the book of Psalms, and we also see man’s need for God through salvation. The gospel is woven throughout this book, pointing to Jesus. Learning to study and pray Scripture is a beautiful way to communicate with God, love His Word, and see Jesus throughout all of Scripture. Before we begin our study of the Psalms, let’s start with Psalm 1, the building block for the rest of the book.

THE BOOK OF PSALMS IS A HYMN BOOK
AND A HIM BOOK—IT IS ALL ABOUT HIM.

-J. VERNON MCGEE

How to Pray the Psalms

ONE.

Learn the context of the Psalm by studying who wrote it (if known), the author's circumstances, and the main principles laid out in the Psalm. The Psalms point to Christ. As you read, think about how this Psalm is an arrow pointing to our Savior.

TWO.

Meditate on the language used. What words are repeated? What is the structure of the Psalm? What emotions are expressed through the words? Read the Psalm out loud. Don't just read it once, read it a few times, asking the Lord to give you a deeper understanding of the message.

THREE.

Write a prayer to the Lord using the words of the Psalm and your own summary of it. Don't run from your emotions; pour them out before the Lord and praise Him for His faithfulness. Learn from the Psalmists and come to God humbly and honestly. Some Psalms begin with desperation, longing, and even questioning, but they almost always end in praise.





Example Prayer from Matthew 6:5-15

If you don't know where to start with prayer, take one day to read through the Lord's Prayer and follow the example that Jesus offered us in Matthew 6:5-15. Below is a simple breakdown of some principles that we can learn from the Lord's Prayer:

“Our Father in heaven” | Pray to the Father, the Creator of all things, who is above all and holds all things together (Colossians 1:17).

“Hallowed be your name” | His name is high above every other name. When you come to the Lord in prayer, come humbly and reverently. “Hallowed” means honored as holy. God's name is holy and is worthy of our praise!

“Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven” When you pray, ask for His will to be done. This is an exchanging of your temporary desires for eternal vision. It is an act of surrender and a shifting of your gaze to the kingdom of God that lasts forever.

“Give us this day our daily bread” | Pray for the day in which you are living, knowing that you aren't promised tomorrow, and that God will give you all that you need for what is to come. The future is not here, but you are entrusted with the present. Ask the Lord for His daily, moment-by-moment provision.

“And forgive us our debts, as we have also forgiven our debtors” | Pray for the supernatural strength to forgive others as Christ forgave you! Forgiveness is not possible apart from the cross. When you look to Jesus and the forgiveness you find through His sacrifice, you are able to forgive those who have wronged you.

“And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.” | Pray for His guidance, protection, and deliverance.

2 Corinthians 1:20 tells us, “For all the promises of God find their Yes in him (Jesus). That is why it is through him we utter our Amen to God for his glory.” When you pray, pray in Jesus' name. Place Him at the center of your prayers. Pray boldly. Pray with confidence. Pray specifically. Pray always.

Read Psalm 1

As you read, make note of the differences between the righteous and the wicked. What sets them apart from each other?

R I G H T E O U S

W I C K E D

What do you learn about the Lord in this passage?

Psalm 1 begins with one powerful word to describe the life of the righteous man, “blessed.” Look up the meaning of the word “blessed” and write it here.

This blessed person doesn’t walk in the counsel of the wicked, stand in the way of sinners, or sit in the seat of scoffers. In other words, he doesn’t tune his or her ears to unwise advice, associate with the wicked person’s wayward actions, or make friends with those who mock the innocent.

Rather, this blessed person delights in God’s law, thinks about it all the time, and loves it more than any earthly thing. The main priority of the righteous is knowing God through His Word. The Psalmist describes this life to be like a tree that does the impossible: its leaf never withers. This person flourishes because they are deeply rooted in God’s truth that never fails, and their life is built upon a firm foundation. The Lord knows this person intimately and sustains their life.

This specific Psalm introduces us to Book 1 of the Psalms, which refers to the account of Genesis. The “righteous” man in this introductory Psalm points us to Jesus Christ who is the ultimate picture of righteousness and blamelessness. We cannot live a righteous life apart from His sacrifice on the cross on our behalf.

We cannot begin our journey in the Psalms without first looking to Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith (Hebrews 12:2). We are blessed because we have received every blessing from God in Christ Jesus and are covered by His righteousness. (Read 2 Corinthians 5:21 and Ephesians 1:3.)

Example Prayer from Psalm 1:

Father, I thank you that because of Jesus I can live the “blessed” life. I trade my sinful rags for your glorious riches in Christ. No longer do I walk in my old sinful ways, making friends with the world, but instead I delight in your law and words. You have redirected my paths and welcomed me into your family, giving me every spiritual blessing I could ever need through Jesus. My heart can barely fathom how wonderful this gift of grace truly is! As I daily delight in your law, plant me by streams of living water. I know that when I detach myself from you or fail to come to you for refreshment and nourishment, I start to wither. But when I’m rooted in your law, my leaves never wither, no matter the seasons and droughts of life that come my way. I trust that you know my heart, you see my circumstances, and you love me with an infinite kind of love. Water my soul this day, Lord. Take the places in my life that are broken and dry and deserted and revive my soul according to your Word. I delight in you alone! In Jesus’ name, Amen.

WRITE YOUR OWN PSALM 1 PRAYER IN THE SPACE BELOW:

Delight

BOOK ONE | PSALMS 1-41 | GENESIS

The Genesis section of the book of Psalms (Psalms 1-41) focuses on mankind and our need for redemption.⁴ In the book of Genesis we see the creation of the world and creation of man in innocence (Genesis 1-2), the fall of man and man's need for a Redeemer (Genesis 3), and the restoration of man starting to take place (Genesis 4-50). Similarly, Book One of the Psalms shows us man's blessedness, man's fall, and man's recovery through God's grace in sending His Son, Jesus, to die in our place.

The first Psalm of this book lays a foundation for man's blessedness when delighting in God's law and it closes in Psalm 41 with a reminder of man's blessedness when abiding by God's law. Children of God now walk a new path of life with a love for His law because we have been radically redeemed by the blood of Jesus from our sinful waywardness. Our actions have been redefined and redirected by the gospel of grace. We have exchanged our sin for blessedness in Christ, and because of that we delight in our Savior!

We've chosen a word to capture the theme of each section of the Psalms. The word for Book One is "delight," which reminds us that true blessedness comes through delighting in the Lord and finding our joy and happiness in Him.

When we come to Him in prayer, honesty, and desperation, we delight in worshipping Him and submitting to His ways. When we preach the gospel to our hearts through prayer and meditation, remembering that we rebelled but Christ rescued us, our hearts change to become more like His (Ephesians 2:1-5). That is the purpose of prayer. Prayer is delighting in God, and prayer delights God.

Breathe in. Breathe out. Now praise.

Day One • Psalm 4

BUT KNOW THAT THE LORD HAS SET APART THE GODLY FOR HIMSELF;
THE LORD HEARS WHEN I CALL TO HIM. (V.3)

This Psalm was authored by King David when he was being pursued by his rebellious and stubborn third-born, Absalom (see 2 Samuel 15:13-17). Absalom had lived contrary to God's law and his pride led to his eventual downfall. Psalms 3 and 4 are the persistent pleadings of David for help and salvation from the Lord in his difficult situation. David's honest and earnest words show us the immediacy of prayers and that God hears our pleas. He is not unaware of our struggles and fears.

As you read the words of Psalm 4, feel the weight and urgency of them. Has there been a time in your life when you were being pursued? This could be an unjust circumstance you have endured, or a time when fears threatened your peace and wreaked havoc on your mind. God is your steadfast shield and He protects you from harm. When you walk through the inevitable valley of suffering, you can know with confidence that your soul is safely kept in the palm of His mighty hands. The apostle Paul said it beautifully in 2 Corinthians 4:16-18, "So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal." Even in the midst of the battles you face, you can join David in saying, "You have put more joy in my heart than they have when their grain and wine abound. In peace I will both lie down and sleep; for you alone, O LORD, make me dwell securely" (v. 6-7). Jesus Christ is the answer to our souls' distress. He was sent to save us from the enemy, from our fears, and from the injustice of this world.

USE THIS SPACE TO PRAY PSALM 4