



CHRISTIANITY WITHOUT THE RELIGION

# BIBLE SURVEY

THE UN-DEVOTIONAL

PSALMS 31-60

Week 1

# *Before You Begin Your Journey...*

Welcome to the second of our five volumes covering the book of Psalms. This single largest book in the Bible was originally divided into five sections, or “books” by the Hebrew scribes and scholars who edited and organized the Old Testament.

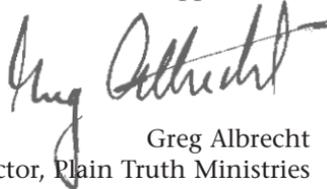
Each of these five books begins and ends with a *doxology*, or hymn of praise to God. You will notice this in Psalm 41, at the end of the first book, and Psalm 42, at the beginning of the second book.

These doxologies remind us that a primary purpose of the Psalms is to offer praise to God. The Psalms are poetry—a form of human expression that seeks to go beyond the limitations of normal prosaic speech.

Many of these psalms were set to music. While we know little about how this music sounded, the ultimate effect for the ancient Israelites was one of awe, worship and exultation in the one true God. Just imagine how they might have been performed in their original context, with enthusiastic groups of worshippers raising their voices and playing their instruments in praise.

If God was praised and worshiped so exuberantly under that old covenant, how much more ought we to praise him today? If God’s people prior to the coming of Jesus—God in the flesh—could have such faith—proclaiming his majesty and sovereignty, his mercy and justice—how much more should we proclaim these attributes of God today?

May your worship of God be enriched as you explore these ancient hymns. May they have as much—or more—meaning for you today as they did for those ancient worshippers millennia ago.



Greg Albrecht  
Executive Director, Plain Truth Ministries

# *How to Use the CWR Bible Survey...*

**1**—Read and study at your own pace. This is a devotional. It is designed to help you consider and ponder the great truths of God's written revelation. It is designed to help you worship and come to know God. If you get behind, you can always catch up.

**2**—We suggest you set aside a special time for the *CWR Bible Survey* every day. We recommend allowing 30-45 minutes, but even if you can only spare 15 minutes, try to make it part of your regular schedule.

**3**—You will need a good Bible. This might be an excellent time for you to consider purchasing a new Bible. Plain Truth Ministries recommends the *New King James Study Bible* published by Thomas Nelson and the *New International Version Study Bible* published by Zondervan.

**4**—Always read the assigned passage of the daily lesson in your Bible first. Each daily lesson builds upon the portion of the Bible being covered that day. You may want to begin by praying about what God has in store for you as you read, and then look at the questions and background information.

**5**—Consider the format of each daily lesson. Almost every daily lesson will include:

• **Opening Up to the Word** —a section designed to help you open your mind to the teaching God has inspired.

• **Digging Into the Word**—this section will encourage you to get your nose into the Bible and think deeply about what it says.

• **Living Out the Word**—here you will be challenged to consider the practical implications for your life. How does this passage help you live?

• **Window On the Word**—will offer key insights to help you more clearly understand the daily Bible passage.

**6**—After you finish the daily lesson, take some quiet time. You may simply think, look out the window, take a walk, or even get down on your knees. But use this time to let this daily lesson sink in. Ask God to show you what he wants you to understand from your reading and study.

**7**—Consider the *CWR Bible Survey* for small groups in which you may be involved. Tell your friends about it. If you are involved in a small group that meets for prayer and Bible study, introduce your group to it. Many are seeking an easy-to-read guide to help them understand the Bible and to help them know God. the *CWR Bible Survey* can do that!

**8**—Remember that while we may refer to the Bible as the word of God—the Eternal Word of God is noneother than Jesus, who inspired the Scriptures to be written by human instruments. Words on paper may tell us about him—but it is not the words that we worship—it is Jesus Christ, the Eternal Word.

**•Abbreviations Used in the *CWR Bible Survey*—**

Genesis	Ge	Nahum	Na
Exodus	Ex	Habakkuk	Hab
Leviticus	Lev	Zephaniah	Zep
Numbers	Nu	Haggai	Hag
Deuteronomy	Dt	Zechariah	Zec
Joshua	Jos	Malachi	Mal
Judges	Jdg	Matthew	Mt
Ruth	Ru	Mark	Mk
1 Samuel	1Sa	Luke	Lk
2 Samuel	2Sa	John	Jn
1 Kings	1Ki	Acts	Ac
2 Kings	2Ki	Romans	Ro
1 Chronicles	1Ch	1 Corinthians	1Co
2 Chronicles	2Ch	2 Corinthians	2Co
Ezra	Ezr	Galatians	Gal
Nehemiah	Ne	Ephesians	Eph
Esther	Est	Philippians	Php
Job	Job	Colossians	Col
Psalms	Ps	1 Thessalonians	1Th
Proverbs	Pr	2 Thessalonians	2Th
Ecclesiastes	Ecc	1 Timothy	1Ti
Song of Songs	SS	2 Timothy	2Ti
Isaiah	Isa	Titus	Tit
Jeremiah	Jer	Philemon	Phm
Lamentations	La	Hebrews	Heb
Ezekiel	Eze	James	Jas
Daniel	Da	1 Peter	1Pe
Hosea	Hos	2 Peter	2Pe
Joel	Joel	1 John	1Jn
Amos	Am	2 John	2Jn
Obadiah	Ob	3 John	3Jn
Jonah	Jnh	Jude	Jude
Micah	Mic	Revelation	Rev

# PSALMS 31-60

## The Hymnbook of Israel and the Church, Part II

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# *Introduction to Psalms 31-60*

The volume you are reading covers Psalms 31-60, which includes portions of Book I (Ps 1-41) and Book II (Ps 42-72) of the Psalter. One literary distinctive or possible theological reason for this book division lies hidden in the Hebrew: In this first collection the Hebrew word for “God” (Elohim) predominates, whereas in the second collection the Hebrew word for “the Lord” (Yahweh) predominates.

The entire book of Psalms is grouped unevenly into five books. See the “Introduction to the Psalms” in the *CWR Bible Survey, Psalms 1-30* for the full five-part outline, with the various collections, types and distinctive features.

Many of the psalms were set to music, and were performed for centuries as integral parts of worship in the Temple.

At the beginning of some psalms there are instructions to musicians. While the meaning of some of these instructions remains unclear to scholars, knowledge of how the Psalms may have been performed has grown in recent years. Archaeology has discovered a great deal about music and musical instruments in ancient Middle Eastern cultures.

We know that music, both sacred and secular, played a significant role in Mesopotamian and Egyptian life. Paintings in Egyptian tombs picture a variety of musical instruments, and some actual instruments have survived intact. Harps, lyres and pipes have been unearthed from graves at Ur in Mesopotamia, dated at more than 1,600 years before David penned his first psalm.

This ancient music was not unsophisticated. Mesopotamian texts give detailed instructions for various traditions, forms and styles of liturgical music, as well as scales and different methods for tuning stringed instruments. Like the later Greek “modes,” each of these scales had a particular application. One tuning might be used to express lament or sadness, another might be used to express joy or thanksgiving, similar to the way our major and

minor scales suggest different emotional states. These ancient scales and modes seem to have been the early ancestors of our Western musical system. Nevertheless, this ancient music would have sounded quite foreign to our ears.

Musical instruments mentioned in the Bible and used to accompany the Psalms fall into four categories: horns, strings, woodwinds and percussion instruments.

*Horns and trumpets.* The Bible speaks of two types of horns: the *qeren* or *shofar*, made of the horn of an animal; and the trumpet, made of bronze or silver.

*Stringed instruments.* These were commonly used as accompaniment to singing. Stringed instruments were of three general types: the lyre—a small rectangular instrument with five to ten strings; the harp—a larger instrument with many strings; the lute—two or three strings joined to a long neck, attached to a resonating soundbox. The neck was often fretted, like the modern guitar.

While David is often pictured playing the harp, it was more probably the lyre at which he was skilled.

*Woodwinds.* Two types of this instrument were common: the soft, breathy-sounding flutes, and the more piercing reed or double-reed instruments, similar to our oboe.

*Percussion instruments.* These were many and varied: drums, cymbals, tambourines, clappers, rattles, sistrums, bells and gongs. The variety of percussive instruments suggests that some psalms were performed with far more noise and exhilaration than one might experience in some Christian institutional services today.



*“Free me from  
the trap that  
is set for me,  
for you are  
my refuge.”*

Psalm 31:4

# Trapped!

DAY 1

## Psalm 31

Where do you feel most “trapped”? (a) at home; (b) on the road, in traffic; (c) in social circles, when a particular person shows up; (d) at work, with customers, vendors or bosses; (e) in a religious insitution.

1. David felt “trapped” on this occasion (vs. 4, 11, 13). By whom? Why?
2. Whose reputation was at stake? (a) David’s, (b) his enemies’, (c) God’s. Why do you think so?
3. How did he reach out for help? What words or phrases express David’s trust in God?
4. What words or phrases identify or describe David’s enemies? What is their fate?
5. Would you agree that those who are in circumstances similar to those David described almost always surrender to God? Why?

1. Which are you more inclined to send to God? (a) “distress signals”, (b) bitter complaints, (c) unwavering trust, (d) a “need” list, (e) a “to do” list.
2. This psalm has been used as an example of total trust in Jesus when human forces, of any kind, conspire and threaten death.
3. At times, David’s enemies caused him great stress to the point of physical illness. Have you ever been worn down physically and emotionally because of religious pressure?
4. At times, David’s only friend was God. Has Jesus ever been your only friend? How often has he delivered you from some “trap”?

**Into your hands I commit my spirit** (v. 5). *Jesus and the apostle Stephen (and other martyrs) used this same thought for themselves when they were threatened with death at the hands of conspirators (see Lk 23:46; Ac 7:59). The Psalmist was rescued physically; Jesus and Stephen were not.*

### OPENING

up to the Word

### DIGGING

into the Word

### LIVING

out the Word

### WINDOW

on the Word

## “I Forgive You”

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Psalm 32

**OPENING**  
up to the Word

Which kind of horse are you more like, and why? (a) race horse—with a one track mind, (b) a small pony—good with kids, (c) plow horse—good for heavy work, (d) war horse—ready for battle, (e) wild horse—no bit or bridle fits, (f) old gray mare—ain’t what you used to be.

**DIGGING**  
into the Word

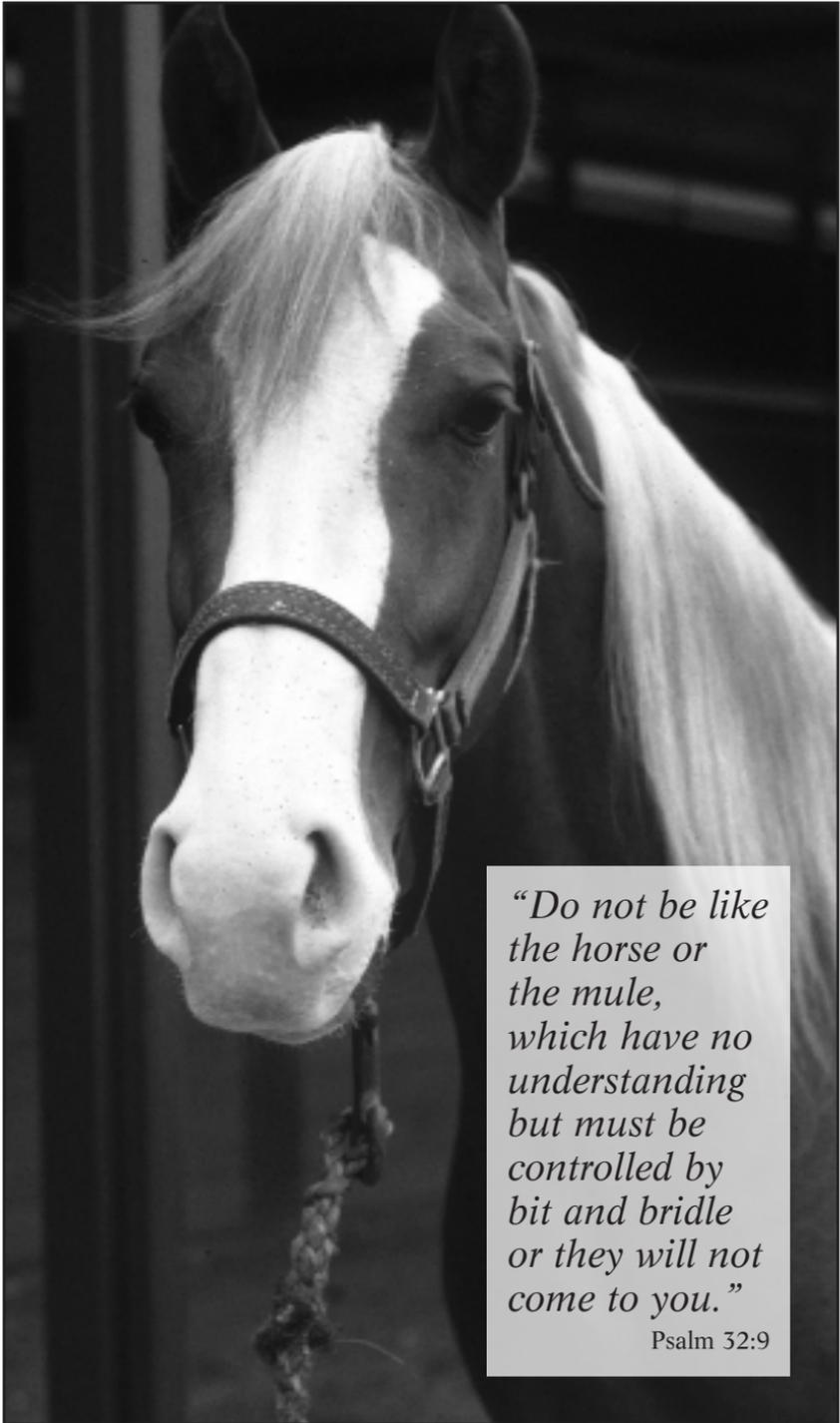
1. This penitential psalm is like a prayer of confession with God offering his response (vs. 8-10). Do you believe David’s confession is sincere or a bit manipulative? Why or why not?
2. Where in this psalm is David like, and unlike, the horse or mule of verse 9?
3. Why did David try to hide his sin from God?
4. God forgave David for sinning. What benefits does David derive from the fact that God has forgiven him (vs. 1-2, 5-6, 11)?
5. What will God do for those who accept his forgiveness? (a) rescue that person, (b) stop the self-destruction, (c) test the person’s sincerity, (d) surround the person with his unconditional love and grace.

**LIVING**  
out the Word

1. What difference does it make to you that God has forgiven you?
2. God has *already* forgiven you. What might be stopping you from accepting his forgiveness?

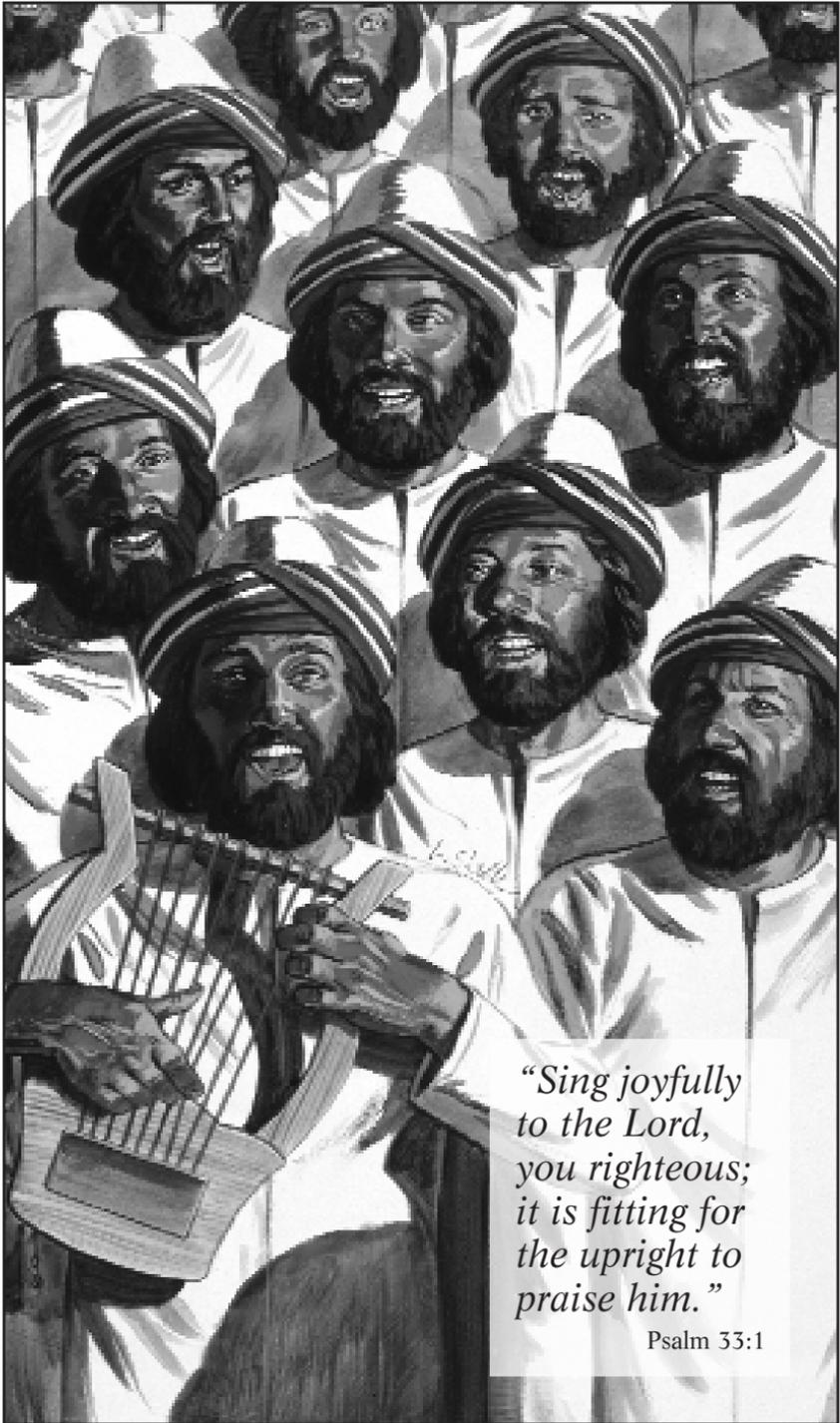
**WINDOW**  
on the Word

*This penitential psalm is a dialogue between David and God, role-played by the community for worship.*



*“Do not be like  
the horse or  
the mule,  
which have no  
understanding  
but must be  
controlled by  
bit and bridle  
or they will not  
come to you.”*

Psalm 32:9



*“Sing joyfully  
to the Lord,  
you righteous;  
it is fitting for  
the upright to  
praise him.”*

Psalm 33:1

# Sing Your Heart Out!

DAY 3

## Psalm 33

If your family was a band, what instruments would you play? What kind of music? How hard or easy would it be for you to agree on some kind of music?

1. Listen to the various voices in the Psalm: the leader's call to praise (vs. 1-3); the two-part chorus of praise (vs. 4-11 and 12-19); and the people's response to the praise (vs. 20-22). What does this structure tell you about its purpose for Israel?
2. What reasons or motivations for praising God are given in the first chorus (vs. 4-11)? In the second round (vs. 12-19)?
3. According to this psalm, who should praise God with music? (a) only trained musicians, (b) those who are right with God, (c) survivors of calamity, (d) the nation of Israel, (e) everyone on earth.
4. God watches all those on earth and considers what they do (vs. 13-15). Does this make you want to sing for joy, or find a good place to hide? Why?

1. What aspect of Jesus' love, mercy and grace prompts your heart to break out into song?
2. Add a line or two of your own to either praise chorus (vs. 4-11 and 12-19). Try singing it or at least saying it from the heart.
3. What does God's "protection plan" (vs. 18-22) give you the freedom to do?

*The call for a **new song** (v. 3; compare Ps 40:3; 96:1; 98:1; 149:1; Isa 42:10) suggests an occasion of national deliverance, perhaps the ones experienced during the reign of Judah's King Jehoshaphat (see 2Ch 20) or King Hezekiah (2Ki 19). A "new song" will also be sung by the saints delivered by God's ultimate saving act (Rev 5:9; 14:3).*

### OPENING

up to the Word

### DIGGING

into the Word

### LIVING

out the Word

### WINDOW

on the Word

## DAY 4

# Close to the Broken-Hearted

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Psalm 34

**OPENING**  
up to the Word

**DIGGING**  
into the Word

Have you had an experience that brings back painful memories?

1. The speaker and addressee of this psalm change from verses 1-7 to verses 8-22. Why? Who was speaking? Who was the intended audience?
2. What encouraging words does this wisdom teacher offer “the afflicted,” “the poor” and the “weak and hungry” who seek the Lord?
3. God’s does not promise a trouble-free life. What *does* he promise his children?
4. Under what conditions will God ultimately deliver men and women from trouble (vs. 4-10)? (a) if they become poor, (b) if they think pure thoughts, (c) if they “say the right things” to God, (d) if they control the tongue, (e) if they seek peace, (f) if they work harder, (g) if they accept his grace?
5. How is the Lord “close to the brokenhearted”?

**LIVING**  
out the Word

1. From what you have “tasted” and “seen” of Jesus, what how would you describe your experience so far? (a) sweet, (b) sour, (c) spicy, (d) salty, (e) bitter, (f) bland.
2. In the last five years, have you experienced more of the “good” life or the “troubled” life? How do you account for more of one than the other?
3. What promises for Christ-followers do you see in this Psalm?

**WINDOW**  
on the Word

*“...when he pretended to be insane before Abimelech.” Judging from this phrase in the title of this psalm, the occasion that inspired it is narrated in 1 Samuel 21:10-15, which features King Achish. The word “Abimelech” could be a royal title, not a name, and thus “Achish” (1Sa 21:10-15) could have been an “Abimelech.”*

# Hit 'em Again, Harder, Harder

DAY 5

## Psalm 35

Did you ever find yourself saying “hit ‘em again, hit ‘em again—harder, harder”? Were you watching a contact sport, TV news or a violent movie?

1. David appeared as the innocent victim of an unprovoked attack. How did he react? (a) fought back, (b) wimped out, (c) asked God to call a penalty, (d) asked God to hit his enemies harder.
2. Why did David want them punished? (a) justice, (b) revenge, (c) so that the righteous would prevail, (d) so that God would prevail, (e) so that David’s life would be carefree.
4. People whom David had helped later turned against him (vs. 11-16). How did he respond?

1. Such calls for vengeance were written in the context of the Old Testament. In the New Testament, Jesus gives a radical, new perspective (Mt 5:43-48; Mk 11:24-26). Rather than vengeance or retribution, Christ-followers are called to seek blessings and forgiveness for their enemies as well as their friends.

2. Has someone ever betrayed you? Jesus’ example (Lk 23:34) supercedes that of David.
3. David claimed that his enemies were attacking him “without cause” (vs. 7, 19). How can believers make sure they are innocent before asking God for help?
5. Could Christ defend you right now? What outcome would you trust him to bring?

**“May [my enemies] be put to shame.... may ruin overtake them”** (vs. 4-8). Christians accustomed to turning the other cheek will wince at the anger and vindictive spirit that appears to accompany David’s cries for vengeance. David’s attitude, of course, was not always perfect. Yet at thier best, these so-called “imprecations” (or curses) are cries against injustice, or cries for God to be the judge (see also Ps 5:10; 28:4). Christ-followers may take comfort in the fact that all injustice (with no exceptions) is ultimately resolved at the foot of the cross.

**OPENING**  
up to the Word

**DIGGING**  
into the Word

**LIVING**  
out the Word

**WINDOW**  
on the Word

## PSALMS 31 – 60 AT A GLANCE

Psalm	Author	Summary
31	David	Commitment to God in times of stress.
32	David	The blessing of forgiveness and wise living.
33	Anonymous	The Lord is sovereign and faithful.
34	David	God will listen when we call. We can trust him for protection.
35	David	A prayer to God for vindication.
36	David	God is just and faithful to love us.
37	David	Trust in God and be patient as he works out his plans. The wicked and the righteous are compared.
38	David	A prayer of repentance and plea for reconciliation.
39	David	A plea for God's mercy. Human life is short, and apart from God it is futile.
40	David	Waiting patiently for God's salvation.
41	David	God is faithful in adversity.
42	Sons of Korah	The thirst of a human for God. When we are downcast, we can call on God to lift us up.
43	Sons of Korah	A cry for relief in a time of discouragement.
44	Sons of Korah	A prayer for victory, remembering God's past deliverance.
45	Sons of Korah	A wedding poem to the king.
46	Sons of Korah	God is our fortress.
47	Sons of Korah	God is the victorious King of the world. All nations will recognize him as their master.
48	Sons of Korah	God is the defender of Jerusalem.
49	Sons of Korah	Confidence in physical possessions is pointless.
50	Asaph	True faith compared against empty ritual. God desires a heart of gratitude.
51	David	A prayer of repentance.
52	David	God will uproot the wicked like a tree. The righteous will be like a flourishing olive tree.
53	David	The foolishness of Godlessness. All humans have sinned.
54	David	A prayer for God's help against enemies.
55	David	Anguish over betrayal by a friend.
56	David	Faith in God while under attack by enemies. God will deliver us from trouble.
57	David	We can trust God in times of trouble.
58	David	A prayer for God's justice.
59	David	God is our champion and fortress, our only place of safety.
60	David	God alone is our help against our enemies.

## Artist at Work

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### Psalm 36

If you had a paint brush and canvas, what kind of painting would you create to tell your life story? Would some parts be overshadowed in dark colors or a chaotic jumble? What qualities would the light exemplify?

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1. Examine the first half of this psalm. How did David portray the wicked (vs. 1-4)?
  2. How does the godlessness of the wicked contrast with the goodness of God (vs. 5-9)?
  3. What does God's character (his love and faithfulness, his righteousness and justice) look like when captured on the canvas of this psalm?
  4. God's character and creative work are pictured here quite clearly, but they are not always this evident in real life. Why do you think that is?
  5. What prayer and assurance did this contrasting picture give David (vs. 10-12)?
- 

1. As you try to picture God in your mind's eye, what does he look like (Jn 14:9)?
  2. The righteous feast on God's abundance and drink from his "river of delights" (v. 8). Have you been "feasting" or "drinking" lately from the abundance of God's grace?
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*The contrasting dark-and-light, chaos-and-order themes come to David as an **oracle** (v. 1) or prophetic insight.*

## DAY 6

### OPENING

up to the Word

### DIGGING

into the Word

### LIVING

out the Word

### WINDOW

on the Word

## DAY 7

# Don't Sweat the Small Stuff

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Psalm 37

**OPENING**  
up to the Word

While you were growing up, did your family enjoy a more prosperous lifestyle, or less so, than your neighbors?

**DIGGING**  
into the Word

**1.** According to this psalmist, what is there to worry about (vs. 1, 7-8)? (a) daily bread, (b) justice, (c) the future, (d) your neighbor's prosperity, (e) everything, (f) nothing.

**2.** How does one "delight in the Lord" (vs. 4-6)? (a) wait on him, (b) commit your ways to him, (c) turn from idols, (d) trust he will triumph, (e) stop worrying about "the small stuff."

**3.** Wicked people plot and scheme (vs. 7, 12,), abuse loan agreements (v. 21), exercise raw power (v. 14), yet seem to prosper (vs. 7, 16,). By contrast, the righteous practice humility (v. 11), generosity (vs. 21, 26), peace (vs. 11, 37), worship and wait (vs. 4, 7, 34). Do the wicked enjoy lasting prosperity?

**4.** What eventually happens to the wicked (vs. 1-2)? Does God always strike them down? What eventually happens to the righteous (vs. 39-40)? Do you see God intervening for them?

**5.** What do riches reveal about the character of the wicked and the righteous (vs. 16, 21, 25-26)?

**LIVING**  
out the Word

**1.** Have you worried excessively about anything in the past year? The past week? Were your worst fears realized?

**2.** Do you believe that Christ-followers sometimes envy the prosperity of the wicked? Have you known people who believe that all physical prosperity is a direct result of their obedience to God?

**3.** Can God's grace give you a more forgiving spirit toward those you believe are less than perfect in their relationship with you?

**WINDOW**  
on the Word

*This is a **wisdom psalm** (as are Ps 1; 34:8-22; 49; 73; 91; 92:6-15; 111; 119; 127; 128; 133), with many features akin to Proverbs.*