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THE 66-BOOK 8-WEEK GROUP BIBLE STUDY SERIES • BOOK 19 OF 66

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PSALMS

An 8-Week Bible Study Through Selected Psalms • Volume 1

By Greg and Kayla Gibson

THE COMPLETE STUDY • WEEKS 1-8 • SELECTED PSALMS, BOOKS 1-5

GENERAL / MIXED GROUP EDITION

Psalms: Walking the Psalter

An 8-Week Bible Study Through Selected Psalms • Volume 1 • ESV® • 8 Sessions of 75-90 Minutes

PARTICIPANT STUDY EDITION

Synchronized Section-by-Section with the Leader Guide Edition · Includes Group Reflection Workspace

Psalms: Walking the Psalter • Volume 1

Participant Study Edition • General / Mixed Group Track

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WEEK 1 OF 8

Week 1: The Two Ways and the LORD's Glory — Psalms 1, 2, 8, 19

Scripture Scope: Psalms 1, 2, 8, 19 (ESV) • Session Length: 75–90 Minutes

- **The title:** "Psalms" comes from the Greek word for songs sung with stringed instruments. The Hebrew title, Tehillim, means "praises."
- **The voices:** David wrote the largest collection; others come from the sons of Korah, Asaph, Solomon, Moses (Psalm 90), Ethan the Ezrahite, and many unnamed writers. The "I" of a psalm may be a king, a priest, a pilgrim, or the whole gathered people, and God's people have prayed these words as their own ever since.
- **Its form:** One hundred fifty poems, written over many centuries, from Moses through the exile and after, gathered on purpose into one book of prayer and song.
- **The structure:** Five books, each ending with a doxology, a short burst of praise:
  - Book 1 (Psalms 1–41), mostly psalms of David, many of them laments.
  - Book 2 (Psalms 42–72), ending with a royal prayer.
  - Book 3 (Psalms 73–89), ending with the covenant with David in question.
  - Book 4 (Psalms 90–106), answering with "the LORD reigns."
  - Book 5 (Psalms 107–150), ending in a crescendo of praise.
- **This volume:** Psalms is not a story to follow chapter by chapter. Volume 1 walks through the five books by reading 28 selected psalms in full, so the group tastes the Psalter's movement from the blessed man and the threatened king, through lament and crisis, to the LORD's reign and keeping, and finally to the praise that closes the book.
- **Why it matters:** The Psalms teach God's people to pray the whole of life before him: lament, confession, trust, royal hope, and praise. Jesus prayed the Psalms, quoted them from the cross, and said that what was written about him in the Psalms must be fulfilled.

How This 8-Week Study Works

Designed for weekly small groups, mini-churches, and community gatherings (75–90 minutes per session) rather than daily homework checklists, each week invites you to walk through selected psalms together through six repeatable sections:

- **Section X.1 — Opening:** Sets the scene, the Week at a Glance, Head, Heart, and Hands objectives, the Opening Frame, and the Opening Entry Question.
- **Section X.2 — Historical & Literary Context:** Places the week's psalms inside the shape of the Psalter and the ancient Near Eastern world.
- **Section X.3 — Movement 1:** The week's first group of psalms: Guided Scripture Reading, Anchor Verses, Teaching Narrative, and Group Discussion Questions.
- **Section X.4 — Movement 2:** The week's second group of psalms, following the same flow.
- **Section X.5 — Canonical Horizon:** Traces how the psalms echo across Scripture and find their fulfillment in Jesus Christ.
- **Section X.6 — Application, Looking Ahead, and Closing Prayer:** Moves the week's study into everyday life, previews next week, and closes in prayer.

Key anchor verses are printed in each section for quick reference. Each week's psalms are read aloud in full from the ESV, because a psalm is meant to be heard whole. The Psalms speak honestly about fear, grief, guilt, and darkness, and the study makes room for that honesty with care.

Choosing a Bible Translation: Top 5 Translations Compared

Every English Bible translation falls along a spectrum between two primary approaches: word-for-word translation (formal equivalence, which prioritizes literal accuracy to the original phrasing and sentence structure) and thought-for-thought translation (dynamic equivalence, which prioritizes immediate modern readability by translating idioms and ideas into natural contemporary expressions). Here is how five widely used English translations compare:

- **ESV (English Standard Version) — Word-for-Word**
  - Pros: Follows the wording and sentence structure of the original Hebrew and Greek closely while using modern English; well suited to close study.
  - Cons: Because it tracks the original sentence structure, some phrasing can feel more formal than everyday speech.
- **NIV (New International Version) — Balanced (Between Word-for-Word and Thought-for-Thought)**
  - Pros: Widely read; balances accuracy to the original languages with natural, everyday readability.
  - Cons: Because some idioms are rendered as modern expressions, a few literal wordplays or technical terms can be less visible.
- **NLT (New Living Translation) — Thought-for-Thought**
  - Pros: Warm and conversational; reads smoothly aloud and helps readers follow the big picture of long passages.
  - Cons: Because it prioritizes meaning over literal phrasing, it can be harder to use for close word study.
- **CSB (Christian Standard Bible) — Optimal Equivalence (Balanced)**
  - Pros: Stays close to the original words where possible while smoothing awkward phrasing into natural modern English.
  - Cons: Because it is a newer translation, some well-known verses may sound different from the wording many readers remember.
- **KJV / NKJV (King James Version & New King James Version) — Traditional Word-for-Word**
  - Pros: Historic cadence that shaped English literature and church history; the NKJV updates archaic pronouns ("thee/thou") while keeping the classic rhythm.
  - Cons: Often reads like older English poetry, with complex sentences and archaic or formal vocabulary that can be harder for modern readers to follow.

This study quotes the ESV.

Greg & Kayla's Recommended Study Bibles

Having a trusted study Bible on hand is one of the best ways to go deeper as you read through the Psalms:

- **Greg's Favorite Study Bible:** The MacArthur Study Bible (ESV), which contains extensive explanatory notes beneath almost every verse, ideal for detailed study.
- **Kayla's Favorite Study Bible:** The ESV Study Bible, containing over 20,000 study notes, articles, and explanations.

The 8-Week Psalms Study at a Glance

Week	Title & Psalms	Movement 1 / Movement 2	Canonical Horizon
1	**The Two Ways and the LORD's Glory** (Pss 1, 2, 8, 19)	The Gateway (Pss 1–2) / The Heavens and the Word (Pss 8, 19)	The blessed Man and the begotten Son
2	**The Forsaken, the Shepherd, and the Light** (Pss 22, 23, 27)	Why Have You Forsaken Me (Ps 22) / The Shepherd and the Stronghold (Pss 23, 27)	The crucified and risen Shepherd
3	**Confession and the Close of Book 1** (Pss 32, 40, 41)	The Blessing of Confession (Ps 32) / He Set My Feet on a Rock (Pss 40–41)	The blessed one whose sin is covered; the One written in the scroll
4	**Thirst, Refuge, and a Clean Heart** (Pss 42–43, 46, 51, 63)	Thirst and a Very Present Help (Pss 42–43, 46) / A Clean Heart and Better Than Life (Pss 51, 63)	Living water; God with us; a broken and contrite heart
5	**The King, the Crisis, and the Courts** (Pss 72, 73, 84)	The King's Prayer and the End of Book 2 (Ps 72) / Truly God Is Good; How Lovely (Pss 73, 84)	The greater Solomon; God as our portion; a better country
6	**Darkness, the Covenant, and Our Dwelling Place** (Pss 88, 89, 90)	The Darkest Lament and the Questioned Covenant (Pss 88–89) / A Prayer of Moses (Ps 90)	Christ enters our darkness; the steadfast love sworn to David; from everlasting to everlasting
7	**Come, Worship the LORD Who Keeps You** (Pss 95, 103, 121)	Come, Let Us Worship; Bless the LORD (Pss 95, 103) / The LORD Who Keeps You (Ps 121)	The people of his pasture; the One who heals and forgives; the LORD who keeps you
8	**The Priest-King and the People's Praise** (Pss 110, 118, 130, 145)	The Priest-King and the Rejected Stone (Pss 110, 118) / Out of the Depths to the Praise of the King (Pss 130, 145)	The seated Priest-King; the rejected stone; forgiveness from the depths; a people of praise

Scripture Scope: Psalms 1, 2, 8, 19 • **Focal Group Readings:** Psalm 1:1–6; Psalm 2:1–12; Psalm 8:1–9; Psalm 19:1–14 (ESV) • **Session Pacing:** 75–90 Minutes

Section 1.1

Opening: The Two Ways and the LORD's Glory (Psalms 1, 2, 8, 19)

Passage **Psalms 1, 2, 8, 19**

Opening

The Psalter opens with a gate, and the gate has two posts. Psalm 1 shows two ways of life: the blessed person who delights in the law of the LORD and grows like a tree by streams of water, and the wicked who blow away like chaff. Psalm 2 shows the nations raging against the LORD and his Anointed, while the LORD in heaven laughs and sets his King on Zion: "You are my Son."

Then two psalms lift our eyes. Psalm 8 looks at the night sky and asks, "What is man that you are mindful of him?" Psalm 19 hears the heavens declaring God's glory without words, and then praises the law of the LORD that revives the soul, ending with a prayer to the LORD, "my rock and my redeemer."

Week 1 At a Glance

Scripture Scope	Psalms 1, 2, 8, and 19 (the two ways, the LORD's King, the wonder of human dignity under God, and the two books of creation and Scripture)
Focal Passages	Psalm 1:1–6; Psalm 2:1–12; Psalm 8:1–9; Psalm 19:1–14
Literary & Structural Anchor	Psalms 1 and 2 form a joint gateway to the whole Psalter: Psalm 1 opens with "Blessed," and Psalm 2 closes with "Blessed are all who take refuge in him." Psalm 8 is framed by the majestic name of the LORD; Psalm 19 moves from sky to Scripture to the speaker's own mouth.
Big Idea	The blessed life delights in the LORD's law, and the LORD has set his King on Zion, in a world that already declares his glory.

Week 1 Learning Objectives (Head, Heart, Hands)

HEAD	**Know the Gateway:** Learn how the Psalter is shaped, and trace the two ways, the King, and the two books of creation and Scripture.
HEART	**Delight in the LORD:** See that Jesus is the blessed Man and the Son on Zion, and that in him we are planted by streams of water.
HANDS	**Meditate Day and Night:** Take one step to make God's word a daily delight.

Opening Frame: The Gate of the Psalter

Job ended with a man who had heard of God and then seen him. The Psalms now teach God's people to pray what they have seen and suffered. The Psalter is not a random hymnal but a gathered book in five parts, each ending with a burst of praise. Over eight weeks, this first volume walks through those five books by reading selected psalms in full, from the blessed man of Psalm 1 to the praise that closes the book. This week we stand at the gate: two ways of life, a King the nations cannot overthrow, a sky that declares God's glory, and a word that revives the soul. The question for this week: which way are we walking, and whose word are we delighting in? Before we read together, take a moment to share with the group:

Opening Entry Question (Icebreaker)

1.1 Q1 (Opening Entry Question): Is there a song, hymn, or psalm you have known for a long time that still means a lot to you? Why?

Section 1.2

Historical & Literary Context: The Gate of the Psalter (Psalms 1, 2, 8, 19)

Passage Psalms 1, 2, 8, 19

Entering the World of the Psalter

1. Historical Background

The Psalter is Israel's prayer book and songbook, gathered over many centuries. Many psalms were sung at the sanctuary; all of them teach God's people how to speak to him in every part of life.

2. Cultural Setting

In the ancient Near East, kings were sometimes called sons of a god when they took the throne. Psalm 2 uses that court language for the LORD's Anointed on Zion, without the pagan idea that kings are gods. Some ancient hymns praised the sun as a god; Psalm 19 treats the sun as a creature that runs its course with joy.

3. Literary Structure of Psalms 1, 2, 8, 19

- **The two ways** (Psalm 1)
- **The LORD's King** (Psalm 2)
- **What is man?** (Psalm 8)
- **The heavens and the law** (Psalm 19)

4. Key Themes

A joint introduction to the Psalter; two ways, not three; creation and Scripture together; psalms framed by repeated words.

5. Theological Considerations

Psalm 1 describes a planted life, not a guarantee of ease; the following psalms are full of righteous sufferers. Psalm 19 holds creation and Scripture together without making them rivals: both glorify the same LORD.

6. Relevant Scholarly Insights

Psalms 1 and 2 have no titles and are bound together by "blessed" at the start of Psalm 1 and the end of Psalm 2. Many interpreters read them as the editors' introduction to the whole book.

Group Discussion Questions (Section 1.2)

> **1.2 Q1:** The Psalter is arranged as five books, each ending in praise. Why might God have given his people a book of prayers and songs, and not only stories and commands?

1.2 Q2: Psalm 1 begins with "Blessed is the man" (Psalm 1:1), and Psalm 2 ends with "Blessed are all who take refuge in him" (Psalm 2:12). What do these two "blessed" lines together say about the good life?

1.2 Q3: Psalm 19 praises God through both creation and his written word. What does creation reveal about God, and what does Scripture reveal more fully?

Section 1.3

Movement 1: The Gateway (Psalms 1–2)

Passage Psalms 1–2

Guided Scripture Reading

Read aloud in this order, with brief connecting summaries between readings:

- **Reader 1: Psalm 1:1–6** (focal passage) — The blessed person does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, stand in the way of sinners, or sit in the seat of scoffers, but delights in the law of the LORD and meditates on it day and night; he is like a tree planted by streams of water, while the wicked are like chaff that the wind drives away; the LORD knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.
- **Reader 2: Psalm 2:1–12** (focal passage) — The nations rage and rulers plot against the LORD and his Anointed; the One who sits in the heavens laughs and sets his King on Zion; the King tells the decree: "You are my Son; today I have begotten you," and he will inherit the nations; so the kings of the earth are warned to serve the LORD with fear and kiss the Son, for all who take refuge in him are blessed.

Anchor Verses (ESV)

Psalm 1:1–2: Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night.

Psalm 1:5–6: Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous; for the LORD knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.

Psalm 2:6: “As for me, I have set my King on Zion, my holy hill.”

Psalm 2:7: I will tell of the decree: The LORD said to me, “You are my Son; today I have begotten you.

Teaching Narrative: Two Ways and a King

1. Walk, Stand, Sit (Psalm 1:1)

A downward settling into scorn, and the blessed person who refuses it.

2. Delight and Meditation (Psalm 1:2)

The law of the LORD as joy, not burden.

3. The Tree and the Chaff (Psalm 1:3–4)

Rooted life versus weightless life.

4. Two Ways, Two Ends (Psalm 1:5–6)

The LORD knows the way of the righteous.

5. The Nations Rage (Psalm 2:1–3)

Rebellion against the LORD and his Anointed.

6. Heaven Laughs; the King Is Set (Psalm 2:4–9)

The decree of sonship.

7. Kiss the Son (Psalm 2:10–12)

A summons to take refuge.

Group Discussion Questions (Section 1.3)

1.3 Q1: Psalm 1 describes walking, standing, and sitting with the wicked (Psalm 1:1). How does a person drift slowly into a way of life, and how can we notice it?

1.3 Q2: The blessed person's "delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night" (Psalm 1:2). What would it look like for God's word to be a delight to you, and not just a duty?

1.3 Q3: The righteous person is "like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season" (Psalm 1:3). What does a tree teach us about patience and growth in the Christian life?

1.3 Q4: "Why do the nations rage" (Psalm 2:1), yet "He who sits in the heavens laughs" (Psalm 2:4)? How does God's view of world events comfort you when the news is frightening?

1.3 Q5: The LORD says, "I have set my King on Zion" (Psalm 2:6), and calls all people to "Kiss the Son" (Psalm 2:12). What does it mean to take refuge in God's King?

Section 1.4

Movement 2: The Heavens and the Word (Psalms 8, 19)

Passage **Psalms 8, 19**

Guided Scripture Reading

Read aloud in this order, with brief connecting summaries between readings:

- **Reader 1: Psalm 8:1–9** (focal passage) — The LORD's name is majestic in all the earth; from the mouths of infants he has established strength; when the psalmist looks at the heavens, the moon, and the stars, he asks what man is that God is mindful of him, yet God has crowned him with glory and honor and given him dominion over the works of his hands; the psalm closes as it opened, with the majestic name.
- **Reader 2: Psalm 19:1–6** (focal passage) — The heavens declare the glory of God; day to day pours out speech with no words, yet their voice goes out through all the earth; the sun runs its course like a bridegroom or a strong man, and nothing is hidden from its heat.
- **Reader 3: Psalm 19:7–14** (focal passage) — The law of the LORD is perfect, sure, right, pure, clean, and true, more desirable than gold and sweeter than honey; by it the servant is warned; he asks to be declared innocent from hidden faults and kept from presumptuous sins, and prays that his words and meditation would please the LORD, his rock and redeemer.

Anchor Verses (ESV)

Psalm 8:3–4: When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him?

Psalm 19:1: The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork.

Psalm 19:7–9: The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple; the precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes; the fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; the rules of the LORD are true, and righteous altogether.

Psalm 19:14: Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O LORD, my rock and my redeemer.

Teaching Narrative: The Heavens and the Word

1. The Majestic Name (Psalm 8:1–2)

God's strength from the mouths of infants.

2. What Is Man? (Psalm 8:3–4)

The wonder of God's attention.

3. Crowned with Glory (Psalm 8:5–9)

Human dignity and dominion as gift.

4. The Heavens Speak (Psalm 19:1–6)

Creation's wordless sermon and the joyful sun.

5. The Law Revives (Psalm 19:7–11)

Six names and six gifts of God's word.

6. Hidden Faults (Psalm 19:12–13)

Honest self-examination.

7. My Rock and My Redeemer (Psalm 19:14)

The prayer that closes the week.

Group Discussion Questions (Section 1.4)

1.4 Q1: "When I look at your heavens" (Psalm 8:3), David asks, "what is man that you are mindful of him" (Psalm 8:4). Job asked a similar question in pain (Job 7:17). How does Psalm 8 ask it differently?

1.4 Q2: God has "crowned him with glory and honor" (Psalm 8:5). How should this truth shape the way we treat ourselves and other people?

1.4 Q3: "The heavens declare the glory of God" (Psalm 19:1), and "Day to day pours out speech" (Psalm 19:2), yet without words. What has creation taught you about God?

1.4 Q4: God's rules are "More to be desired are they than gold" and "sweeter also than honey" (Psalm 19:10). Which of the six descriptions of God's word in Psalm 19:7–9 do you most need this week, and why?

1.4 Q5: David prays, "Declare me innocent from hidden faults" (Psalm 19:12), and ends, "O LORD, my rock and my redeemer" (Psalm 19:14). Why does a prayer about hidden sin end with God as Rock and Redeemer?

Section 1.5

Canonical Horizon: The Blessed Man and the Begotten Son

Passage Psalm 2:7

Tracing the Thread Across Scripture

The blessed man of Psalm 1 and the King of Psalm 2 point forward to Jesus, the truly blessed Man who delighted in the Father's will and the begotten Son whom the Father declared at his baptism and raised from the dead. Turn to each passage as the connections are traced.

1. The Truly Blessed Man (John 4:34; 1 Peter 2:22; Romans 8:1)

Jesus is the blessed man of Psalm 1, who delighted in the Father's will and never walked in the way of sinners. Those who are in him share his blessedness, not by matching his record, but by union with him.

2. The Begotten Son (Acts 13:33; Hebrews 1:5; 5:5; Acts 4:24–28)

The New Testament applies Psalm 2's royal decree to Jesus' resurrection, not because Jesus became God's Son at that moment, but because the eternal Son was publicly vindicated and enthroned as the promised Davidic King. The nations' rage appears in the plot against Christ, which God had planned for our salvation.

3. The Son of Man Crowned (Hebrews 2:5–9; 1 Corinthians 15:27)

Psalm 8 is fulfilled in Jesus, who was made lower than the angels for a little while and is now crowned with glory and honor.

4. The Word Fulfilled (Matthew 5:17; 1 Corinthians 10:4)

The law that revives the soul is fulfilled, not abolished, in Jesus, the Rock and Redeemer to whom Psalm 19 prays.

Anchor Verse (ESV)

Psalm 2:7: I will tell of the decree: The LORD said to me, “You are my Son; today I have begotten you.

Group Discussion Questions (Section 1.5)

1.5 Q1: Jesus said, "My food is to do the will of him who sent me" (John 4:34). How does Jesus fulfill the picture of the blessed man in Psalm 1, and what does that mean for those who trust him?

1.5 Q2: Paul preached that God raised Jesus, as it is written, "You are my Son, today I have begotten you" (Acts 13:33). How does Psalm 2 help you understand who Jesus is?

1.5 Q3: Hebrews says, "But we see him who for a little while was made lower than the angels, namely Jesus" (Hebrews 2:9). How does Jesus complete the story of human glory in Psalm 8?

Personal & Group Application (Head, Heart, Hands)

HEAD	The Psalter opens with two ways and a King, and Psalms 8 and 19 show a world and a word that declare God's glory.
HEART	Jesus is the blessed Man, the Son set on Zion, the crowned Son of Man, and our Rock and Redeemer.
HANDS	Faith delights in God's word, takes refuge in his King, and looks up in wonder.

Section 1.6

Application, Looking Ahead, and Closing Prayer

Application

Take a few minutes to move this week's study into everyday life. Discuss these three questions together and write down what you want to remember:

1.6 Q1: What is one practical way you could meditate on God's word "day and night" this week?

1.6 Q2: Where do you need to take refuge in God's King rather than in your own plans?

1.6 Q3: How could you make Psalm 19:14 your own prayer this week?

Looking Ahead to Next Week

Recap: In Week 1, we entered the Psalter through its gateway: two ways, a King, and the glory of God in creation and Scripture.

Transition: Next week moves from the King's throne to his anguish, then to the Shepherd and the stronghold.

Week 2 Overview — The Forsaken, the Shepherd, and the Light (Psalms 22, 23, 27): Movement 1, Why Have You Forsaken Me (Psalm 22), covers a cry of godforsakenness that turns to praise. Movement 2, The Shepherd and the Stronghold (Psalms 23, 27), covers the LORD as shepherd, light, and salvation. The Canonical Horizon traces the crucified and risen Shepherd.

Focal Readings to Preview

- Psalm 22:1–11
- Psalms 22:19–31
- Psalm 23:1–6
- Psalm 27:1–14

My One Concrete Step for the Week Ahead

Write down or name aloud the specific rhythm, boundary, or conversation you want to practice before next week's gathering:

Closing Prayer

Close your time together by inviting each person to share a one-sentence takeaway or prayer request, then pray together along these lines:

Closing Group Prayer

LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth; the heavens declare your glory. Thank you for your law, which revives the soul and is sweeter than honey. Plant us like trees by streams of water. We pray for those who are not flourishing this season. When the nations rage, we trust the King you have set on Zion. Forgive our hidden faults. Thank you for Jesus, the blessed Man and your Son. Let the words of our mouths and the meditation of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O LORD, our rock and our redeemer. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.