

# HEARING THE WORD



NIGEL BARGE

**Psalms I**  
**Leader's Guide**

# *Hearing the Word: A Tool for Bible reading*



## **LOOK** – What does it *say*?

- 1) The Text
  - a) What questions does it raise - *Who, What, When, Where, Why, How?*
  - b) What surprises you?
- 2) The Context?
  - a) the surrounding text
  - b) the Book of the Bible
  - c) the whole Bible
  - d) the place in the Bible Story



## **LEARN** – What does it *mean*?

- 1) What type of writing is it?
- 2) Answer the questions
- 3) Summarise the passage



## **LISTEN** – What is the *message*?

- 1) Which is the main point?
- 2) Which is the key verse?



## **LIVE** – How should we *respond*?

- 1) What does it show about God, (Father, Son, Holy Spirit) :
  - a) His nature and character?
  - b) His grace\*
  - c) Jesus / his salvation\*\*
- 2) What should I do?

\* God's undeserved generosity is evident throughout the Bible, and it is perfectly expressed in Jesus.

\*\* The Bible, from 'the fall' onwards, describes God's plan of salvation through his Son. Thus, *all* the Scriptures speak in some way of Jesus (Luke 24:27).

**HEARING THE WORD**

**Psalms Volume I**

**Leader's Guide**

**Nigel Barge**

# **Hearing the Word Psalms Vol I Leader's Guide**

**Copyright © Nigel Barge 2009 – 2018**

Revised Edition, published by Nigel Barge, Torrance, 2017

**Print edition ISBN 978-1-912209-14-9**

(Matching Workbook ISBN 978-1-912209-15-6)

*Revisions 2011, 2014, 2015, 2018*

## **Distributed by Torrance Parish Church**

Office: 1 School Road, Torrance, Glasgow, G64 4BZ

*Tel: 01360 620970 Email: [hearingtheword@tpc.org.uk](mailto:hearingtheword@tpc.org.uk)*

*Website: [www.torranceparishchurch.org.uk](http://www.torranceparishchurch.org.uk)*

Torrance Parish Church of Scotland is a Scottish Charity (No: SC016058)

## **Acknowledgements**

I am very grateful to Phil and June Malloch, whose tireless editing, reviewing and pulling together of materials has enabled the 'Hearing the Word' resource to be shared with the wider church.

*Nigel Barge, April 2017*

## **Scripture Quotations taken from**

THE HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc® The International Bible Society. Used by permission of Hodder & Stoughton Ltd. A member of the Hodder Headline Plc Group. All rights reserved

"NIV" is a registered trademark of International Bible Society. UK trademark number 1448790

## **Resources**

*The New Bible Dictionary* 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, published by Inter Varsity Press

*The New Bible Commentary* 21<sup>st</sup> century edition. A commentary on every Bible book, IVP

[www.blueletterbible.org](http://www.blueletterbible.org)

## Table of Contents

<b><i>Hearing the Word: A Tool for Bible reading</i></b> .....		<i>Inside front cover</i>
<b>Reading ‘POETRY’ in the Bible .....</b>		<b>2</b>
<b>JESUS in the Psalms .....</b>		<b>4</b>
<b>The Book of the Psalms .....</b>		<b>4</b>
<b>Study 1</b>	<b>Psalm 23 .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Study 2</b>	<b>Psalm 51 .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Study 3</b>	<b>Psalm 150 .....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Study 4</b>	<b>Psalm 122 .....</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Study 5</b>	<b>Psalm 42 .....</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Study 6</b>	<b>Psalm 19 .....</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>Study 7</b>	<b>Psalm 22 .....</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>Sharing the Word .....</b>		<i>Inside back cover</i>

### Psalms covered in this Volume I

<b>Psalm</b>	<b>First line</b>	<b>Study</b>	<b>WB</b>	<b>LG</b>
		<b>Page</b>	<b>Page</b>	<b>Page</b>
19	The heavens declare the glory of God	6	21	21
22	My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?	7	24	24
23	The Lord is my shepherd	1	5	5
42	As the deer...so my soul pants for you, O God	5	18	18
51	Have mercy on me, O God	2	8	8
122	I rejoiced with those who said to me, ‘Let us go	4	14	14
150	Praise the LORD	3	11	11

**(Volume II** covers Psalms 2, 37, 45, 83, 90, 95, 110, 115)

# Reading ‘POETRY’ in the Bible

Whatever we read, we adjust to its style, sometimes without noticing. We don’t approach a newspaper, a car manual, a cookery book, a poem, a scientific report, a TXT Msg and a Shakespeare play in the same way. We take into account why it was written and how the writer uses words. The Bible too has many styles: law, poetry, history, wisdom, prophecy, letters, visions. We must allow for the style if we are to discern what God is saying.

The Psalms are ‘Poetry’. To read them correctly, remember these principles:

## **POETRY’S use of words**

One of the great reformers held that ‘Scripture cannot be understood *theologically* unless it be first understood *grammatically*’. Poets use devices like:

### **a) Parallelism**

The Psalmist often makes a point twice. He repeats it in different words, not to add anything, but simply to accentuate the point. We are meant to note the emphasis, but not to try to find new meaning in the repetition.

e.g. “The heavens declare the glory of God

    The skies proclaim the work of his hands.” Ps 19:1

Sometimes the couplet shows a *contrast* instead:

e.g. “For the Lord watches over the way of the righteous,  
    but the way of the wicked will perish.” Ps 1:6

### **b) Figures of speech**

A poet may use words in a way that is not literal: they reveal meaning in another way. So we often see

Metaphors      e.g.      *God is a fortress*    (Ps 46)

This is not trying to say that God is a construction of stone! Rather, it expresses the Psalmist’s confident sense of security that he has from God. When danger looms, he ‘runs’ to God and is safe.

Similes      e.g.      *the mountains skipped like rams,*  
                            *the hills like lambs*    (Ps 114:4)

The two, parallel similes do not imply an earthquake; just that the physical world complied with God’s will to release his people from Egypt.

Hyperbole (*over exaggeration*) is a device used to make a point. Its teaching cannot be extracted line for line as in law but must be taken in context.

    e.g.      *In sin did my mother conceive me* (Ps 51:5).

This does not imply that sex is sinful, or teach ‘original sin’; rather, the poet expresses the weight of his sin: he has *always* been sinful!

## POETRY and the Word of God

All Scripture is written by man and inspired by God; it is for making us wise for salvation and for building us up (2 Tim 3:16-17). This ‘tension’ in the Bible is seldom more evident than when we are reading its poetry. We need to take both aspects into account:

### 1) Written by man

#### a) *The Psalms are Poetry*

Poetry expresses emotion. It conveys how the writer felt at the time of writing. Rather than simply *stating* feelings the writer lets his words, and the pictures they convey, *express* his feelings. In seeking to understand any poem, it is therefore useful to ask about

##### (i) The timing

a) General: At what point in the history of Israel is it written?

b) Specific: What was the event/occasion that prompted it?

*NB* This may be specified in the title of the poem or it may be implied by the content as we ‘read between the lines’.

##### (ii) The emotion What was the writer’s underlying feeling?

Anger/pleasure? Sadness/joy? Confidence/anxiety? Hope/despair?

##### (iii) The purpose: What is the writer’s single target or goal?

#### b) *The Psalms are songs*

They express openly the emotion of the writer and encourage us to respond sympathetically and identify with him. i.e. What parts of this Psalm may I - or should I - say myself?

### 2) Inspired by God

The Psalmists, whether they knew it or not, were ‘prophets carried along by the Holy Spirit.’ (2 Peter 1:21) As well as expressing human emotion, they are also the means of God speaking to his people.

So, according to God’s purpose in Salvation, we ask what God is saying to **us** through this Psalm.

How does it... a) ...make us wise for Salvation?

How does God reveal himself in this Psalm?

How does he help us understand his plan of salvation in Jesus?

b) ...equip us?

What does God want me to do in response to this?

# JESUS in the Psalms

All Scripture speaks of Jesus (Luke 24:27; John 5:39). Psalms do this:

## 1) Directly

*Psalms* is the Old Testament book most frequently quoted in the New. There are 70 quotations introduced by a formula like, 'David says concerning him...' There are 60 more without a formula and a further 220 allusions.

Some Psalms which deal with the subject of 'the King' can be seen as anticipating the Messiah. Psalm 2 is mentioned 17 times in the New Testament, where it is applied to Jesus in connection with his baptism, transfiguration, resurrection, final rule and judgment.

Many verses in the Psalms speak directly and prophetically about Jesus.

## 2) Indirectly

The Scriptures describe the unfolding revelation of God in salvation history that culminates in his exact representation in Jesus (Hebrews 1:1-3).

So the Psalmist writes within his own historical situation but also anticipates and foreshadows Jesus who is to come. Therefore, as we read the Psalms we ask ourselves: ***What does this Psalm show us of the gift of God in Jesus?***

## The Book of the Psalms

The traditional titles of the Psalms suggest that David wrote half of them (73), Moses: one, Solomon: two, and sons of Asaph and Korah: several.

They were used in private and public worship. Scholars suggest that after the return from exile and the reconstruction of the Temple by Ezra in the 5<sup>th</sup> Century BC, they were formed into its official 'Hymn book'.

The Psalms have been arranged into 5 'books', but with no discernable pattern. The following types of Psalms are found intermingled in them:

1. Lament – expressing distress to God, e.g. 3, 22, 31, 39, 57, 71, 120, 139, 142
2. Thanksgiving – expressing gratitude to God, e.g. 65, 75, 124, 138
3. Praise – appreciating God, e.g. 8; 19, 66, 103, 114, 145, 148
4. Salvation History – recalling God's past deliverance, e.g. 75, 105, 135
5. Celebration/affirmation – acknowledging God's rule, 2, 18, 29, 47, 87, 89, 122
6. Wisdom – considering Godly living, e.g. 36, 49, 112, 133
7. Songs of Trust – professing hope in God, e.g. 16, 62, 121, 125

# Study 1                    Psalm 23

## Background information

In the Middle East, shepherds lived with their sheep. They were nomadic and responsible for finding food for their flock. The sheep depended on the shepherd for *everything* – food, water, protection.

Where there was a sheepfold – a circular stone wall – the shepherd slept lying across the entrance, keeping the sheep in and wild animals out.

Today, a shepherd with a dog drives sheep from *behind*; back then, sheep had such confidence in their shepherd, they *followed* him.

Shepherds used a sling to drive off predators; and if a sheep was straying too far, he would land a stone *beyond* it, so it was startled into coming back. (If by mistake he *hit* it, it would run for miles!) David's skill with sling and stone (1 Sam 17:15, 49) came from long practice with a flock.

## Word List

4	<i>Rod</i>	shepherd's weapon to protect and rescue sheep
	<i>Staff</i>	support to lean on, also to rescue sheep
5	<i>anoint...oil</i>	sign of hospitality
6	<i>cup overflows</i>	generous portion or share

## Bible connections

1	Jesus the good <i>shepherd</i>	John 10:1, 14
3	<i>soul</i> - love with all your soul - source of praise <i>paths of righteousness</i> <i>name's sake</i>	Deuteronomy 6:5 Psalm 103:1 Genesis 15:6; Romans 3:22; 4:3ff Exodus 34:14; Deuteronomy 5:11; Ezekiel 36:22
4	<i>valley of shadow of death</i> <i>rod and staff</i> <i>comfort</i>	Isaiah 9:1-2; Matthew 4:16 1 Samuel 17:34-36 John 14:16
5	<i>table before enemies</i> <i>anointing head</i> = joyful coronation <i>cup</i> = lot/portion <i>overflows</i> = abundant	Leviticus 24:6 Psalm 45:7; 1 Samuel 16:13a Psalm 16:5 Malachi 3:10; John 10:10
6	<i>house of the Lord</i> – love for – command to go there	Psalm 26:8 Deuteronomy 12:5

# LOOK

## 1) The Text

What questions does the passage raise?

What surprises or confuses you?

1 *Why use a shepherd-sheep relationship (neither was prestigious)?*

2 *Why green pastures and still waters?*

*Why does he 'make me' lie down?*

3 *What are paths of righteousness?*

*What is 'his name's sake'?*

4 *What is the valley of the shadow of death?*

*What are the rod and staff?*

5 *Why the present tense - you prepare, you anoint?*

6 *Who is leading, if goodness and love are following?*

*Where is the house of the Lord?*

## 2) The Context

a) What circumstances have prompted the writer?

*David appears to be in a 'good place'. All is well. His Psalm is an exhortation to others (and to himself) to continue to trust God. His head has been anointed i.e. he is king. This was perhaps written when the Kingdom was secure. cf 1 Samuel 8:1-14*

Who was this poem written for / addressed to?

*v 1-3 to general audience*

*v 4-5 to God*

*v 6 to general audience*

b) What other parts of the Bible - adjacent Psalm, individual book, whole bible, or Bible story - might help you understand this passage?

*See Bible connections on p5.*

# LEARN

1) How do you answer the questions that the passage raises?

*1 Shepherd-sheep relationship = David's experience of God.*

*2 Green pastures/still waters = all a sheep needs, cf 'our daily bread'*  
*He makes me = He chooses the pastures, as I don't know which are 'good'. I might choose others.*

*3 Paths of righteousness - the wise way to live*

*His name's sake = reputation*

*4 Valley of shadow = time when death is imminent*

*Rod and staff = a shepherd's weapons.*

*5 Present tense - lives in the reality anticipating fulfilment*

*6 The Shepherd leads; goodness and mercy follow  
The house of the Lord = tabernacle / heaven.*

2) What emotion(s) are expressed in this poem? Which is the main one?  
*Contentment, satisfaction, wellbeing, and confidence*

3) How do you resolve issues that surprised or confused you?

4) Give an overall 'picture' of the passage in a few sentences.

*The Lord cares and protects me. He shows me the right way to live (1-3)  
I trust Him completely - even through death (4)  
You provide for me completely despite my enemies (5)  
I expect goodness and mercy in this life and to be with the Lord in the next (6)*

## **LISTEN**

1) What is the lesson or the main point?

*To express trust in God/acknowledge the truth about him*

2) Which verse best sums up the passage's message? **v 6**

## **LIVE**

1) What does it show about God (Father, Son, Holy Spirit)?

a) His nature and character?

*1 God is our provider. He is generous - all is covered.  
2 He is reliable - able and willing to deliver.*

b) His grace

*1ff There is nothing in the poem that the 'sheep' does as he receives from God, except express his faith and trust in him.*

c) Jesus / His salvation

*6 Jesus is the good shepherd who lays down his life for his sheep, that they may have eternal life (John 10:14,28)*

2) What should I do now?

*1 To sing it at all times - as an expression of gratitude when at ease and to induce faith when times are hard.*

*2 Verbalise what is true of God's provision and care*

*3 Follow his lead*

*4 Do not Fear.*

*6 Anticipate the future with God.*

# Study 2                    Psalm 51

## Background information

King David committed adultery with Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah the Hittite and she became pregnant. Uriah was away on duty in the army and would have known he was not the father. To cover up, David gave instruction to his general that Uriah should be killed in battle in a way that made it look like an accident. After this was carried out, David took the now widowed Bathsheba as one of his wives. (2 Samuel 11)

God sent his prophet, Nathan, to confront him. He did this with a parable. When David condemned the villain of the parable, Nathan declared, 'You are the man'. He also said the son to be born would die (2 Samuel 12:7,14). David, deeply convicted of his sin, wrote Psalm 51.

## Word List

7 *hyssop*                    a herb with cleansing properties

## Bible connections

1. 'Have mercy on me'                    Mark 10:47  
God's compassion                            Exodus 34:6  
blot out - cf word for 'cancel' in Colossians 2:14
2. washed: 1 Cor 6:11                    Cleansed: 1 John 1:9
3. It is God the Holy Spirit who convicts people of sin - John 16:8
4. Sin against God                            Genesis 39:9
7. They used a stalk of hyssop to hold up  
a sponge soaked in wine, to offer  
Jesus a drink on the cross                    John 19:29  
Christ's blood cleanses from sin            1 John 1:7  
Whiter than snow                              Isaiah 1:18
8. Restoring joy                              Isaiah 61:3
9. Blots out / remembers sin no more    Isaiah 43:25
11. David receiving Spirit                    1 Samuel 16:13
13. Teaching transgressors                    Psalm 1; Matthew 28:20
14. Without shedding of blood, no forgiveness - Hebrews 9:22  
The righteousness of God, Jesus              1 Corinthians 1:30
15. Declaring the wonders of God            Acts 2:11
16. Sacrifices not welcome to God        1 Sam 15:22; Matt 9:13; Heb 9:9

# LOOK

## 1) The Text

What questions does the passage raise?

What surprises or confuses you?

- 1 *Why mercy?*
- 3 *What are his transgressions?*
- 4 *'Against you only...' What about Uriah and Bathsheba?*  
*What has God said / judged?*
- 5 *What does sinful at birth mean?*
- 6 *Where are your 'inner parts' / 'inmost place'?*
- 7 *Why should hyssop cleanse?*
- 8 *When did God crush his bones?*
- 11 *When was he given the Holy Spirit?*
- 13 *Why should he teach transgressors?*
- 18 *Why does he pray for Zion?*
- 19 *What is a righteous sacrifice?*

## 2) The Context

- a) What circumstances have prompted this poem?

*David has committed adultery; then, in trying to hide that, he commits murder. He has been living with this 'secret' till he is confronted by God's prophet, Nathan. His guilt is exposed and furthermore he is told that his son born to Bathsheba will die.*

Who was this poem addressed to/written for?

*It is all addressed to God himself*

- b) What other parts of the Bible - adjacent Psalm, individual book, whole bible, or Bible story - might help you understand this passage?

*See Bible connections on p8.*

# LEARN

- 1) How do you answer the questions that the passage raises?

*1 Mercy because he has offended God /broken his Law.*

*3 His transgressions- adultery, murder, deceit.*

*4 Uriah's life belonged to God.*

*God judged when Nathan said - 'You are the man'.*

*5 Sinful at birth means totally, completely sinful.*

*6 Inner parts - heart of hearts / private thoughts.*

*7 Hyssop used to cleanse from disease.*

*8 God 'crushed his bones' when he was exposed / his son died.*

11 *He was given the Holy Spirit when anointed King (1 Sam 16:13)*  
 13 *He should teach / lead as King.*  
 18 *He prays for Zion, as he knows he is responsible for the nation?*  
 19 *A righteous sacrifice is one offered in faith in Jesus.*  
*(Romans 12:1)?*

2) What emotion(s) are expressed in this poem? Which is the main one?  
*Remorse.*

3) How do you resolve issues that surprised or confused you?

4) Give an overall ‘picture’ of the passage in a few sentences.  
*Lord, have mercy on me (1,2). I am totally sinful (3-6). Remove all my sin (7-9). Make me wholly yours (10-12) Then I will serve you with all my heart (13-19)*

## LISTEN

1) What is the lesson or the main point?  
*To show repentance, to seek forgiveness and to express faith and devotion.*

2) Which verse best sums up the passage’s message? **v 1**

## LIVE

1) What does it show about God (Father, Son, Holy Spirit)?

a) His nature and character?  
 1 *God is merciful and his love unfailing*  
 4 *His judgements against sin are just*  
 10 *God looks for repentance.*

b) His grace  
 14 *God saves*  
 15 *We rely on God to 'open our lips'*  
 17 *All God requires is our heart*

c) Jesus / His salvation  
 7 *It is the blood of Jesus that cleanses*  
 19 *Jesus is the King who delights in the security and righteousness of his people (*

2) What should I do?  
 1 *Repent, and express repentance.*

# Study 3                    Psalm 150

This Psalm is an exuberant song of praise to God.

## Word List

1 *Praise the LORD*      Hebrew *Hallel-ū-* (praise-to-) *Yah* (short for 'Yahweh'). Jews thought this name for God, explained to Moses at Exodus 3:14, was too holy to speak; if reading the Hebrew text aloud, they said *Adonai*, (pronounced *A-thon-eye*) meaning 'Lord'. Early translators, combining the consonants of *YHWH* and vowels of *Adonai*, came up with 'Jehovah', which is not a real Hebrew word, as it uses one letter twice, first as a consonant, then as a vowel. English Bibles normally use 'LORD' in small capitals when translating *YHWH*, and 'Lord' in lower case for *Adonai*.

*sanctuary*      the holy of holies in the Temple in Jerusalem.

3 *Trumpet*      primarily an instrument for giving signals.

## Bible connections

1 Praising God:

Reason for	1 Peter 2:9
Universally	Psalm 67:3
In song	Psalm 9:11
Continually	Hebrews 13:15

2 God's power      1 Chronicles 29:12; Psalm 62:11; 65:6  
God's greatness      Deuteronomy 3:24; Jeremiah 32:17-23

Praise God using:

3-5 Music, percussion      1 Chronicles 13:8  
Harp      1 Chronicles 25:3; 2 Chronicles 5:12  
Dancing      Exodus 15:20; 2 Samuel 6:14

6 Voice / breath      Genesis 2:7  
All encompassing      Psalm 148:7-12  
Praise in heaven      Revelation 5:13

## LOOK

### 1) The Text

What questions does the passage raise?

What surprises or confuses you?

1 *Where is God's mighty sanctuary / his Heavens?*

2 *What are his acts of power?*

3-5 *What is the purpose of - Trumpet, Harp, Tambourine, strings, flute, cymbals?*

*Why is singing not mentioned?*

6 *Why everything?*

*What is 'Praise the Lord' - exhortation or command?*

### 2) The Context

a) Who was this poem addressed to/written for?

*Corporate worship, one to another*

What circumstances have prompted the writer?

*The emotion is effusive joy*

b) What other parts of the Bible - adjacent Psalm, individual book, whole bible, or Bible story - might help you understand this passage?

*See Bible Connections*

## LEARN

1) How do you answer the questions that the passage raises?

1 *Praise is expressing an appreciation of God. It is one part of worship (old English, 'worth-ship') recognising God is worthy to receive our praise and obedience.*

*Sanctuary = Heaven / God's throne*

2 *Acts of power = Creation and salvation*

3-5 *Trumpet - direction, Harp - song, Tambourine - dance. Strings and flute - Music. Cymbals - proclamation*  
*no singing mentioned because a basic assumption, but note 'everything that has breath' = voices and wind instruments.*

6 *everything - all creatures (all creation Ps 148:7ff)*

*praise the Lord = command*

2) What emotion(s) are expressed in this poem? Which is the main one?

*Exuberance, gratitude, enthusiasm, awe, joy, delight, extravagance, compulsion.*

3) How do you resolve issues that surprised or confused you?

4) Give an overall 'picture' of the passage in a few sentences.

*Praise God in Heaven (1). Praise Him for being almighty (2). Praise Him with all that you have (3-5). Everyone - praise Him (6)!*

## **LISTEN**

1) What is the lesson or the main point?

*To encourage all life to exuberant praise of God*

2) Which verse best sums up the message of the passage? ***vv 1 & 6***

## **LIVE**

1) What does it show about God (Father, Son, Holy Spirit)?

a) His nature and character

2 *He is powerful and worthy of praise*

b) His grace

1 *God does it all. We praise Him*

c) Jesus / His salvation

2 *The supreme act of power was the resurrection of Jesus.*

2) What should I do?

6 *Sing the poem with others to God bringing heartfelt praise.*

## Study 4

## Psalm 122

## Background information

## 1) The city of Jerusalem

Originally called Jebus, it was the capital of one of the five kingdoms in Canaan (Judges 19:10; Joshua 10:1ff). When David captured it he made it his residence and brought the Ark to Jerusalem (2 Samuel 5 & 6).

The Lord instructed David to build an altar on the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite (1 Chronicles 21:18). This then became the site of the Temple, built by Solomon (1 Chronicles 22:1)

Thus the kingly *rule* of God, and the *worship* of God were united on Mount Zion in the city of Jerusalem.

## 2) The origin of Psalm 122

David is living in Jerusalem, the altar has been built and he anticipates the building of the Temple. He writes the Psalm, rejoicing in God's provision and encouraging the faithful to worship there and recognise that the wellbeing of the nation depends on the prosperity of Jerusalem.

### 3) The use of Psalm 122

11 Psalms 120 -134 are known as the ‘songs of ascent’. They are thought to be a group of songs used by the pilgrims as they made their way up to Jerusalem for the great festivals of Passover, Pentecost and Tabernacles.

They are known as the 'Great Hallel' and there appears to be a three-fold division among them marking the deliverance by God of the Jews from exile.

- a) Ps 120 -123 The exile to Babylon under Nebuchadnezzar.
- b) Ps 124 -128 The Homecoming which had been ordered by the Persian King, Cyrus.
- c) Ps 129 -134 The Restoration with Ezra and Nehemiah.

As the pilgrims climbed up Mount Zion to Jerusalem, the physical ascent symbolised the story of the *nation*, from the lowest point in exile to the restoration, and the individual *believer* from the lowest state of distress to the highest degree of exaltation.

In this re-enactment, therefore, Psalm 122 may best be understood from the perspective of one in exile. The believer is remembering, longing for and by faith anticipating the day the 'tribes will go up'.

## Bible connections

1	Rejoice	Philippians 4:4
2	<i>Jerusalem as God's permanent dwelling</i> <i>Shiloh had been temporary</i>	Psalm 132:13 1 Samuel 1:3

<i>Jerusalem as symbol of the church standing firm the church persevering</i>	Revelation 3:12; 21:2,10ff Ephesians 6:11,13,14 Matthew 16:18
<i>3 Jerusalem to be first city of world</i>	Isaiah 2:2
<i>4 Statutes to worship in Jerusalem</i>	Ex 23:14-17; Deut 16:16ff
<i>5 Judgments</i>	Deuteronomy 17:8
<i>8 Brothers / harmony amongst God's people Peace</i>	Psalm 133:1; Ephesians 4:2ff Philippians 4:7,9
<i>9 House of God Prosperity</i>	Psalms 23:6; 27:4; 84:10 Psalm 1:3

## LOOK

### 1) The Text

What questions does the passage raise?

- 1 Who were 'those who said ....'?*
- 2 Where were they standing?*
- 3 Why was Jerusalem 'like a city'?*
- 4 Which statute was given to Israel?*
- 5 What are those thrones of judgment?*
- 6 Why was there a need to pray for peace for Jerusalem?*
- 7 Why 'for the sake of brothers'?*
- 8 What does prosperity look like?*

What surprises or confuses you?

### 2) The Context

a) Who was this poem addressed to/written for?

*v1 a 3<sup>rd</sup> party      v6 God in prayer      v9 Jerusalem*

What circumstances have prompted the writer? (from the title or 'reading between the lines')

*An anticipation of worshipping in the House of the Lord*

- David by faith, as the Temple had not yet been built,*
- the pilgrims, as they go up to the Temple for the festivals*

b) What other parts of the Bible might help you understand this passage?  
*see Connections above*

## LEARN

1) How do you answer the questions that the passage raises?

*1 Those who took the ark up with David / fellow pilgrims*

- 2 a statement of confidence in Jerusalem and its permanence (Psalm 132:13-14)
- 3 describing reality - compacted together
- 4 Statute to go to Jerusalem for worship and justice
- 5 Thrones of judgment = justice
- 6 Jerusalem being the capital was the target for enemies
- 7 For the sake of brothers - corporate solidarity and identity is essential
- 8 Prosperity looks like harmony amongst brothers, victory over the enemies, provision for needs

2) What emotion(s) are expressed in this poem? Which is the main one?

*Joy, pride, thankfulness, excitement, confidence, eagerness, concern.*

3) How do you resolve issues that surprised or confused you?

4) Give an overall 'picture' of the passage in a few sentences.

*The worship of God (in Jerusalem) is my delight (1,2)*

*The praise of God and the judgement of God (in J) are displayed (3-5)*

*The rule of God (in J) is the object of its citizens (6-9)*

## LISTEN

1) What is the lesson or the main point?

*To express the Psalmist's excitement at the prospect of meeting together with God and his people in worship and to make his commitment known to them,*

2) Which verse best sums up the passage's message? v 1

## LIVE

1) What does it show about God (Father, Son, Holy Spirit)?

a) His nature and character?

1 *God delights when his people praise him together.*

9 *God is honoured when there is peace amongst his people.*

b) His grace

6 *He provides fellowship / gives us company.*

8 *He has given us a 'place' to call home.*

c) Jesus / His salvation

6 *The Gospel is an invitation to meet with God in Christ with His people*

2) What should I do?

- 1 *Express excitement at the prospect of church worship.*  
*Encourage others to join together in the worship of God.*
- 6 *Pray for the peace of Jerusalem.*
- 7 *Work for peace.*
- 9 *Seek the well being of God's people.*

## Study 5                    Psalm 42

## Background information

The heading of the Psalm describes it as a 'Maskil of the sons of Korah'. A Maskil was a term showing that it was used for instruction.

As to the Author, some, like Calvin, think that it was written by David in the latter part of his exile by Saul (1 Samuel 23-30) and committed to the sons of Korah. Others think it was written by the people of God, when in exile in Babylon (cf Psalm 137).

## Word List

5	<i>Jordan</i>	River running from north to south in Israel
	<i>Hermon</i>	High mountain (2,814m) in Anti-Lebanon range. Headwaters of R Jordan start here.
	<i>Mt Mizar</i>	location unknown. Hebrew 'Mizar' means "small"

## Bible connections

1	<i>Thirsting for God</i>	Psalm 63:1; John 7:37
2.	<i>Living God</i>	Psalm 84:2 <i>of</i> Non-living gods - Exodus 20:4; Jeremiah 10:1-10
3	<i>Scoffers</i>	Psalm 1:1; Acts 17:18; 2 Peter 3:3
4	<i>House of God</i>	Attendance      Deuteronomy 12:5 Refuge            Isaiah 37:1 Blessings        Psalm 84:4 Procession to    Psalm 122
5	<i>The comfort of God</i> - Psalm 103:13; John 14:16	
5/11	<i>Jesus is the Saviour</i> - Luke 2:11; Philippians 3:20	
9	<i>Forgotten</i>	Psalm 22:1; Isaiah 49:14-16; Matthew 27:46
	<i>God the rock</i>	Matthew 7:24
	<i>Enemy</i>	Ephesians 6:12; 1 Peter 5:8
11	<i>Hope in God</i>	Jeremiah 17:7; Colossians 1:27; Hebrews 6:19; 10:23; 11:1; Titus 2:13.

## LOOK

### 1) The Text

What questions does the passage raise?

What surprises or confuses you?

- 2 *Where would he meet with God?*  
*What was stopping him?*  
*Why the 'living God'?*
- 3 *What does 'my tears as food' mean?*
- 4 *What was the procession?*
- 5 *What is he remembering?*
- 8/9 *Why the swing of mood?*
- 9 *Who is the enemy?*
- 10 *What does 'bones in mortal agony' mean?*
- 11 *Why should he not be downcast?*

### 2) The Context

a) What circumstances have prompted the writer?

*He is outside the Promised Land, being taunted by enemies about his plight and unable to have fellowship with God's people.*

Who was this poem addressed to/written for?

*v 1 God; vv 2-4 A third party; v 5 himself; v6 God; v7-11 himself.*

b) What other parts of the Bible - adjacent Psalm, individual book, whole bible, or Bible story - might help you understand this passage?

*Could the very next Psalm be a continuation of Ps 42?*

*Compare 42:5,11 with 43:5.*

## LEARN

2. *He would meet with God in the tabernacle / Temple.*  
*His enemies stopping him?*  
*The 'living God' contrast with all others - idols.*
3. *Tears = food as they run down into your mouth?*
4. *Procession = Ark to Jerusalem ( David 2 Samuel 6) or annual pilgrimage (Deuteronomy 16:16).*
5. *He remembers joy, celebration, privilege.*
- 8/9 *The swing is because he is giving himself a talking to?*
9. *The enemy is King Saul, Babylonians, Devil.*
- 10 *'Bones in mortal agony' means deep anguish.*
- 11 *He should not be downcast because God is his Saviour*

2) What emotion(s) are expressed in this poem? Which is the main one?

*Sadness (3); longing & frustration (4), depression (3, 9a)  
determination (5b,11b), pain (10) hope (5,11)*

3) How do you resolve issues that surprised or confused you?

4) Give an overall ‘picture’ of the passage in a few sentences.

*I long to meet with God as I used to (1-4).*

*Though He seems distant now, I believe I will enjoy God, my Saviour, again (5-11).*

## **LISTEN**

1) What is the lesson or the main point?

*Hope in his salvation.*

2) Which verse best sums up the passage’s message? *v 5 & 11*

## **LIVE**

1) What does it show about God (Father, Son, Holy Spirit)?

a) His nature and character?

*3 He may appear remote because we hide from him, or he hides his face from us.*

*5,11 He is always worthy of trust.*

b) His grace

*3 He permits us to moan, to tell him we feel sad.*

*8 'He directs his love to us by day and at night his song is within me.'*

c) Jesus / His salvation

*5,11 Jesus is the Saviour*

2) What should I do?

*4 In the 'bad' times, remember the 'good' times.*

*5 Choose to praise God as a declaration of intent, in faith.*

# Study 6                    Psalm 19

## Background information

The Egyptians in those days thought the Sun was the supreme God and every Pharaoh was his incarnation on earth.

## Word List

7	<i>Law</i>	term for the Torah (the first 5 books of the Bible)
	<i>Soul</i>	one's whole being
	<i>Statutes</i>	(lit. 'meeting place') Instructions within the covenant.
8	<i>Precepts</i>	that which God has charged us to do.
9	<i>Ordinances</i>	God's whole revealed way to live
14	<i>Heart</i>	'mind' in Jewish thought.

## Bible connections

1	God evident in creation	Romans 1:20
	Creator God	John 1:1; Colossians 1:16; Job 38
4	Universal scope of message	Romans 10:18
7-10	God's Word	Psalm 119
7	God's perfect Word	Psalm 18:30
9	The fear of the Lord	Proverbs 9:10
12	God knows our sin	Psalm 139:1
	'Seeing' Jesus leads to sense of unworthiness	Luke 5:8; 7:7
	Conviction leads to faith	John 16:8

## LOOK

### 1) The Text

What questions does the passage raise?

What surprises or confuses you?

- 1 *What do the heavens say?*
- 2-4 *Why the different verses about speech?*
- 5 *Why chose the sun as an example?*
- 7-10 *Why different words for the Law?*
- 9 *How can 'fear' be pure?*
- 12,13 *What are hidden / wilful sins?*
- 11 *What is the great reward?*
- 14 *Why doesn't it include 'deeds'?*

### 2) The Context

a) What circumstances have prompted the writer?

*He is aware of his sin in the light of the glory of God and the Truth of His word*

*He desires to please Him*

Who was this poem addressed to/written for?

*v 1-11 a third party*

*v 12-14 God*

b) What other parts of the Bible - adjacent Psalm, individual book, whole bible, or Bible story - might help you understand this passage?

*See Bible connections on p21.*

## LEARN

1) How do you answer the questions that the passage raises?

- 1 *The Heavens say God is glorious - orderly*
- 2-4 *Speech is incessant, intelligible to all, everywhere*
- 5 *The sun is the greatest light in the sky, controlled by God.*
- 7 *Word in every way - complete, reliable, sufficient*
- 9 *Fear is pure if it means reverent obedience of a benevolent and just God.*
- 11 *The reward = joy (8)*
- 14 *Deeds inevitably follow.*

2) What emotion(s) are expressed in this poem? Which is the main one?

*Wonder, Awe (1) appreciation, gratitude (7-10) inadequacy (12)  
desire for God, sense of security from God (14)*

3) How do you resolve issues that surprised or confused you?

4) Give an overall 'picture' of the passage in a few sentences.

*The heavens display the glory of their creator (1-6)*

*The Law of the Lord is complete - trustworthy, right, radiant, pure,  
righteous, precious, 'sweet' a blessing to his servants (7-10)*

*(It makes me aware of my sin) Protect me from it that I may please you  
(12-14)*

## **LISTEN**

1) What is the lesson or the main point?

*Appreciation of God's perfection leads to an awareness of sin and a  
desire to resist it and to please Him, whose we are.*

2) Which verse best sums up the passage's message?

**v14**

## **LIVE**

1) What does it show about God (Father, Son, Holy Spirit)?

a) His nature and character?

*1-4 Creator and sustainer*

*Wonderful and awesome*

*5 Supreme over all gods*

*7-10 Careful & wise*

*Perfect*

b) His grace

*1-4 He speaks (to sinners) whether we listen or not*

*10 He gives us that which is more precious than gold*

*14 He redeems*

c) Jesus / His salvation

*14 Jesus is the rock and redeemer*

2) What should I do?

*1ff Sing to remind them of the revelation of God'*

*7ff Enjoy and attend to God's Law*

*14 Seek to please God*

# Study 7

# Psalm 22

## Background information

David is most likely writing of his experience when King Saul was seeking to kill him and he was on the run (1 Samuel 23 -27).

It is a Psalm that the NT writers quote as being directly Prophetic about Jesus (see verses marked **P** in Bible connections below).

Many other passages are connected to this Psalm without quoting it directly.

## Word List

12	<i>Bashan bulls</i>	choicest and heaviest breed of the day.
16	<i>Dogs'</i>	Barbarians.
22ff	<i>Declare..praise</i>	Sacrifice and feast after completing a vow of service to God (Leviticus 7:16; Deuteronomy 12:17-19).
25	<i>Great assembly</i>	Possibly one of the four main Jewish festivals.
29	<i>Rich ones</i>	literally, 'fat ones'.

## Bible connections

1	Jesus' cry on the cross	- Mark 15:34 <b>P</b> ; Matt 27:46 <b>P</b> ; Gal 3:13
6-8	scorned . . . despised	Isaiah 53:3
9	Known to God	Jeremiah 1:5; Ephesians 1:4,5
10	our whole lives planned by God	Psalm 139:13-16; Job 10:8-12
14	Jesus life poured out	Isaiah 53:12
18	Jesus' garments divided by lot	John 19:24 <b>P</b>
19-21	God chooses the time for Jesus' sacrifice	- Matthew 26:56
22	After saving us Jesus calls us brothers	- Heb 2:12 <b>P</b>
23	Tell what God has done for you	Mark 5:19
27	All will bow down to Lord Jesus	Philippians - 2:10
29	Riches cannot get us to heaven	Mark 10:23-27
31	Jesus has done it!	John 19:30

## LOOK

### 1) The Text

What questions does the passage raise? What surprises or confuses you?

*4 When did the fathers put their trust in God?*

*9 How did God 'make him' trust when he was so young?*

*22 What was the congregation?*

*24 How can he say this after v 1-2?*

*25 What vows?*

29 Why will the rich feast and worship?

31 What had he 'done'?

## 2) The Context

a) What circumstances have prompted the writer?

*David is physically, mentally and spiritually, as low as he could be.*

*He is despised and scorned by everyone and in mortal danger from brutal enemies.*

Who was this poem addressed to/written for?

1-22 to God;

23, 24 to descendants of Jacob

25 to God

26-31 to descendants of Jacob / everyone

b) What other parts of the Bible - adjacent Psalm, individual book, whole bible, or Bible story - might help you understand this passage?

*Jesus' death (Gospels)*

*Paul praising in Philippian jail - Acts 16:25*

*Paul finds contentment even in adversity - Philippians 4:11*

*2 Corinthians 11:24-27*

## LEARN

1) How do you answer the questions that the passage raises?

4 *They put their trust in him as they left Egypt*

9 *Way of saying he has been dependent on God from the start.*

22 *Gathering at one of the great festivals.*

24 *He has emptied the bile and has reached a place of praise.*

25 *Kingly vows or personal commitment.*

27 *The kingdom is for all.*

31 *He has 'saved to the uttermost'.*

2) What emotion(s) are expressed in this poem? Which is the main one?

*Agony (1) humiliation, worthlessness (6), fear (15),*

*confidence (22-23) gratitude (24) pride (30,31)*

4) Give an overall 'picture' of the passage in a few sentences.

*Lord, why have you left me (1,2) You, the all-powerful God, saved our forefathers (4,5). I am a laughing-stock (6-8), yet I owe you my existence (9,10) Help (11).*

*I am assailed on all sides (12-18) Rescue me (19-21)*

*I will exhort others to trust you (22-24) you are praiseworthy (25). The needy will be satisfied by the Lord (26) and every knee will bow before Him (27-31).*

## **LISTEN**

1) What is the lesson or the main point?

*In the deepest darkness we are sustained by the hope of declaring God's praises.*

2) Which verse best sums up the passage's message? *v 3b - 4a*

## **LIVE**

1) What does it show about God (Father, Son, Holy Spirit)?

a) His nature and character?

2 *He may seem to be silent sometimes, but he is still faithful.*

6 *He is prepared to allow great suffering and apparent defeat to his people.*

25 *He is always worthy of praise.*

b) His grace

1 *God patiently absorbs hurt and questions.*

9,10 *God sustains totally from the womb.*

26 *God ensures that the poor will eat and be satisfied.*

c) Jesus / His salvation

1 *His agony* *(Mark 15:34)*

7 *His humiliation* *(Mark 15:19,31,32)*

15 *His thirst* *(John 19:28)*

16 *His death* *(Mark 15:27)*

18 *His stripping* *(Mark 15:24)*

22 *His proclamation* *(Acts 2:14,36)*

28 *His worship* *(Philippians 2:10)*

31 *His accomplishment* *(John 19:30)*

2) What should I do?

1 *Be real in my prayers*

3 *Remember who I am talking to!*

9 *Acknowledge my dependence on God*

22 *Resolve to declare His name*

25-28 *Acknowledge the worth, kindness, dominion of God*

29-31 *Believe all will acknowledge, God wins!*

# Sharing the Word

## Use

*Hearing the Word*' can be used alone, with one other person, or in a group

## Preparing for a group

Time put in alone beforehand will greatly benefit time spent together.

Work through the stages - LOOK, LEARN, LISTEN, LIVE.

Write down your own questions and answers \*

## A format

If you have 45 mins together, you might like to try dividing it up like this.  
(If longer or in a large group, you can extend the times)

1) Drink, bite to eat, chat	(10 mins)
2) A Bible reading	( 2 mins)
3) A Bible study	
a. Any questions? (Whether answer is known or not!) (Don't answer any, till all questions noted!)	( 2 mins)
b. Any relevant cross references?	( 2 mins)
c. Discussion of answers	(13 mins)
d. Conclusion	
i. A Key verse and Main Point?	
ii. What does it show about God / Jesus?	
iii. What should I do?	
4) Sharing (Trials and joys – family, work, self)	( 5 mins)
5) Prayer	( 1 min)

## Remember!

As we gather round God's Word

- a) Listen to the views of others
- b) Make room for the novice. They can join in too when you start by listing 'Any questions'
- c) Don't let the 'knowledgeable' dominate. Encourage everyone to think for themselves.
- d) Try to include others' especially, 'seekers' in your sharing together.

\* The **process** is explained and practised in a four-hour course, suitable for all, called '**An Introduction to 'Hearing the Word'**'. Email: [office@tpc.org](mailto:office@tpc.org)

## ***“I can read the Bible for myself!”***

To show that the Bible is accessible to all, the Rev Nigel Barge, minister of Torrance Parish Church, has devised a tool called ‘Hearing the Word’. The Manual explains the basic principles of Bible reading, teaches them by means of an interactive course, and practices them on a single passage, Mark 10:35-45, Participants follow in a Workbook: *Hearing the Word - Introduction*, which includes the next six passages in Mark, so they may follow on for themselves.

As the principles apply equally to all, the course will both instruct the novice and refresh the ‘hardened’ Bible student!

Further Study Guides cover various genres of Bible material –  
Narrative, Poetry, Law, Letters, Prophecy etc.  
For the current list of material or to place orders, contact

Hearing the Word,  
Torrance Parish Church Office  
1, School Road, Torrance, GLASGOW, G64 4BZ  
*Tel: 01360 620970 Email: [hearingtheword@tpc.org.uk](mailto:hearingtheword@tpc.org.uk)*  
*Web [www.torranceparishchurch.org.uk](http://www.torranceparishchurch.org.uk)*  
Torrance Parish Church, Scottish Charity #SC016058,  
part of the Church of Scotland