



CHRISTIANITY WITHOUT THE RELIGION

BIBLE SURVEY

THE UN-DEVOTIONAL

PSALMS 61-89

Week 1

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Before You Begin Your Journey...

Today we call it “journaling” or “writing therapy.” But in ancient Israel, psalms were written as prayers, almost like personal letters to God. These psalms are not always pleasant, because the psalmists were struggling to reconcile the circumstances they were experiencing with what they believed to be true about God. The psalms they wrote are evidence that they didn’t always reach a satisfactory conclusion. Psalmists were sometimes angry or disappointed with God—emotions we too experience.

The Psalms may be read on many levels, to suit many needs and experiences. Some give no easy answers. The Psalms often reveal a conflicted, “hang-in-there” type of faith that shows up in dark times. The Psalms range from the heights to the depths of a believer’s relationship with God. That’s why the Psalms can offer spiritual insight for every person and every worship need.

However, many people regard the book of Psalms as a medicine cabinet, as if it were chock full of pick-me-up goodies and daily vitamins that make them feel good. This misunderstanding might be expressed as a maxim: *a psalm a day keeps the devil away.*

Indeed, many psalms, especially the *laments*, can be antidotes for depression, sadness or defeat. But other psalms can stir up negative emotions without presenting any practical solutions. To read such psalms as a bedtime tonic may fill your mind with troubling thoughts.


Take Psalm 69, for example, an *imprecatory* psalm—full of curses for Israel’s enemies. In day 9 in this reading plan, you will find some clues to help you understand how Jesus and Paul understood this psalm.

Another dark and gloomy lament is Psalm 88 (day 28 in our reading plan). This psalm sounds more like a funeral dirge than a message of encouragement.

Yet God included both positive and negative expressions of

human emotion in the Psalms for continuing generations to remember.

The Psalms help us understand that the people of the Bible were not so different from the people of today. We hope that this volume of *The CWR Bible Survey* will help you see how relevant this portion of the Bible is to your daily life.



Greg Albrecht

Greg Albrecht
President, Plain Truth Ministries

How to Use the CWR Bible Survey...

1—Read and study at your own pace. This is a devotional. It is designed to help you consider and ponder the great truths of God’s written revelation. It is designed to help you worship and come to know God. We plan to cover the entire Bible in 43 volumes, and while that sounds like a long time, don’t be in a hurry. Take your time! Even though each volume is divided into bite-size daily lessons, you may want to take two days on each “daily” lesson.

2—We suggest you set aside a special time for the *CWR Bible Survey* every day. We recommend allowing 30-45 minutes, but even if you can only spare 15 minutes, try to make it part of your regular schedule. You will find that the *CWR Bible Survey* will be an invaluable resource for facing your daily challenges .

3—You will need a good Bible. This might be an excellent time for you to consider purchasing a study Bible. Plain Truth Ministries has reviewed many of the study Bibles that are available, and in cooperation with Thomas Nelson and Zondervan, we are pleased to be able to offer two superb study Bibles that will be an excellent resource and help to you. Please see the back pages of this book for more details.

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

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

- **Opening Up to the Word** —a section designed to help you open your mind to the teaching God has inspired.
- **Digging Into the Word**—this section will encourage you to get your nose into the Bible and think deeply about what it says.
- **Living Out the Word**—here you will be challenged to consider the practical implications for your life. How does this passage help you live?

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

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

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

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

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

PSALMS 61-89

The Hymnbook
of Israel
and the Church,
Part III

Introduction to Psalms 61-89

Authorship: We are used to thinking of most of the Psalms as written personally by David. That may be true of only a few psalms in this volume. Other psalms in this volume are attributed to various authors. Some are peasants and commoners, some kings and prophets, some professional musicians and some amateurs. They fluctuate wildly in their moods, but all struggle to embrace God.

Two psalm writers who proved to be “one-hit wonders” are Heman the Ezrahite (Ps 88) and Ethan the Ezrahite (Ps 89).

This section of the Psalms also includes several entries from the professional music guilds of ancient Israel. Psalms 73–83 are of the Asaph musical guild, and Psalms 84–85 and 87–88 are of the Korah guild.

Asaph was the chief composer among Temple musicians during the reigns of David and Solomon (1Ch 15:17–16:37). However, some events appearing in Asaph’s songs could not have been from this period (10th century B.C.), such as the songs (Ps 74–76 and 79–80) that lament the destruction of the Temple (around 722 and 597 B.C.) or celebrate Israel’s return from exile in Babylon (beginning 538 B.C.). Scholars believe some psalms “of Asaph” were produced by the guild named after him or his descendants.

A similar explanation may apply to the psalms “of David” and “of Korah” that appear to be from a later period.

Types of Psalms: In Psalms 61-89, we find representatives of most of the 12 functional categories of psalms that we discussed in our introduction to Psalms 1-30.

Lament—Psalms 61, 64, 69, 71, 74, 77, 79, 80, 83, 85 and 86, 88.

Thanksgiving—65, 67 and 75.

Hymns of praise—Psalm 66.

Royal or messianic—Psalm 68, 72.

Enthronement—none in this volume.

Penitential—none in this volume.

Redemptive—Psalm 62, 78.

Songs of ascent or pilgrimage—none in this volume.

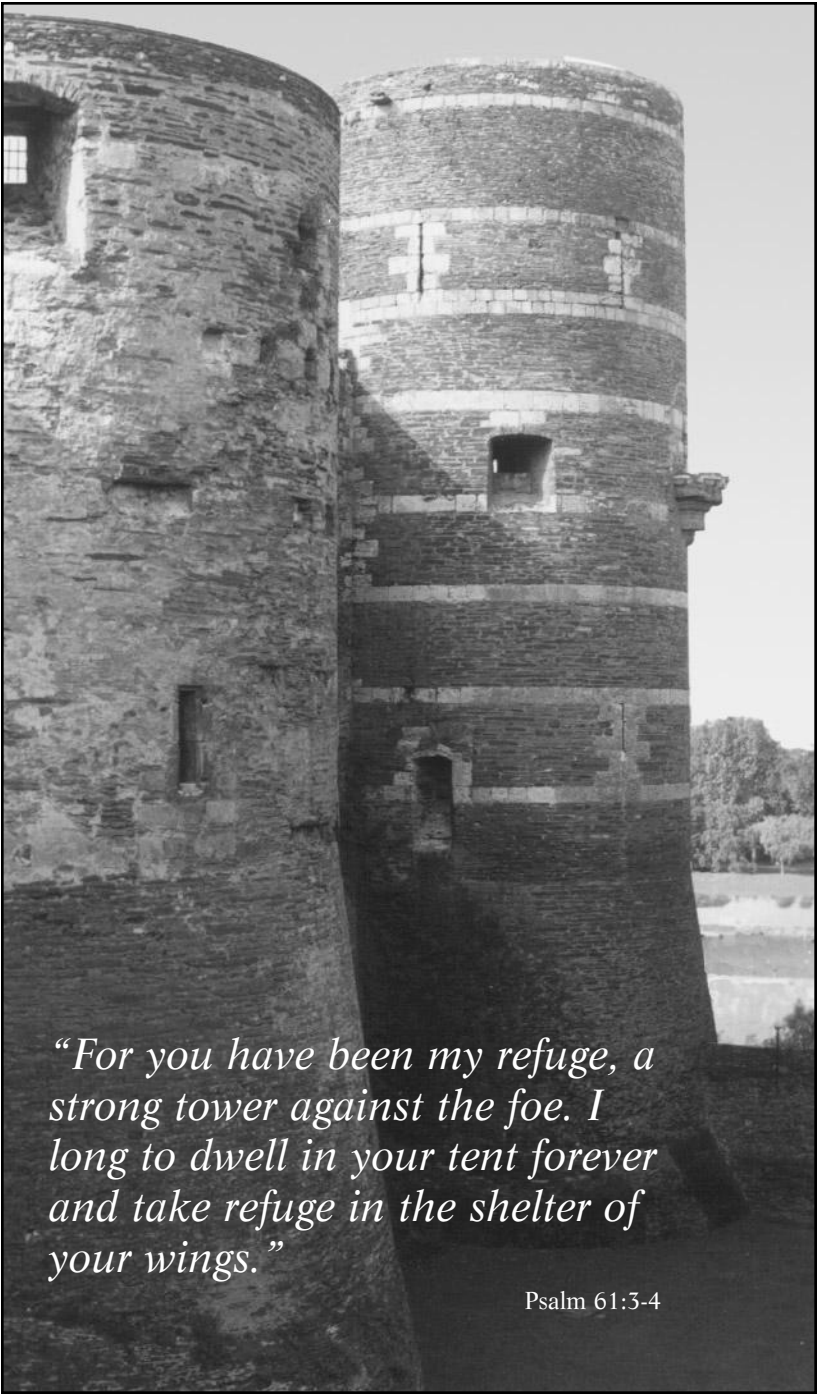
Songs of Zion—Psalms 76, 84 and 87.

Liturgies of covenant renewal—Psalm 81, 89.

Instructional or wisdom—Psalm 73.

Songs of trust—Psalm 63, 70, 82.

In the introduction to Psalms 1-30 there is a general outline of the five books of the greater book of Psalms. You may notice that this present volume concludes with Psalm 89—the traditional end of book III.

A black and white photograph of two ancient stone towers. The towers are cylindrical and built from rough-hewn stone. They feature several arched windows and decorative horizontal bands of smoother stone. The towers are set against a clear sky, with a landscape of trees and a field visible in the background to the right.

“For you have been my refuge, a strong tower against the foe. I long to dwell in your tent forever and take refuge in the shelter of your wings.”

Psalm 61:3-4

Call for Help

DAY 1

Psalm 61

Whom could you call, day or night, for help? Have you ever called that person? Were you far from home at the time?

1. Where was David calling from (v. 2)? (a) “long-distance,” (b) ends of the earth, (c) under a rock.
 2. What was David feeling? (a) disconnected, (b) distant, (c) afraid, (d) full of praise, (e) all of the above.
 3. What did David want (vs. 4-7)? (a) protective shelter, (b) eternal security, (c) long life.
-

1. Is your sense of God’s presence limited by geography or difficult circumstances? How do you know God is with you at all times?
 2. When have you needed God to be a strong tower, a safe tent or a protective shelter (vs. 3-4)?
 3. What do you need God to be for you today?
-

David wrote this psalm (also Psalm 62 and 63) during a hasty, forced escape from his pursuers, either during Absalom’s rebellion (2Sa 15–18) or one of Saul’s hunting expeditions.

OPENING

up to the Word

DIGGING

into the Word

LIVING

out the Word

WINDOW

on the Word

Rest and Reward

Psalm 62

OPENING
up to the Word

What stress or pressure are you feeling at work or home? Is there any let-up in sight? What would a “break” look like in your situation?

DIGGING
into the Word

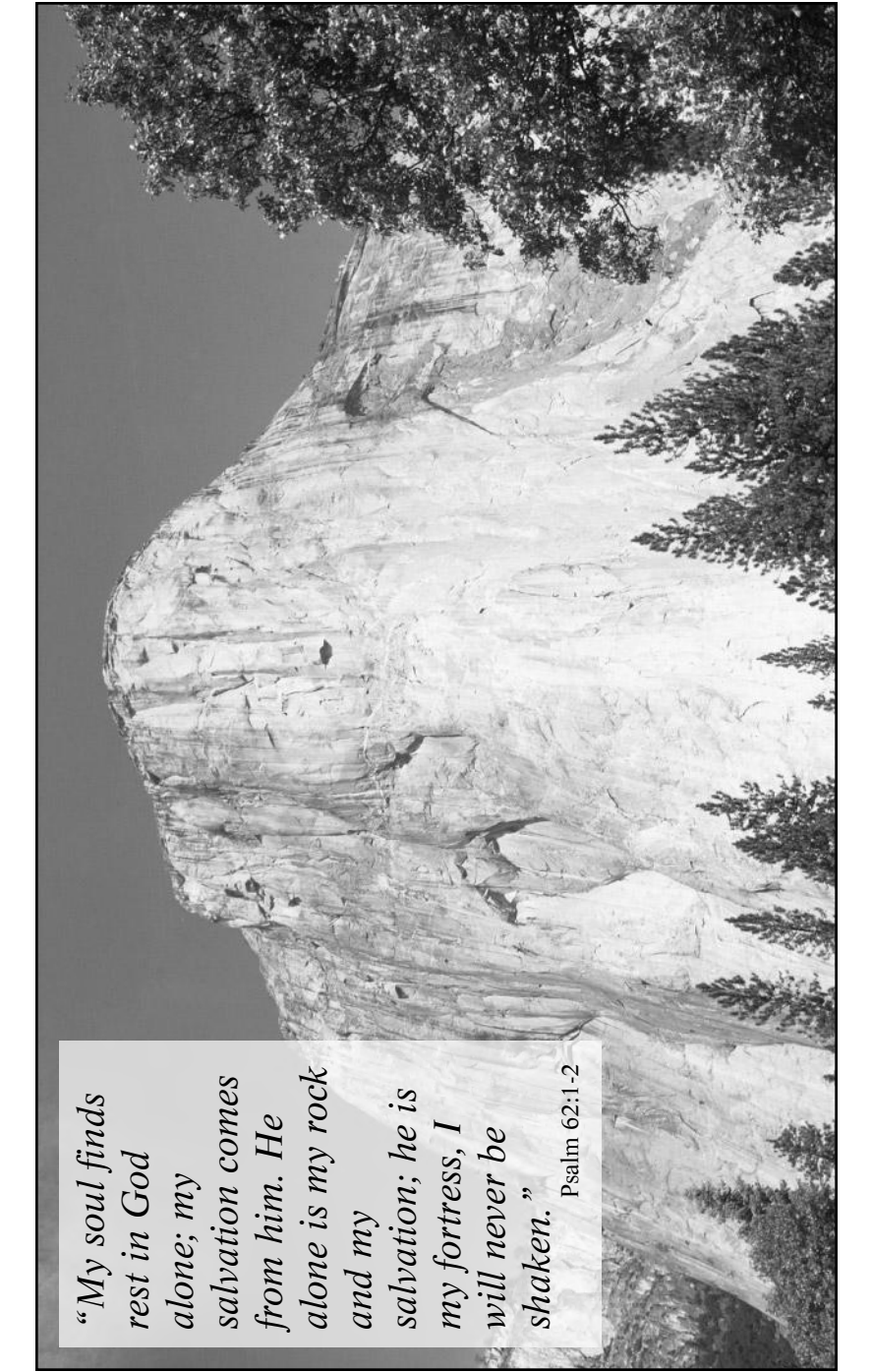
1. How did David get rest from his personal stress and pressure (vs. 1, 5)?
2. How did David describe God (vs. 2, 6)? (a) a silent presence, (b) a mighty fortress, (c) a victim’s rescuer, (d) a safe place, (e) a trustworthy bank, (f) a powerful yet loving judge.
3. On what basis does God weigh the rich and poor alike (v. 12)?
4. What did David trust God for (v. 8)? (a) strength, (b) power, (c) riches, (d) relief, (e) love, (f) his destiny. How so?

LIVING
out the Word

1. David urges you, the reader, to “pour out your heart” before God, as he did. What hurt, difficulty, fear or worry is in your heart, ready for you to pour out?
2. “In God we trust”—so say some coins and David. What will you trust God for today?

WINDOW
on the Word

See “Window on the Word” on Psalm 61. The words of author Francois Fenelon (1651-1715) shed light on this Psalm. “Silence promotes the presence of God, prevents many harsh and proud words, and suppresses many dangers in the way of ridiculing or harshly judging our neighbors.... If you are faithful in keeping silence when it is not necessary to speak, God will preserve you from evil when it is right for you to talk.”



*“My soul finds
rest in God
alone; my
salvation comes
from him. He
alone is my rock
and my
salvation; he is
my fortress, I
will never be
shaken.”*

Psalms 62:1-2

*“O God, you are my God,
earnestly I seek you; my soul
thirsts for you, my body longs
for you, in a dry and weary
land where there is no water.”*

Psalm 63:1



“I’m Thirsty!”

Psalm 63

What quenches your thirst on a really hot day? What liquid refreshments do you stock up on more than any other?

1. King David was fleeing from his enemies, hiding in the barren Judean desert. What was he thirsting for above all else (v. 1)?

2. When did David sense God to be more real—in good times, or bad (v. 1)? In feast, or famine (v. 5)? With others, or all alone? In the Temple (v. 2) or at his bedside (v. 6)? During late night vigils or in the light of day?

3. With which of the five senses did David connect God?

1. Note the ways or means that David kept his spirits up, connected to God (vs. 4-7). When you’re feeling lonely, down in the dumps, how do you remain connected with God?

2. How do you think Madison Avenue might compose a marketing jingle or ad slogan that touts the thirst-quenching, soul-satisfying nature of God? What comparisons to advertisements for popular products come to your mind?

3. What are some of the ways you can enjoy more of God’s presence, provision and protection?

See “Window on the Word” note on Psalm 61.

DAY 3

OPENING

up to the Word

DIGGING

into the Word

LIVING

out the Word

WINDOW

on the Word

Complaint Department

Psalm 64

OPENING
up to the Word

What is the “number one complaint” where you work or live? Who are usually the accusers and the accused?

DIGGING
into the Word

1. What was on David’s complaint list (vs. 3-6)? (a) threats, (b) enemies, (c) evil, (d) sharp tongues. Does anything surprise you about David’s list of complaints?

2. Who seemed to be conspiring against David (vs. 1-2)? (a) imagined enemies, (b) physical threats, (c) spiritual forces, (d) anyone and everyone.

3. What did David want from God (v. 8)? (a) comfort, (b) protection, (c) revenge, (d) more ammo.

4. What is the point of God’s judgment here (vs. 9-10)? (a) believers are vindicated, (b) the wicked get what they deserve, (c) God is all-knowing, (d) God is glorified, (e) trust in God for vindication rather than taking things into your own hands.

LIVING
out the Word

1. Is it ever wrong to complain to God? Why?

2. When do you complain to God? What for?

3. What has God done about your complaints?

WINDOW
on the Word

*Psalm 64 is a **lament**. Personal laments such as this one are the most common kind of psalm. Communal laments (such as Psalm 74 and 79) are less common and usually deal with problems threatening the nation of Israel. Elements of the personal lament may include (a) a calling upon God, (b) a complaint, (c) a request that God hear and respond, (d) a reason that God should respond, (e) an expression of confidence that God will hear and respond. All of these elements are present in this psalm, although not in this order.*

*“Hear me, O God, as I
voice my complaint;
protect my life from the
threat of the enemy.
Hide me from the
conspiracy of the
wicked, from that noisy
crowd of evildoers.”*

Psalm 64:1-2



Artwork by C.W.Taylor

Standing Ovation

Psalm 65

OPENING
up to the Word

What sports team, career achievement or family milestone has recently brought you to your feet with wild applause?

DIGGING
into the Word

1. For what blessings, general and specific, did David praise God—with a standing ovation, as it were (vs. 2-3, 5, 9)?

2. What events come to mind as David pictures God as the Creator? As a gardener? As the weatherman? As the seat of mercy? As Redeemer?

3. Though denied direct access to God in his holy Temple (see note below on v. 4), what recourse did most Israelites have to taste and see the God of hope and harvest?

LIVING
out the Word

1. With what good things has God filled your life?

2. Vows, made and completed, were an important way for the Israelites to show their appreciation to God (v. 1). How do you show your thankfulness to God?

WINDOW
on the Word

*Though it was optional to take a **vow** under Old Testament law (Dt 23:21-23), once taken, the vow was binding. The vow spoken of in verse 1 was to pay tribute to God for answered prayer. However, Jesus tells us (Mt 5:33-37) that taking a vow is not necessary. Jesus tells us that a simple “yes” or “no” will suffice for Christians. Under the old covenant, access to God in his **courts** (v. 4) was the privilege of a few Temple priests chosen from the tribe of Levi (Nu 3:5-51).*

“You care for the land and water it; you enrich it abundantly. The streams of God are filled with water to provide the people with grain, for so you have ordained it.”

Psalm 65:9



PSALMS 61 – 89 AT A GLANCE

Psalm	Author	Summary
61	David	God is our rock and our strong tower against any enemy.
62	David	True rest and hope come from God.
63	David	Written while in the desert. He constantly seeks God.
64	David	God will listen when we call. We can trust him for protection.
65	David	God's love reaches out to us and to all the earth.
66	Anonymous	God is awesome and does not withhold his love from us.
67	Anonymous	Let all the people sing for God's graciousness and God will bless us.
68	David	God is strong and all his enemies are under his feet.
69	David	God hears our cries for help when things around us are swallowing us up.
70	David	Quick request for help from God.
71	Anonymous	God's faithfulness over a lifetime.
72	David	God is asked to bless Solomon with great riches and be a king who protects the weak.
73	Asaph	Confused about the world but glad to be near God.
74	Asaph	God is asked to remember his people and deliver them.
75	Asaph	God is the only judge.
76	Asaph	God is great and is the only one to fear.
77	Asaph	A sleepless night makes the psalmist reflect on God and what God has done for Israel.
78	Asaph	The past and present are compared.
79	Asaph	A plea to God for deliverance.
80	Asaph	God is asked to restore his people so they can be saved from their enemies.
81	Asaph	Singing for joy to God after being rescued.
82	Asaph	Death will be the consequence to all those who act like little gods and defy God.
83	Asaph	God is asked to destroy Israel's enemies.
84	Sons of Korah	God's house brings comfort to an empty soul.
85	Sons of Korah	God is asked to restore Israel from what they had done.
86	David	A prayer to God, for a heart totally devoted to Him.
87	Sons of Korah	A psalm exalting Zion.
88	Sons of Korah	A cry for help from all the darkness of life.
89	Ethan	Written about the promise given to David. Probably written after the Babylonian invasion.

Psalm 66

Can you recall the last generous gift, good deed, or special favor that was done for you? How did you show your gratitude—or do you still owe a thank-you?

1. What did God do that made the psalmist want to shout for joy (vs. 5-7)?
2. Which awesome deed was unique in the history of Israel (vs. 6)?
3. Note the importance of vows (vs. 13-15; see “Window on the Word” for day 5). Today what do we offer that is equivalent to rams, bulls or goats?
(a) giving money, (b) giving God your heart, (c) performing a “required” religious ritual (d) attending a “required” religious observance, (e) under the new covenant there is no equivalence.
4. Does God listen to the prayers of “sinners” (v. 18)? Why or why not?

When has God brought you safely through “fire and water” (v. 12). In other words, what trials has God used to shape your character? Have you ever thanked him for that? There’s no time like the present.

*Psalm 66 is a **thanksgiving psalm**. Elements often found in these psalms include (a) an introduction, (b) a description or narrative of the events leading to thanksgiving, (c) other elements, such as the mention of an offering, or invitation to others to join in thanksgiving.*

OPENING

up to the Word

DIGGING

into the Word

LIVING

out the Word

WINDOW

on the Word

Blessed to Be a Blessing

Psalm 67

OPENING
up to the Word

What family or pastoral benediction can you remember from your household or church tradition?

DIGGING
into the Word

1. Why does Israel ask God to shine on them and bless them (v. 2)? (a) they're greedy, (b) so others will see God's power and goodness, (c) for God's honor and praise.
 2. For what purpose does God bless Israel or any nation (v. 7)?
 3. What vision of the Messiah do you see in this psalm (see note below)?
-

LIVING
out the Word

1. When you picture God's face, do you see him smiling or frowning?
 2. What is this psalm inviting you to do? (a) gaze upon God's face, (b) praise him in song, (c) rejoice in all good gifts from God, (d) make God known to others.
 3. How and why does God bless you? What blessing from God are you passing along, and to whom?
-

WINDOW
on the Word

*If this **blessing** (v. 1) sounds familiar, it is. The often-recited priestly benediction of Numbers 6:22-27 shaped this popular Hebrew blessing. Also, compare Genesis 12:2-3, Isaiah 66:18-23, and Matthew 28:18-20, to see how Jesus Christ is the ultimate fulfillment through whom all benefit from this prophetic benediction.*

“May the peoples praise you, O God; may all the peoples praise you. May the nations be glad and sing for joy, for you rule the peoples justly and guide the nations of the earth. May the peoples praise you, O God; may all the peoples praise you.”

Psalm 67:3-5

