

On Track Map

Topical Lesson: Getting to know the book of Psalms

Elementary

Know Right:	Psalms is a collection of songs responding to God.
Think Right:	"May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, O Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer." Psalm 19:14
Do Right:	I will worship God in all situations.
Feel Right:	I can feel good about worshiping God in all situations.

This lesson is designed to introduce kids to the longest book in the Bible - Psalms. They'll learn some basics about the book, as well as what is contained in its pages and the different types of psalms. Through the Psalms, God's people communicate with Him passionately and expressively, but no matter what they are feeling, the writers always go back to their trust in God and their desire to worship and obey Him.

Option 1: Discover Time: Is it in the Psalms?

Goal: To get students thinking about the variety of topics that are covered in the book of Psalms.

Location: Large open area (large enough for all grades to run around in)

Supplies:

- One large sign with "YES" and one large sign with "NO" displayed on opposite ends of your large open area
- Loud bell or horn (that can be heard throughout the room)
- List of questions (see below)

Instructions for the DT Leader:

1. Gather all students in a huddle to explain the rules of the game:
 - a. Say: Remember that the Bible is one big book made up of many little books. What is the longest book in the Bible? (Psalms) Psalms is a book that expresses many feelings of the writers - good, bad, sad, joyful, and more! We're going to play a game where you'll decide what you think is written in the book of Psalms.
 - b. You (the DT Leader) will quiz students on the book of Psalms. You will ask Yes/No questions, and students will answer by running to the correct sign.
 - c. If students choose the wrong answer, they are eliminated from the round.
 - d. There will be two rounds, each with 10 questions. After each round, the remaining students will earn two Tracker Tickets each. Students who were eliminated from the first round will rejoin the group for the second round.

2. Instruct students to spread out in the open area, and then begin to read each statement below, followed by the question: "Is it in the book of Psalms?"
3. Students will have 10 seconds to make a decision and pick a side of the room. When you sound the horn/ring the bell, students must freeze.
4. Give the answer (yes or no).
5. If students chose the wrong answer, they must sit out for the rest of the round.
6. *Optional: To keep your kids who are "out" engaged, have kids sit in teams based on gender and answer as a team with hands up or hands down and give points to the boys or the girls team. Assign a Shepherd or the Lead Teacher to manage this group of kids.*
7. Continue until 10 questions have been asked, then award Tracker Tickets. Repeat the activity with the remaining 10 questions.

Questions:

Note: Psalm references included for as the leader prepares.

ROUND 1:

1. Worshiping God with all that we have. Is it in the book of Psalms? (Yes; Psalm 86:12)
2. The type of food that God enjoys. Is it in the book of Psalms? (No)
3. The prophet Jonah. Is he mentioned in the book of Psalms? (No)
4. The importance of asking for forgiveness. Is it in the book of Psalms? (Yes; Psalm 25:11)
5. Thanking God. Is it in the book of Psalms? (Yes; Psalm 136:26)
6. Jesus was born in Bethlehem, and His mom's name was Mary. Is it in the book of Psalms? (No)
7. The importance of being patient. Is it in the book of Psalms? (Yes; Psalm 37:7)
8. The sun and the ocean. Is it in the book of Psalms? (Yes; Psalm 93:3, 4)
9. How to deal with being very sad. Is it in the book of Psalms? (Yes; Psalm 34:18)
10. We should encourage others. Is it in the book of Psalms? (Yes; Psalm 10:17)

ROUND 2:

11. The topic of sickness. Is it in the book of Psalms? (Yes; Psalm 41:3-4)
12. The importance of baptism. Is it in the book of Psalms? (No)
13. Joy. Is it in the book of Psalms? (Yes; Psalm 95:1-2)
14. Strength. Is it in the book of Psalms? (Yes; Psalm 118:14)
15. Admiring God because He is the Creator. Is it in the book of Psalms? (Yes; Psalm 146:6)
16. Warnings about too much screen time being bad for your heart and mind. Is it in the book of Psalms? (No)
17. Patience. Is it in the book of Psalms? (Yes; Psalm 27:14)
18. The importance of getting enough rest each night? Is it in the book of Psalms? (No)
19. The history of Abraham and his sons? Is it in the book of Psalms? (No)
20. Obedience. Is it in the book of Psalms? (Yes; Psalm 119:35-36)

Option 2: Discover Time: Worship Art!

Goal: To give students the opportunity to creatively worship God through art.

Location: Open Area or Art Station (large enough for all grades)

Supplies:

- Large roll paper or large sheets of paper
- Art supplies (markers, crayons, paint, etc.)
- Worship music to play in the background as students work

Instructions for the DT Leader:

1. While playing worship music, encourage students to use what they know about God to create a beautiful piece of art that tells or shows others who God is. They can paint or draw a beautiful picture of worship or write words that help them worship.
2. Ideas: Paint something beautiful that God created, draw a place where you love to worship God, write words that remind you of God, or write out a Bible verse that you know.
3. Optional: At the end of the Discover Time activity, invite students to share what they created and why.

Preparation for the Classroom

Pray: Pray that God will help your students begin to understand the book of Psalms and they will have the desire to worship and obey God.

Read: Psalm 19:14, which is the Think Right verse today. It will also benefit you to read some of the other Psalms to refresh your thoughts on the variety of feelings expressed in this book (Psalms 34, 42, and 95).

Know Right: Psalms is a collection of songs responding to God**Lead Teacher's Notes:**

- The book of Psalms reminds us that we worship and serve not only a God who rules over all creation, but who is also interested in being personal with each of us. He commands our obedience as His disciples but doesn't leave us on our own to deal with the complexities of life.
- Psalms is a wonderful collection of songs from people who are coming to God as they are - no cleaning up, no carefully tiptoeing around the words they use, and no "I'm not good enough to come before God."
- Psalms is not mediocre or dull! This book of the Bible shows the wide range of human emotions. When it speaks of joy, it's not just a brief moment of happiness; it's deep, incredible, soul-filling joy. When it speaks of sorrow, it's not just a temporary sadness; it's the deep, longing emptiness of prolonged sorrow. This is your opportunity to make this book of the Bible very personal to each student. Encourage them to obey God wholeheartedly and to express themselves honestly to the One who created them.

Creative Ideas for the Lesson:

1. The following ideas are written into the lesson:
 - a. Three large blocks that you can write on (or write on them in advance: Trustworthy, Powerful, Loving)
 - b. A small treat to provide students, to show that you keep your promises (example in the lesson is a cookie)
 - c. Pictures of God's incredible creation (i.e. the Grand Canyon, mountains, galaxies, etc.)
 - d. Draw a happy face on one side and a sad face on the other side of small, white paper plates (one plate per student). Pass out the plates when you get to the "God wants us to bring our feelings to Him" section of the lesson. After reading each Scripture passage, have students hold up their plate showing the type of feeling that is being conveyed in the passage.
2. Refer to the Feel Right poster throughout the lesson.

Lesson Introduction for the Classroom

Lead Teachers ~ Connecting the DT to the Lesson:

DT Option 1: In today's Discover Time, you guessed what is included in the book of Psalms and what is not included. Today, we are going to discover a lot about Psalms. This book helps us learn that we can come before God, no matter what is happening or how we are feeling, and cry out to Him through songs, words, and actions.

DT Option 2: In today's Discover Time, you used what you know about God to create a beautiful piece of art that tells or shows others who God is. That's one way we can worship God! Today, we are learning about a book in the Bible that is all about worship. The book of Psalms helps us learn that we can come before God, no matter what is happening or how we are feeling, and cry out to Him through songs, words, and actions.

Pray: *Encourage one of your students to lead your class in prayer. This will help them learn to pray in a public setting and develop their spiritual leadership skills.*

Find It: Is Psalms in the Old Testament or the New Testament? (OT) The book of Psalms is right in the middle of your Bible, a little toward the front half. *Demonstrate opening a Bible and how it opens to Psalms. Encourage students to do the same with their Bibles. Challenge students to find the first page and last pages of Psalms, holding all the pages together. This way they can see how many pages of the entire Bible Psalms takes up.* That's a big chunk of the Bible. There are 150 chapters in the book of Psalms - that makes it the longest book in the Bible! Psalms must be important if this much of the Bible is devoted to it!

Timeline: We don't see the book of Psalms on our timeline, because it was written over many years by many different people. We do know that it was written during the Old Testament. *Point to the Old Testament section of the timeline.* We also know that King David either wrote about half of the psalms or someone wrote them in his honor. Do you see King David on the timeline? *Students should point out King David.* But the other half were written by lots of different people - Moses (*point out Moses on the timeline*), David's son Solomon (*point out Solomon on the timeline*), the sons of Korah (a leader among the Israelites), and Asaph (a worship leader assigned by King David). The last psalms were written during the time of Ezra (*point out Ezra on the timeline*). Look how much of the timeline this covers! It took a long time to collect all the songs that are in Psalms.

Introduction to the Bible Lesson:

The word "psalm" actually means a song usually sung along with musical instruments. Songs are written about all kinds of things, and the songs written in Psalms are no different. They are written about many different topics. We don't have the tunes to the songs, but these verses were most likely the lyrics. Each psalm paints a picture with words, so you can relate to what the writer is experiencing. The writers of these songs and poems sometimes felt sad, sometimes angry, sometimes confused, and sometimes happy - but no matter what they felt, they chose to worship and obey God. These songs and poems are made to worship God.

Optional: For older students
The different types of Psalms!

Lead Teacher's note: To help students process the following information, write out the types of psalms (genres) on your whiteboard in advance.

One chapter of Psalms may be celebrating the God who created everything. The next chapter could be about needing forgiveness. And then turn the page, and the next chapter is filled with beautiful words that simply worship God. There are some main categories, though, that the psalms fall into.

- **Thanksgiving.** There are psalms of thanksgiving telling God how thankful the person is for who God is and all that He has created and done.
- **Praise and Worship.** Many of the psalms are written as part of worship, praising God and recognizing His greatness. They point out that God is the one true God and the only one worthy of our worship.
- **Lament.** Now that may be a new word to you. "To lament" means to cry, to express sadness, or to grieve. When you read these psalms, you hear someone's broken heart. The writer invites God to be part of his sadness and help him through it.
- **Forgiveness.** Some of the psalms focus on the writer's need for forgiveness. They state the sin of disobedience against God and ask that He forgive that sin.
- **Help.** So many times, we are in trouble and just don't know what to do. We would obey if we just knew how. We can go to God and ask Him for help in dealing with whatever it is that seems to overtake our lives, and His Word will guide us. Many of the psalms are "please help me God" psalms.

There are some psalms that don't seem to fall in one of these categories, but you'll find that most psalms are about thanksgiving, praise and worship, lament, forgiveness, or help.

Scripture Outline for the Classroom

Establishing the foundation - what we know about God

When we worship God, we are thanking Him for who He is, and we are reminding ourselves of what we know about God. Let's think about what we know about God.

We know that God is trustworthy

First, we know that we can trust God. He is TRUSTWORTHY. What does it mean to be trustworthy? It means that when you say you will do something, you will do it. It means that others can depend on you. That means that if I say I will give you a cookie *(or choose something else you can follow through on – even something crazy the students wouldn't expect you to actually do!)*, I will do it. *Give students the cookie or follow through on whatever promise you made.*

Why do you think God is trustworthy? God is trustworthy because He always does what He promises. He never lies. One promise that God made was to send us a Savior. Did He do that? Yes! He sent Jesus! That is just one promise fulfilled that shows God is trustworthy.

Let's read Psalm 9:10a. This verse teaches us that God is trustworthy.

Read Psalm 9:10a

On a large block, write "TRUSTWORTHY".

We know that God is powerful

Second, we know that God is POWERFUL.

Why do you think God is powerful? We know that God is powerful because the Bible tells us about the amazing, powerful things God does. God created the whole world. Some of the places in our universe are just amazing - they help us remember how powerful God is: the galaxies, the Grand Canyon, giant mountains. *Show students pictures of these places as you talk about them.*

Only our powerful God could create all of these amazing, beautiful places!

Remember when we learned about Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead? That was powerful, too!

Let's read Psalm 68:35. This verse teaches us that God is powerful.

Read Psalm 68:35

On a large block, write "POWERFUL".

We know that God is loving

We also know that God is LOVING. How do you know that God loves you? I know that God is loving because He sent His only Son, Jesus Christ, to save me. John 3:16 tells me this! I also know that God doesn't stay high and far away from me. Remember how we learned about the Holy Spirit a few weeks ago? This means that God is always with me. He is close to me. He hears me. He loves me, no matter what I'm feeling. *Opportunity to share the Gospel using the Wordless Book and give an invitation for salvation.*

Let's read Psalm 103:8. This verse teaches us that God is loving.

Read Psalm 103:8

On a large block, write "LOVING", then stack the three blocks on top of each other.

The psalms are worship songs and poems

We know that God is trustworthy, powerful, and loving. The writers of the psalms knew this about God, too, and they used the things they knew about God to write worship songs and poems together. Let's read a psalm together.

Read Psalm 100.

What did you notice in this psalm that describes things we know about God?

1. It says God is our Creator. (He's powerful!)
2. It says that we belong to God, and He will take care of us like a shepherd takes care of his sheep. (He is trustworthy!)
3. It says God is good, and His love lasts forever. (He is loving!)

God wants us to bring our feelings to Him

Note: If you're using the paper plates, pass them out now and explain the activity.

When you listen to Psalm 100, how does it make you feel? *Have students hold up their plates.* It makes me feel joyful! I feel happy and loved when I remember who God is. It feels good to be joyful, doesn't it? Guess what. God wants you to come to Him when you feel joyful. Why? Because He loves you and wants to share that joy with you!

We don't always feel happy, though, do we? Sometimes we feel confused, or sad, or afraid. There are psalms for those feelings, too.

I'm going to read you a few verses from different psalms for when we feel afraid, sad, or confused.

Read Psalm 23:4; *then have students hold up their plates*

Psalm 23 is a really good psalm to read when you feel afraid. It helps us remember that God is our Shepherd, and He is always with us.

Read Psalm 130:1-2; *then have students hold up their plates*

In this psalm, the writer is crying out to God. He feels sad and is asking God to hear him and be with him.

Read Psalm 121:1-2; *then have students hold up their plates*

If you feel confused, Psalm 121 can help us remember that God is always with us and is ready to help us.

Even though it isn't comfortable to feel sad or afraid or confused, we still sometimes experience these feelings, and God still wants us to come to Him. Why? Because He loves us and wants to comfort us. God always loves us and always hears us. How does that make you feel? *Have students hold up their plates.*

The writers in the Psalms knew this! Each one of the psalms is written by a person expressing how they feel at that moment. It's 150 chapters of people telling God their gut reaction about life. No pretending! They're telling God what's on their mind and in their heart. The God of the Psalms is a personal God who is interested in the things that make us really joyful... *(have students hold up their plates)* and the things that make us cry our hearts out... *(have students hold up their plates)* and the things that make us want to pound our fists in frustration *(have students hold up their plates)*. He is the God we can plead to for help. All of these - joy, sadness, frustration, helplessness - can be pleasing to God, if we react to the feeling by serving Him with total obedience, no matter the situation. Let's read Psalm 19:14.

Read Psalm 19:14; *have students hold up their plates*

Did you hear that? That is someone passionately asking that all that is in his heart would be pleasing to God, during the ups and the downs of life.

When we feel sad or confused *(have students hold up their plates)*, we still choose to obey God because we know that He is with us and that He loves us *(have students hold up their plates)*.

Conclusion:

When we spend time in the book of Psalms, we are reminded that we can always come to God. He always hears us and loves us, no matter how we're feeling. Because we know we can trust Him always, we can obey Him, no matter how we're feeling. Just like the writers of the Psalms, we can trust our good God.

Do Right and Feel Right:

So, the next time you are feeling frustrated, happy, sad, angry, or any other big feeling...

1. Return to your foundation - what do you know about God?
2. Read a psalm. Remember that other people, who loved and obeyed God, also felt the same things as you! The songs and poems that they wrote to God can help us worship God, too!
3. Finally, choose to obey God, because you know He is good, and you can trust Him.

Let's stop and pray, and thank God for always being trustworthy, powerful, and loving.

Close in prayer.

Review Questions: What did you discover today?

1. Is Psalms in the New Testament or the Old Testament? (OT)
2. What is a psalm? (It's a song or poem that worships God)
3. What's the best way to find Psalms when you're opening your Bible? (Go to the middle)
4. Who is one person who wrote worship songs and poems to God? (Moses, King David, King Solomon, etc.)
5. How many chapters are in Psalms? (150)
6. Can you obey God, even when you're angry or sad? Why? (Yes! Because we know that He is good, and we can trust Him)