

HEARING FROM GOD

40 Days in the Psalms

Leader's Discussion Guide

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“Hearing from God” is designed as a guidebook for your faith journey, equipping you to hear from God and find guidance in life’s storms. This 40-day adventure into the Psalms through biblical mediation and prayerful application can also be shared and amplified by going through it together with others.

Better Together: The Bible gives us a way to hear God’s voice. He can also speak uniquely and directly as we listen for Him. He may give us a picture, a word, an emotion, a song, or a Scripture verse. God may also speak to you through another person.

When we share what and how God is speaking in community with others—who are also paying attention to His voice—we can receive correction where we’ve misunderstood or get confirmation when we are aligned with Scripture and find unity with one another. The following pages provide some ideas and discussion points to help you lead a few friends, your family, or LifeGroup through using “Hearing From God” as a resource for your shared journey into God’s Word and discovering more of His will and ways for your lives.

Preparation: Before anything else, begin with prayer. Ask the Lord who He wants you to help lead on a journey into the Psalms. Commit this season of growing together in community to Him. Then take the next step by reaching out and inviting others to join you. You will want enough books for each person to have their own copy. Available on Amazon or at StevenSewell.me

Pacing and Plan: The plan for this as a shared experience can vary based on how often you’ll be able to get together. So it is divided into a flexible amount of sessions, anywhere from 5-8. Explain this roadmap to your group during your first meeting, including what date the 40-day plan will start for after Session 3 so that you can do the 40 days at the same time..

- Session 1 overviews the Psalms with a focus on Psalm 107 and the big idea of the book.
- Session 2 gets people into the book and telling their own stories.
- Session 3 explores Psalm 46 and details the start of the 40 day plan in the Psalms.
- Session 4 is a check-in of encouragement and shared learning from the journey and can be repeated as needed, depending on how often you meet.
- Session 5 wraps it up with a study of Psalm 95 and how we can cultivate a life of worship beyond this 40 days together in the Psalms.

Session 1

Open up with a moment of prayer: Commit this time to the Lord, opening up your hearts to Him and looking forward expectantly to what He wants to do and say.

Teaching Introduction:

The Psalms were most likely collected gradually, as corporate worship forms developed along with temple worship. There is good evidence that writings stretched out for up to 1,000 years - from as early as the time of Moses to as late as after the Babylonian captivity. It is likely that by the time of Ezra, the books of the Psalter were organized into their final form with the fivefold division perhaps meant to be an imitation of the Pentateuch (the first five books of the Old Testament).

That's right, did you know what we call the book of Psalms is actually made of 5 books or collections? (1–41, 42–72, 73–89, 90–106, 107–150). Each of these sections is marked by a concluding doxology

You can assign each person in the group to read one of these: Psalm 41:13, 72:18-19, 89:52, 106:48).

Psalm 150 is a grand doxology for the entire collection. Alexander Maclaren, a 19th century Scottish Baptist minister, wrote of Psalm 150: *“The psalm is more than an artistic close of the Psalter: it is a prophecy of the last result of the devout life, and, in its unclouded sunniness, as well as in its universality, it proclaims the certain end of the weary years for the individual and for the world.”*

Read Psalm 150 aloud in unison together

Book 5 of the Psalms is poetically like Deuteronomy, which details the last month of Moses' life as the Promised Land was about to be entered. Psalm 107-150 can be looked at as songs of longing to go home. While home may be expressed as the Promised Land, Jerusalem, or Zion, it is ultimately our heart's true and ultimate longing for home in shalom and the peace found in eternity *with* God - in a new heaven and a new earth (Revelation 21) where all will be made right.

This fifth and final Book 5 begins with Psalm 107, which was an inspirational Scripture passage for this book on “Hearing From God” and finding guidance in life's storms. It was probably written after Judah had gone into captivity and exile in Babylon and then later returned to Israel. Psalm 106:47 gives the prayer, *“Save us, O Lord our God, and gather us from among the nations.”* Then in Psalm 107:2-3, we see that request has been answered. The psalmist wants to teach how God uses trials (like the exile) to drive us to trust Him.

Read: Psalm 107 (have each person read a section)

Questions to Consider: (Let group answer and fill in gaps)

What are the 2 commands given in vs 1-2?

- Vs 1. "Give thanks to the Lord"
- Vs 2. "The redeemed of the Lord shall say so" (NASB)
"Has the Lord redeemed you? Then speak out!" (NLT)
"Let the redeemed of the Lord tell their story" (NIV)

Why are we supposed to do these things as God's people, what is our motivation?

- Vs 1b. for He is good; His love endures forever.

What are the various types of distresses the Lord rescues His people from in vs 4-32?

- redemption from sinful wandering (vs 4-9)
- freedom from self-imposed prisons (vs 10-16)
- release from deathly psychological sickness (vs 17-22)
- rescue from overwhelming circumstances like stormy seas (vs 23-32)

What is the common refrain that each of these acts of redemption should inspire?

(can hint v. 8, 15, 21, 31) - "Oh that men would praise the LORD"

Teaching Biblical Patterns: The next section vs 33-41 gives a miniature overview of Israel's history and a lesson on how God brings down the self-sufficient, but lifts up the needy who call to Him with a repeated cycle: Plenty > Poverty (vv. 33-34) Poverty > Plenty (vv. 35-38) Plenty > Poverty (vv. 39-40) Poverty > Plenty (vv. 41-42).

Conclusion: God is faithful and gracious to His people, especially when He allows storms and difficult seasons to drive us toward trusting Him rather than relying on our own ways. In the closing verses 42-43 we see that the knowledge of God's steadfastness and love will cause rejoicing among the righteous, silence among the wicked, and meditation among the wise.

Close by sharing prayer requests and praying for each other with this framework in mind:

- What can we be praising God for together?
- Are there any struggles or sins you need prayer for?
- What do you need wisdom for in your life?

(be sure as the leader to write down requests or assign someone to keep track for you).

Between now and next time: Read the Introduction through Chapter 2 (pages 3-37)

Session 2

Open up with a moment of prayer: Commit this time to the Lord, opening up your hearts to Him and looking forward expectantly to what He wants to say and do. (Consider using the prayer on page 8 of the book and make it into a group prayer, changing “I” to “We” etc.)

Chapter 1: A Light to Your Path

Steve shares about his first and second Bibles (pg 11). Do you remember getting your first Bible?

Give space for each person to share, but don't force it as some may not have a good memory or experience.

On page 12 Steve tells his story of coming to faith in Jesus. Have each person share a 1-2 minute version of their relationship with Jesus - how it began or how it's going.

This format keeps it open to new believers, lifelong followers of Jesus, or even those still seeking or wondering about Him. It's also good practice on how to briefly share your testimony.

Like Steve's hearing loss and stuttering (pg 13-19), have you had any circumstances in which God met you and provided healing or help? Open this up briefly for sharing.

Teaching Point:

Of course, God doesn't always give us exactly what we want when we want it. Waiting is a common theme in the Psalms. In Psalm 27:7-8 David writes, *“Hear me as I pray, O Lord. Be merciful and answer me. My heart has heard You say, “Come and talk with me.” And my heart responds, “Lord, I am coming.”*

Waiting for God is an active process marked by hope and expectancy as God invites us to bring our needs to him in prayer. David knew from experience what it meant to wait for the Lord. He was anointed king at age sixteen, but didn't become king until he was thirty. And he spent much of his time of waiting running for his life from King Saul. During this time, David learned confident dependency on God. He learned first-hand that God could be trusted. Psalm 27 is a Song of Trust. It was written after David became king and even in the midst of new battles, he is confident that he will see the goodness of the Lord. Psalm 27 ends with David's declaration: *“I remain confident of this: I will see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. Wait for the Lord; be strong and take heart”*

In the section on the Psalms (pg 19-24) was there anything that really stood out to you?

Leave space for each person to share. Have something ready that you've highlighted as well.

Do you have a favorite Psalm? You can open this up to each person reading their Psalm if time allows, which can be a unique and meaningful time of worship and encouragement.

Chapter 2: Steps to Quieting Your Soul

Has there been anything in your life for which you trained regularly or for a long time?

Give space for group to answer: things like a race, a school degree, a job or a hobby

Teaching Point: (From page 27 of Hearing from God) The same is true for becoming a self-feeding disciple of Jesus. The word disciple comes from the Latin *discipulus*, which means "student, learner, or follower." As followers of Jesus, we are His students—learning to think and to act more like Him in an ongoing journey of growth toward maturity, wholeness, and holiness. The great philosopher and theologian Dallas Willard said about the process of pursuing growth through spiritual disciplines, "Grace is not opposed to effort, it is opposed to earning. Earning is an attitude. Effort is an action." Learning to hear the voice of God within, whatever circumstances we are in, takes work. We need to become experts at quieting our souls so we can more clearly hear God speak through His Word.

That is why we want to pursue a "quiet time" or daily devotion—each day, not only when we happen to feel like it or there is nothing better to do (because those times are rare). The best way to succeed then in this endeavor is to have a plan and stick to it. Build repetitions with intention over time until you have developed a positive new habit in your daily routine.

Do you have a regular habit of daily devotions or a consistent pattern of time you spend with the Lord?

What does that usually look like for you?

Open this up for sharing, but don't require everyone to answer. This can quickly become about comparison or shame/guilt. So, be grace-filled in your encouragement.

Are there quiet time frustrations or distractions Steve lists (pg 28-32) that you can relate to? What do you think about ideas for fighting back - any you'd add?

What did you notice are keys to finding fruit in faithfulness? (pg 33-37)

Highlights could include following Christ's example, need for consistency, and strength in community.

Conclusion: End with an encouragement from 1 Timothy 4:8, "*Physical training is good, but training for godliness is much better, promising benefits in this life and in the life to come.*"

Close by praying for one another: Consider the framework from Psalm 107 again or introduce a time of listening prayer, waiting to hear from God and sharing how He is speaking.

Between now and next time: Read Chapter 3 of "Hearing from God" (pg 41-60)

Session 3

Open up with a moment of prayer: Commit this time to the Lord, opening up your hearts to Him and looking forward expectantly to what He wants to do in this time.

Consider modeling how to pray Scripture - Psalm 25:4-5: *“Show us Your ways, Lord, teach us Your paths. Guide us in Your truth and teach us, for You are God our Savior, and our hope is in You all day long.”*

Chapter 3: Finding Solace in the Storm

Page 44 reveals insights into Psalm 46 [Read Psalm 46 together](#)

Teaching context of the text: This Psalm is one of the Zion Songs, which glorify Yahweh's presence in the city of Jerusalem, showcasing God's power and protection for His people. The poem was collected and set to music for worship by the Sons of Korah. This psalm was used as a great celebration of thanksgiving when God delivered the Israelites from the Assyrians; the psalm showcases how we are in God's hands in times of trouble and has given great comfort to God's people for over 4000 years (2 Kings 18-20)! This psalm was used by the Reformer Martin Luther for a great lasting hymn, *“A Mighty Fortress is our God,”* that has been sung regularly for over 500 years.

Getting Personal: Steve opens this chapter (pg 41) with the story of his cancer battle and how it pushed him to change his perspective and grow his faith. Has there been a time in your life where everything seems to be out of your control? What helped you through that situation?

Be still: The words “be still” in verse 10 are translated from the Hebrew word raphah (which means to “to let down, let go, or cease.”) The word sometimes carries the idea “to be weak.” If you were in the midst of a battle and someone told you to do this how would you react?

Know God: What does Scripture tell us who God is, what He is like? Exodus 34:6-7 is the most quoted passage by other authors of books of the Bible. This passage is a list of God’s character traits that illustrates what God values and why he acts the way He does. [Read Exodus 34:6-7 together.](#) What character traits of God given here resonate with you the most?

Let go: Letting go of control and acknowledging our weakness is very hard to do. What difference does it make knowing that God asked us to let go in light of truly knowing Him? Is there a specific attribute of God that helps you “let go” or “surrender” a particular situation in your life right now?

Getting practical:

Page 47-50 provides an overview on **journaling**. Has this ever been something you've done before? (have the group share any experiences they've had with this)

Share highlights from pages 51-53 of the **SOAP method** with the group.

Wrap up with pages 56-60 on **getting started**: discuss with each other what your best time, ideal place, and plan to overcome distractions will be.

A Note on Distractions: Express to the group how sometimes what we sense as “distractions” can be God’s way of bringing things to mind that He also cares about. We are not mindless machines who are supposed to push past what’s really going on in our hearts. Instead, we can follow the example of many Psalms in bringing our problems to the Lord and submit them to Him, rather than building up our own anxiety or worry about them. Consider writing things down to come back to later or submit them to God.

Close by sharing prayer requests and praying together: Consider the framework from Psalm 107, a time of listening prayer, or simply sharing requests and updates.

Between now and next time: Begin following the 40-Day plan detailed in Chapter 4. Plan on bringing your journal with you to our next meeting as well.

Session 4

Open up with a moment of prayer: Commit this time to the Lord, opening up your hearts to Him and looking forward expectantly to what He wants to do and say.

Consider modeling how to pray Scripture using Psalm 62:5-7 and begin with an extended moment of silence to sit and listen for the Lord. Then pray,

“We wait in silence for God only, For our hope is from Him. He only is our rock and our salvation, Our stronghold; We shall not be shaken. On God our salvation and our glory rest; The rock of our strength, our refuge is in God. Trust in Him at all times, O people; Pour out your heart before Him; God is a refuge for us. Selah.”

Chapter 4: Resources for the Road Ahead

Use this time as a more open discussion, having people share about their journey so far.

- Have there been any particular days that really impacted you?
- What has the journey been like so far?

End with encouraging everyone to keep going and spend time praying for one another based on what people shared in their reflections on going through the Psalms so far or from their current requests and praises.

Between now and next time: There is some flexibility here based on how often you meet, whether weekly or bi-monthly. You can repeat Session 4 as checkpoints while going through the 40-day plan detailed in Chapter 4.

Try and time it so that you can all have [read Chapter 5](#) for discussion at your last meeting, with the goal that it's near the completion of the 40-day plan.

Session 5

Open up with a moment of prayer: Commit this time to the Lord, opening up your hearts to Him and looking forward expectantly to what He wants to do and say. Consider praying Scripture using Psalm 40:1-3, *“God we have waited patiently You; You turned to us and heard our cry. You lifted us out of the slimy pit, out of the mud and mire; You set our feet on a rock and gave us a firm place to stand. You put a new song in our mouth, a hymn of praise to our God. Many will see and fear the LORD and put their trust in You.”*

Chapter 5: Cultivating a Life of Worship

Before reading this chapter, how would you have described what genuine “worship” is?

Psalm 95 serves as the introduction to a series of Psalms devoted to the theme of worship and praise (Psalms 95–100). **Read Psalm 95. (Take turns each reading one verse)**

Questions to Consider: (Let the group answer and fill in some gaps as needed.)

From vs 1-7a what does the psalmist call us to do?

The list begins with honoring God in song, a chief and important way we worship. The exhortation is let us sing – implying that it should be done with God’s people. Also listed: shouting joyfully, coming before His presence, worshiping and bowing down, kneeling, and hearing His voice.

What are the reasons given for these commands?

The key word here is what follows after “for.” vs. 3 and 7

What's the warning and consequence of 7b-11?

Don't harden your hearts (the same word as what Pharaoh did) but listen to God's voice.

Teaching point: This is from a story in Exodus 17. God warns not listening/obeying means not entering into God's rest or the shalom of the Promised Land which can be understood more broadly as: into His Kingdom or a present and eternal connection with Him. Charles Spurgeon, a 19th century English preacher, gave ways we harden our hearts:

- by resolving not to demonstrate emotion in regard to spiritual things
- by delaying a real relationship with God
- by pretending doubts and foolish criticism
- by getting into evil company or indulging in a favorite sin
- by focusing on “silly amusements all intended to kill time and prevent thought upon divine things.” (this list is from an 1880 sermon, crazy right?)

How do we experience the same temptations?

We don't listen to God as much as we could. We don't read our Bibles. We tune out during sermons or even right now! We hear what's right to do, but choose not to do it. We grumble like the Israelites and doubt that God is good.

Teaching point: Worship is formative, helping us resist these temptations by turning our attention to God and shaping our affection for Him as we respond to the revelation of who He is, what He's done and all He's promised to do with obedience, reverence and gratitude.

What are some ways that we can see Jesus in Psalm 95?

- Jesus is our rock, he is fully God and the source of our salvation.
- God the father created through him (see Colossians 1) and He's worthy of our worship
- He is our chief shepherd who cares for us (see Hebrews 13 or John 10)
- He speaks to us/calls us (John 10)
- He gives us rest (Matthew 11:28-30)

Hebrews 3-4 is a hyperlink back to Psalm 9. [Read Hebrews 3:7-19 together](#)

How should Psalm 95 and Hebrews shape the worship culture of our families or church?

There's a connection between our worship, our obedience, and the need to encourage one another to remember what He has done and who He is. We need to watch out for sin's deceitfulness, having a hard heart, and failing to listen to His voice. We can also be thankful Christ paid the price for our sins and did what we never could out of our own obedience. Jesus made a sure way for us to connect with the Father. Jesus is worthy of our worship!

Concluding Point: Psalm 95 begins with a call to worship and ends with the consequences of when we don't. So, take steps to cultivate a life of worship that ascribes proper worth to God. Grow in your walk of sanctification through the work of the Spirit to become more like Jesus.

One of the main ways we do this is by spending daily dedicated time listening for His voice— remembering who He is and all He has done as revealed in His word and by His Spirit, then responding in obedience, gratitude and awe as your heart is realigned to His will and ways.

Close with a time of prayerful worship: declaring out loud your praise and thanksgiving for who God is and the things He has done.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Steven Sewell has served as a seminar and camp speaker, youth pastor, associate pastor, senior pastor, church planter, and recently as a hospice and in-workplace chaplain while preaching and teaching often. Now in full-time grief and bereavement training and counseling, Steven spends most of his time equipping and encouraging churches, businesses, and individuals to thrive through seasons of adversity and loss.

He has published two previous books:

AT A LOSS – Learning How to Comfort Others

FINDING HOPE – A Children’s Book about Grief

Discover more resources and find ways you can help support the mission of Encouraging Hope today at

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