

**Spring Harvest
Bible Workbook**

WORSHIPPING

**The God of all in all of life
Six studies in David's Psalms**

First published in 2021

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ISBN: 9780281085767
eBook ISBN: 9780281086115

Typeset by Ascent Creative
ascent-creative.co.uk

Project Managed by
Westchester Publishing Services

Printed and bound in the UK by
Ashford Colour Press Ltd, Gosport, Hampshire

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Worship – Learning from David’s Psalms

Worship. When you hear that word, I wonder, what first springs to mind?

For me, it’s singing songs and hymns with fellow believers in a church service, or in a small group. There’s the joy of that, the ease of just being with others who love God. And there’s the strength that comes through worshipping with others – in good times and in tough times. Biblically, worship includes all that – God’s people coming together to sing his praises. But it’s much more. Worship isn’t just singing to the one true God, and it doesn’t just happen at particular times in particular places. Biblically, worship is a way of living.

Paul, the apostle, puts it this way:

Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God – this is your true and proper worship. (Romans 12:1)

Worship is the daily, minute-by-minute offering of all that we are, all that we do, all that we have to God, in grateful, awed recognition of his supreme and infinite value, of his perfect love, his worthiness to be praised, to be loved, to be trusted, to be obeyed in every area of our life.

And one of the places we see this rich understanding of worship is in the psalms of David. Yes, they were no doubt sung in assemblies in the tabernacle and later in the temple but what they reveal is a picture of a believer who seeks God in every context he’s in, who brings all his concerns to him, whose reference point for his whole life is the living God.

The Bible actually tells us more about David’s life than the life of any other person in the Old Testament: from shepherd boy to teenage warrior, royal music therapist to commander, husband to father, fugitive to king and from handsome youngster to dying old man. In the seventy-five psalms ascribed to him, we are given a window into his dynamic relationship with God. In some cases we’re told the


specific situation he's writing about: his son's rebellion (Psalm 3), his adultery with Bathsheba (Psalm 51), his capture in Gath (Psalm 56). In the majority of the others, we can't be sure exactly what was going on his life, but it's clear that they are not theoretical meditations on God's nature. They are personal reflections that come out of his day by day experience of seeking to follow the Lord in a whole host of different and often dangerous circumstances.

I remember the moment that I first really understood how rooted in David's real life his psalms are. I was reading Psalm 144. I don't know how many times I'd read it before but this time David's opening words really hit me:

Praise be to the Lord my rock,
who trains my hands for war,
my fingers for battle.

Suddenly, I realised that David was saying that it was God, the Lord of all, who had trained him to be effective in his job as a soldier. He was worshipping God as his trainer, his coach, in the task God had given him to do – to defend God's people, to bring peace to the land. Somehow, as I'd read his psalms in the past, I'd seen David as some singer-songwriter exploring a whole range of emotions, rather than as a flesh and blood man with a high calling and a life-threatening job. It is obvious. But often in commentaries and in sermons that reality tends to be ignored: enemies, for example, are seen as metaphorical or spiritual or satanic.

Somehow, despite all the references in his psalms to swords and shields and arrows and fortresses, I'd missed the fact that David was often talking about actual swords, actual shields, actual arrows. He wasn't just using these objects as symbols to explore a whole range of emotional challenges, he was writing about his experience as a soldier fighting Philistines, a commander fleeing his own king, a king ruling a nation at war with its neighbours and a father fleeing for his life from his own son. Real life, hard facts, tough challenges. All brought to God.



What can we learn from David's worship of the one true God that will enrich our worship of the one true God?

What might we learn from David's understanding of the character and power of the Lord, from the scope of issues he brings to the Lord and from the way he bares his heart – in joy, in lament, in anger, in confession, in confusion...?

In his grace, God has given us in David an example of someone who sought to live all his life in worshipful response to the unrivalled God – failing sometimes, yes, but nevertheless coming back to the Lord as the one true refuge, the one true source of right perspective, of wisdom for a godly life and of the strength to live it.

May our lives of worship be enriched by exploring David's.

Mark Greene
LICC, 2021

Exploring the Psalms of David

This Bible study is designed to enrich your everyday relationship with God by exploring six of the psalms ascribed to David.

You can work through each session on your own, or one-to-one, or in a small group. And that can be a great way to encourage each other with insights and stories of how God has been at work in your own contexts.

If your church is preaching through Psalms, this study could be a really helpful companion to deepen your understanding of the psalms and their implications for Monday to Saturday life.

Sing these songs, and they will renew you from head to toe, from heart to mind. Pray these poems, and they will sustain you on the long, hard but exhilarating road of Christian discipleship.

Tom Wright
Finding God in the Psalms: Sing, Pray, Live (SPCK, 2014)

I have been accustomed to call this book, I think not inappropriately, *Anatomy of all the Parts of the Soul*; for there is not an emotion of which anyone can be conscious that is not here represented as in a mirror.

John Calvin
Preface to *Commentary on the Psalms* (1557)

Possible Session Plan

Every group has its own way of doing things, so this is only a suggestion.

▣ Pray to Open

▣ Read the “First Thoughts” Section

▣ Read the Psalm

▣ Work through the Questions

They cover the session’s main theme, what the Bible passage says and means, going deeper and living out the passage. Many questions don’t have “right” or “wrong” answers. It’s important and helpful to hear insights from others. Naturally, group leaders may want to pick out the most pertinent questions for their group to discuss.

▣ Responding in Prayer and Worship

Don’t feel bound by the prayer and hymn/song prompts if your study has taken a different direction. Be flexible in responding to each other’s needs.

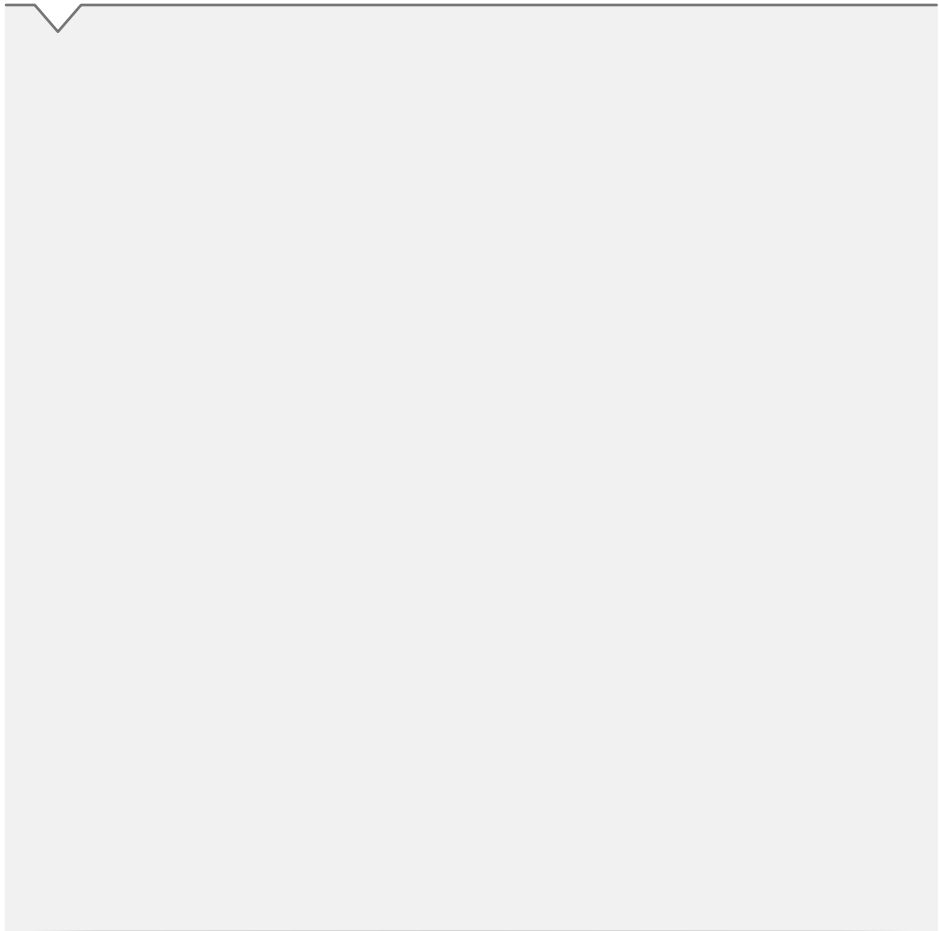
You’ll see that we’ve included three brief feature pieces on questions or issues related to the background and study of the psalms. Together with some real-life stories – lived examples of how God’s word can be worked out in daily life – they offer insights to deepen our understanding of the psalms, the God they point to and the implications for our own lives.

We’ve changed the names of the people in the stories and some details to preserve their anonymity.

Participating in the Study

Before each session you might like to read the passage with one of the features and any explanation boxes or stories that accompany the session. After you meet, you might like to pursue some of the “Going Deeper” questions on your own. Use this space to jot down one or two things that strike you.

As you journey through the studies, come back to these notes and reflect on what God has been teaching you.



My Frontline

Your frontline is an everyday place where you live, work, study or play and where you're likely to connect with people who aren't Christians. Before you start the study, reflect on your frontline using these questions.

Come back to this reflection throughout the sessions, praying and trusting that God will direct your ways through his word.

Where is your frontline?

What do you do there?

Who's there?

What's going on at the moment

What are you excited about or struggling with?

What opportunities for making an impact for Christ do you see in and through what you do and who you connect with?

Worshipping... the God of All – Psalm 145

Antony Billington

First Thoughts

It's perhaps easy to imagine that God is great, but is he also good? It's also easy to think that only parts of life – the so-called "spiritual" bits – get his attention and interest, but not the rest of life. But David knows that God is good as well as great. He also knows that God's loving concern for his people and his world is as wide as creation itself.

Psalm 145 is the last of the psalms "of David" in the book and the only one identified as "a psalm of praise". The repetition of the words "praise" and "for ever and ever" in its opening and closing verses prepare us for the crescendo of praise in Psalms 146–150.

What begins as David's personal praise ("I will exalt you", 145:1) moves to embrace others ("your faithful people extol you", 145:10) and then expands to the whole of creation ("Let every creature praise his holy name", 145:21). Worship of God is not limited to David, or even to Israel, but extends over the entire world. Throughout the psalm, announcements of praise alternate with descriptions of God's character, focusing especially on his everlasting rule (145:1, 11–13). God reigns in a way no king, David included, ever could. The repeated use of the word "all" reinforces God's comprehensive rule over all things for all people.

Psalm 145 allows us to be caught up in the greatness and goodness of God. To pray its words is to declare our faith in the one whose loving oversight embraces all things.

Read: Psalm 145

A psalm of praise. Of David.

- ¹I will exalt you, my God the King;
I will praise your name for ever and ever.
- ²Every day I will praise you
and extol your name for ever and ever.
- ³Great is the Lord and most worthy of praise;
his greatness no one can fathom.
- ⁴One generation commends your works to another;
they tell of your mighty acts.
- ⁵They speak of the glorious splendour of your majesty –
and I will meditate on your wonderful works.
- ⁶They tell of the power of your awesome works –
and I will proclaim your great deeds.
- ⁷They celebrate your abundant goodness
and joyfully sing of your righteousness.
- ⁸The Lord is gracious and compassionate,
slow to anger and rich in love.
- ⁹The Lord is good to all;
he has compassion on all he has made.
- ¹⁰All your works praise you, Lord;
your faithful people extol you.
- ¹¹They tell of the glory of your kingdom
and speak of your might,
- ¹²so that all people may know of your mighty acts
and the glorious splendour of your kingdom.
- ¹³Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom,
and your dominion endures through all generations.
- The Lord is trustworthy in all he promises
and faithful in all he does.
- ¹⁴The Lord upholds all who fall
and lifts up all who are bowed down.

¹⁵The eyes of all look to you,
and you give them their food at the proper time.

¹⁶You open your hand
and satisfy the desires of every living thing.

¹⁷The Lord is righteous in all his ways
and faithful in all he does.

¹⁸The Lord is near to all who call on him,
to all who call on him in truth.

¹⁹He fulfils the desires of those who fear him;
he hears their cry and saves them.

²⁰The Lord watches over all who love him,
but all the wicked he will destroy.

²¹My mouth will speak in praise of the Lord.
Let every creature praise his holy name
for ever and ever.

Focus on the Theme

1. Think about the significance of giving praise in everyday life – in the family or in school or at work. Share a time when you couldn't help but praise something (a delicious meal or a great book or a job done well). Why do we praise?

What Does the Bible Say?

2. Based on its beginning (145:1–2), middle (145:10–13) and end (145:21), how would you summarise the overall theme of this psalm?

In what ways does David – himself a king – acknowledge God as being an even greater king?

3. If you are studying with others, you could divide into three smaller groups to discuss the following questions and report back:

What characteristics of God are praised in verses 3–9?

What actions are attributed to God in verses 14–16?

What promises of God are described in verses 17–20?

4. David alternates between declaring the reasons for praising God and then praising God. See if you can spot this pattern in verses 1–9. What does this tell us about worship?

5. Glance through verses 9–21 and count how many times the word “all” appears. What does the repetition of this word say about the God David praises?

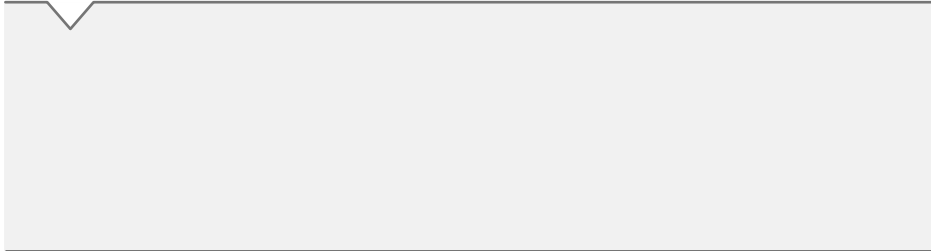
Psalm 145 and Acrostic Psalms

An acrostic psalm is one in which the first letter of each line begins with a consecutive letter of the Hebrew alphabet, from *aleph* (the first) to *taw* (the last), the equivalent of “from A to Z” in English. The most well-known example is Psalm 119, where each line in the first stanza of eight verses begins with the first letter of the alphabet, the next eight lines begin with the second letter and so on – all the way through the alphabet.

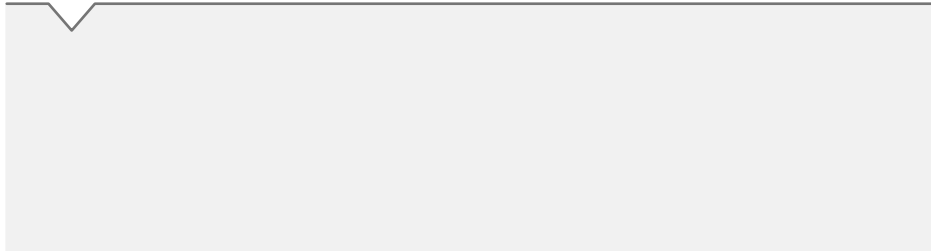
Several acrostic psalms are attributed to David (see 9, 10, 25, 34 and 37), including Psalm 145. The format shows that the psalm has been carefully and artistically composed, and may also have been an aid to the memory. Perhaps, more significantly, it was a way of covering a topic from A to Z, suggesting completeness and comprehensiveness. In the case of Psalm 145, the acrostic form underlines the message of the fullness of God’s reign over all things, and of the praise to be offered to him in return.

Going Deeper

6. The description of God in verse 8 borrows from Exodus 34:6–7, which is drawn on elsewhere by David (Psalm 86:5, 15; 103:8, and see also Nehemiah 9:17; Jeremiah 32:18; Daniel 9:4; Jonah 4:2 and Nahum 1:3). Why do David and other biblical writers keep returning to this declaration of God’s character to Moses?



7. To what extent can we see echoes of Psalm 145 in the prayer Jesus taught his disciples to pray in Matthew 6:9–13?



Living It Out

8. The range of verbs used in Psalm 145:4–7 suggest that effective discipling of others involves testifying about God’s deeds, as well as teaching about his character. How can the praise of God’s greatness and goodness be passed on to others in your context?

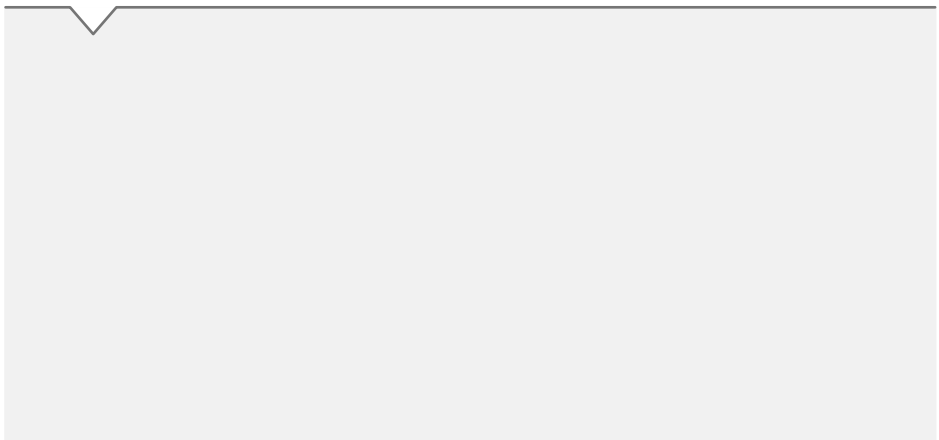
How might this happen within your church community?

How might this happen in your everyday life?



9. We might expect that such a great God would be unconcerned about us, but how do verses 17–20 show that this is not the case?

How might praise of the sort expressed in Psalm 145 strengthen our trust in God’s greatness and goodness in our everyday lives?



10. Psalm 145 celebrates the God over all things: his greatness (145:3–6), goodness (145:7), love (145:8–9), kingdom (145:10–13) and faithfulness (145:14–20). Which is most applicable to the specific issues you are facing this week? And why?



Responding in Prayer and Song

Read the words of *Sweet is the Memory of Thy Grace* by Isaac Watts (1674–1748) or listen to *Greater Than We Can Imagine* by Mark Altrogge, both of which are based on Psalm 145.

Drawing on the psalm, praise God for who he is and for what he has done in your lives, in your church and for his ongoing oversight of all things in the world.

A version of Psalm 145 was found among the Dead Sea Scrolls in which each verse is followed by the refrain: “Blessed be the Lord, and blessed be his name for ever and ever.” An optional prayer activity would be to conclude the meeting with one person reading the psalm and everyone else responding with the refrain after each verse.

