

# **PSALMS**

**23 - 26**

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4. How does the long range view of v5-6 help frame our expectations?

*The banquet of verse 5 could imply God's presence with us even in our current hardship (i.e. 'in the presence of my enemies' could imply that his enemies are still active and threatening, but God's protection is so profound that he can enjoy a banquet with him regardless), or this could be an image of a future victory banquet in which the enemies present have been conquered by God are sitting around powerless and humiliated. Either way the emphasis is on David's security with God as his shepherd and it has implications for his present confidence and his future hope.*

### **If you wish to incorporate John 10 into your study:**

*Read John 10:11-18*

5. How does Psalm 23 this help us understand who Jesus is claiming to be?
6. What do we learn about the character of the Good Shepherd?
7. What do we learn about his concern for the flock?
8. What do we learn about his ability to care for the flock?



## 2 King of Glory

### Psalm 24

This is a psalm of praise. The three sections show us three images of why God is worthy of praise.

*Read Psalm 24.*

- A helpful exercise might be to write a sentence that summarises each section. (v1-2; v3-6; v7-10)
- Then spend a couple of minutes trying to work out what connects the three sections – how does the psalm move from section 1 to 2 to 3?
- Exploring these ideas together may be enough for a fruitful study of this psalm. If you need further ideas, feel free to use any of the suggestions below:

#### **v1-2:**

*The basic idea is that God owns the world because he created and sustains it. If you wanted to expand the idea it is that everything is in reference to him or with regard to him. 'Established' in v2 carries the sense of an ongoing sustaining. God hasn't created and then walked away.*

1. If the earth is the Lord's, what implications does that have for our attitude to God?
2. What implication does it have for our attitude as stewards of the natural world?
3. What implication does it have for our attitude towards other people in this world?
4. What implication does it have for our attitude towards our own sense of ownership over our own bodies and lives?

**5. How does section help us praise God?**

*If you want to build on this theme from the NT, you could consider taking your group to 1 Cor 6:12-20 with an emphasis on v19-20.*

**v3-6:**

*The basic logic is that the God who created the world is a holy God – he is set apart from us by the reality that he is the creator and we are his creatures. As creator he determines how we should live and can rightly determine whether we have lived as we should. In short, he is creator and thus he is judge.*

**6. Who's coming to who in this section? What are they relying on?**

*The image to bring to mind is of Israelites worshippers approaching 'the hill of the Lord' = the hill in the middle of Jerusalem where the temple ('his holy place') was built. The question is rhetorical – who can come into the presence of the holy God? These people... The implication is that there are such people. This doesn't imply they are sinless people, rather it is a picture of those who 'seek' God – who rely on him as 'God their Savior'. Thus their clean hands and pure heart are less about absolute moral purity and more about reliance on the cleansing and purification provided by God.*

**7. What do these verses teach us about God's concern for how we live as his creatures?**

in relationship to one another and with God?

in externally visible actions and the inner motives of our hearts?

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### 8. How does this section help us praise God?

#### **v7-10:**

*The God who is both creator and judge is also savior (v5). v3-6 portrays us coming into God's presence and his people seeking after him. Yet v7-10 now turn this around and demonstrate that what we are dependent on God coming to us. We are dependent on his initiative in saving (v5) and we are dependent on the victory he has won. He is a mighty king who has been victorious in battle to save his people.*

*Imagery explained:*

- *lift up your heads = an image of confidence, the opposite of someone looking at the ground in shame*
- *gates/ancient doors = reference to the gates of Jerusalem, or possibly the temple. Not expecting the gates themselves to lift up their heads, but using this as a poetic portrayal of the gatekeepers, those who would provide the first welcome into the city/temple.*
- *So this is an entrance procession of a king coming home after his victory. It may have first been used with reference to David's decision to move the Ark of the Covenant from to Jerusalem as his capital city (2 Sam 6). It may also have been used as a portrayal of the victorious return of the ark after it had been deployed as a symbol of God's presence with his people in battle.*
- *This imagery feels difficult for us to directly apply to life because it comes from the situation of the nation of Israel as God's people, however it is still very relevant as it helps us consider how God has won the ultimate battle to save his people.*

9. Consider which of the following passages you might have your group read. This could be done in smaller groups, each reporting back along these lines:

- Who/what is defeated?
- How is this achieved?
- What does God give us through this?

Colossians 2:13-15

1 Corinthians 15:54-57

Rom 8:31-39

- 10. While there are many implications we could consider with regards God's victory on our behalf, these final verses of Psalm 24 are words of praise. How does God's victory on our behalf shape us in praise?**

## 3 God My Saviour

### Psalm 25

- What does it mean to trust God?

*Psalm 25 begins with a powerful picture of trusting God – lifting up our soul. (Note that the NIV2011 reads ‘In you, Lord my God, I put my trust’ where NIV1984, ESV, NRSV and others keep the image ‘To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul’. If you have people using the newer NIV2011 it might be helpful to affirm that this is an entirely appropriate translation of the verse, it is just helping us understand the idea rather than the image used.)*

*It is helpful to understand what this image means.*

*It is a description of submitting our whole being to God. The word for ‘soul’ doesn’t imply some sort of spiritual part that is separate from our physical bodies and day to day lives. In fact it means our very inner being, the core of who we are, with all our hopes and fears and desires. To lift up your soul is to offer up all of yourself in submission to God, and Psalm 25 helps us understand a lot about what that looks like. You could note the contrast with Ps 24:4 of lifting up the soul to in idol.*

Psalm 25 is a wonderful expression of the relationship between a person who trusts in God and God himself.

It breaks down into 5 sections that are distinguished by the poetic style in which they are written. This gives us a bit of a structure to try and understand the psalm with.

- v1 - 7** Words to God (these verse are all addressed to God)
- v8 - 10** Words about God (these verses all speak about God in the third person)
- v11** Words to God
- v12 - 15** Words about God
- v16 - 22** Words to God

1. Have a look at the Words About God – v 8-10 and 12-15:
  - a) How does the psalmist describe God's character?
  
  - b) How des the psalmist describe God's actions?
  
2. Have a look at the Words to God – the requests that the psalmist makes in v1-7 and 16-22.
  - a) How does the psalmist express his confidence in God?
  
  - b) What are the requests he makes of God?

**Putting it together**

3. What do we learn about God?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. What do we learn about the psalmist?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
5. What do we learn about their relationship?



# 4 O Lord, you see

## Psalm 26

1. What gives you confidence to pray to God?

*Read Psalm 26.*

2. What are the requests made in this psalm?  
(v1, 2, 9, 11)

3. What are the reasons given for these requests?  
(v1, 3-7, 11)

4. How much do these reasons rely on David's own holiness, and how much do they rely on God?

*This is perhaps the most challenging aspect of this psalm. Note that v3 helps us understand what 'a blameless life' in v1 looks like – being mindful of God's unfailing love, living in reliance on his faithfulness. This then helps us understand some of the profound confidence displayed. Furthermore, the washing of hands in innocence in v6 may not imply that he is innocent, but rather refer to ceremonial washing as provided for by God to express dependence on God's forgiveness. The final request (v11, deliver me and be merciful to me) emphasises this dependence on God and his mercy.*

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*Read Romans 5:1-11 and 8:31-39*

5. What is the basis of our confidence to come before God?

*Read Romans 7:14-8:8.*

6. How does this give us fresh perspective on asking God to 'test, try and examine' us?

# NOTES



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