



Songs of the Spirit

STUDIES IN THE BOOK OF PSALMS

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SONGS OF THE SPIRIT

The Psalms are 150 songs written for worship, from every kind of emotion and situation, to express every experience in relationship with God. John Calvin called the book "the anatomy of all the parts of the soul... for not an affection will any one find in himself, an image of which is not reflected in this mirror. Nay, all the griefs, sorrows, fears, misgivings, hopes, cares, anxieties... the Holy Spirit has here pictured." So in whatever we're going through, the Psalms give us words to reflect what's happening in our spirits, and to express those things in prayer before God. As another church father, Athanasius, said: "Whatever your particular need or trouble, from the Psalms you can select a form of words to fit it, so that you... learn the way to remedy your ill."

But more than just giving voice to our experience before God; the Psalms give us the voice of Christ. In a profound sense, Christ spoke, sung, embodied and lived these words. There's every reason to believe that Jesus would've sung all the Psalms constantly throughout his life, so that he would have known them all by heart; it's the book of the Bible that he quoted more than any other.

“

Our hope in this series is that these songs will give your life a voice before God, and will help you meet with Christ at a level that you've never done before.

So when we sing and pray the words of the Psalms, we're not only expressing our hearts before God, but these words are renewing Christ's image in us. Because the Psalms are more about Jesus Christ than they are about us, their deepest meaning only makes sense when we read them and immerse ourselves in them as the songs of Christ, ultimately fulfilled in his life, death, resurrection and ascension.

Our hope and prayer is that this series will give all of your life a voice before God, and will also help you meet with Christ at a level that you've never done before.

Christian Standard Bible (CSB) is used in these studies.
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The prayers for each Psalm are all from taken from Tim and Kathy Keller's book *My Rock, My Refuge*.

WEEK 1
THE WAY OF CHRIST
Psalm 1

“

He is like a tree planted
beside flowing streams
that bears its fruit in
its season and whose
leaf does not wither.



Big idea: This Psalm is the gateway to all the Psalms. It shows us two, clear ways to live, leading us to life in Christ.

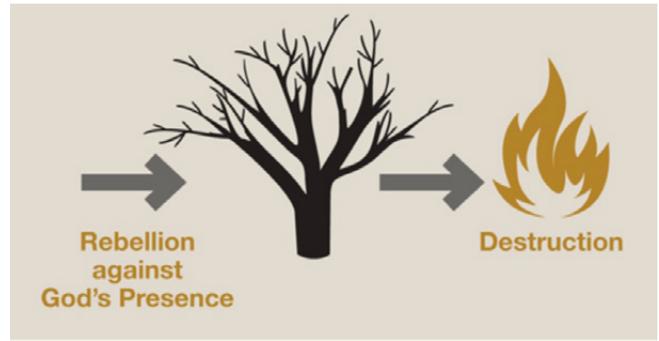
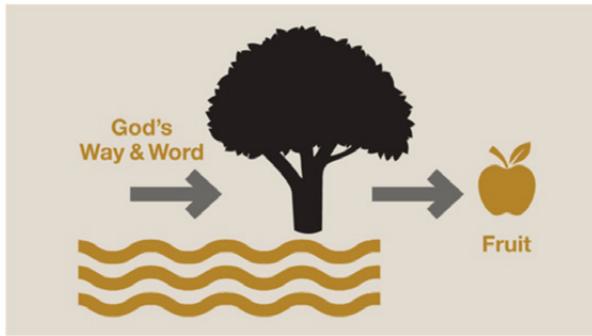
Your spirit

Was there anything from the talk that struck you?

In what ways do you identify (or not identify) with this Psalm?

How does this Psalm speak of your life before God?

What can you learn from this Psalm to grow in your relationship with Christ?



"According to Psalm 1, by delighting in God's presence through his way and his words, health flows into our system." Mark Sayers

God's Spirit

How did Christ fulfill the words of this Psalm?

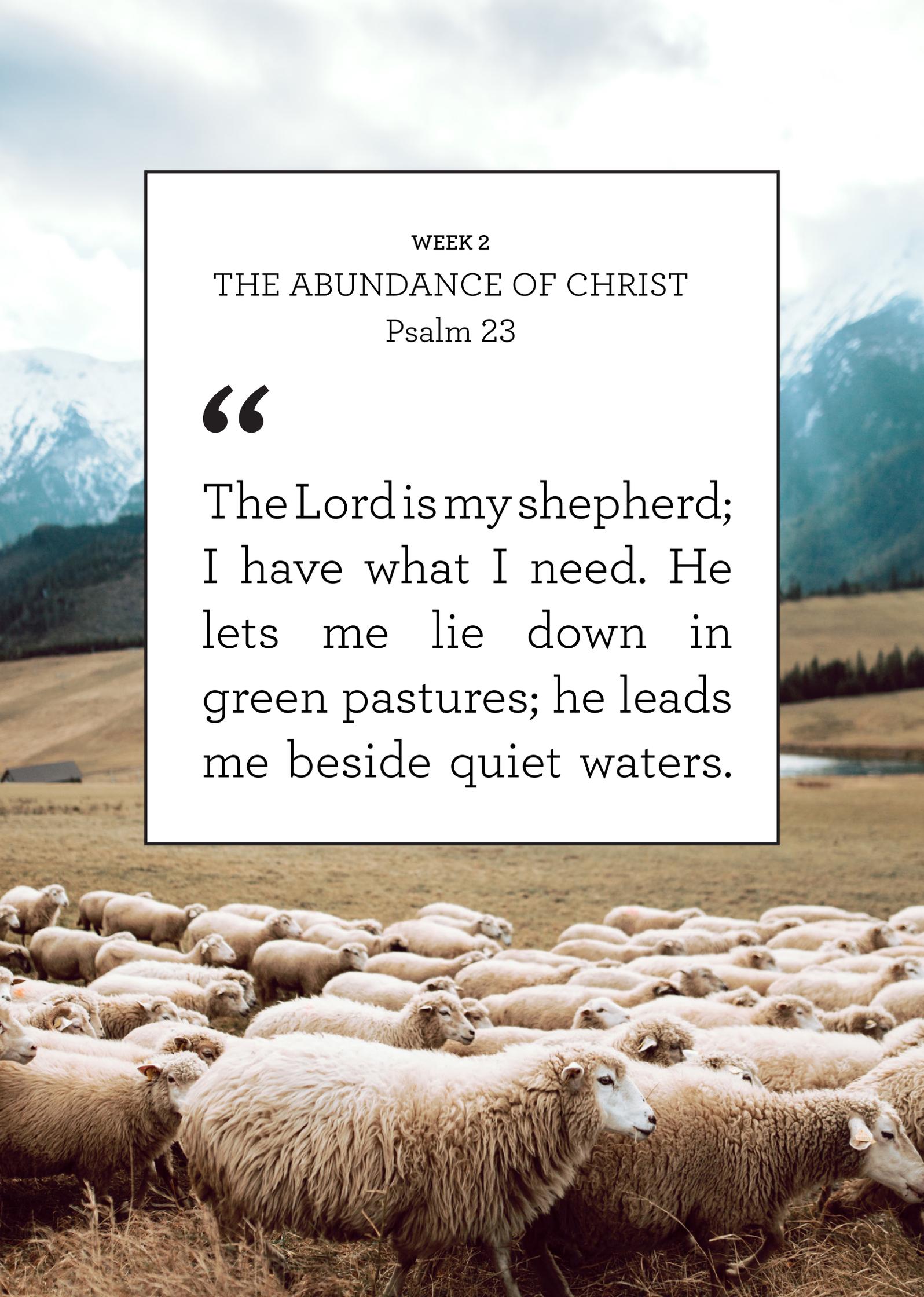
How will this help you own, sing and pray this Psalm in Christ?

What's one way that you could act differently this week because of this Psalm?

Your prayer

Spend some time sharing and praying for one another in light of this Psalm.

Lord of the Word, don't let us be seduced by the world --either naively going with the crowd or becoming hardened cynics. Help us meditate on your Word to the point of delight. Give us stability and contentment regardless of our circumstances. How we need that! Amen.

A large flock of sheep is gathered in a field. In the background, there are mountains, some with snow, under a cloudy sky. The sheep are the central focus of the image, filling the foreground and middle ground.

WEEK 2

THE ABUNDANCE OF CHRIST

Psalm 23

“

The Lord is my shepherd;
I have what I need. He
lets me lie down in
green pastures; he leads
me beside quiet waters.

Big idea: This song shows us the life of abundance that Christ leads us into.

Your spirit

Was there anything from the talk that struck you?

In what ways do you identify (or not identify) with this Psalm?

How does this Psalm speak of your life before God?

What can you learn from this Psalm to grow in your relationship with Christ?

Anti-Psalm 23, David Powlison

*I'm on my own. No one looks out for me or protects me.
I experience a continual sense of need. Nothing's quite right.
I'm always restless. I'm easily frustrated and often disappointed.
It's a jungle — I feel overwhelmed. It's a desert — I'm thirsty.
My soul feels broken, twisted, and stuck. I can't fix myself.
I stumble down some dark paths.
Still, I insist: I want to do what I want, when I want, how I want.
But life's confusing. Why don't things ever really work out?
I'm haunted by emptiness and futility — shadows of death.
I fear the big hurt and final loss.
Death is waiting for me at the end of every road, but I'd rather not think about that. I spend my life protecting myself. Bad things can happen.
I find no lasting comfort. I'm alone ... facing everything that could hurt me.
Are my friends really friends? Other people use me for their own ends. I can't really trust anyone. No one has my back.
No one is really for me — except me. And I'm so much all about ME, sometimes it's sickening. I belong to no one except myself. My cup is never quite full enough. I'm left empty.
Disappointment follows me all the days of my life. Will I just be obliterated into nothingness? Will I be alone forever, homeless, free-falling into void?
Sartre said, "Hell is other people."
I have to add, "Hell is also myself."
It's a living death, and then I die.*

Can you relate to any of these words? Perhaps more than the real Psalm?

God's Spirit

How did Christ fulfill the words of this Psalm?

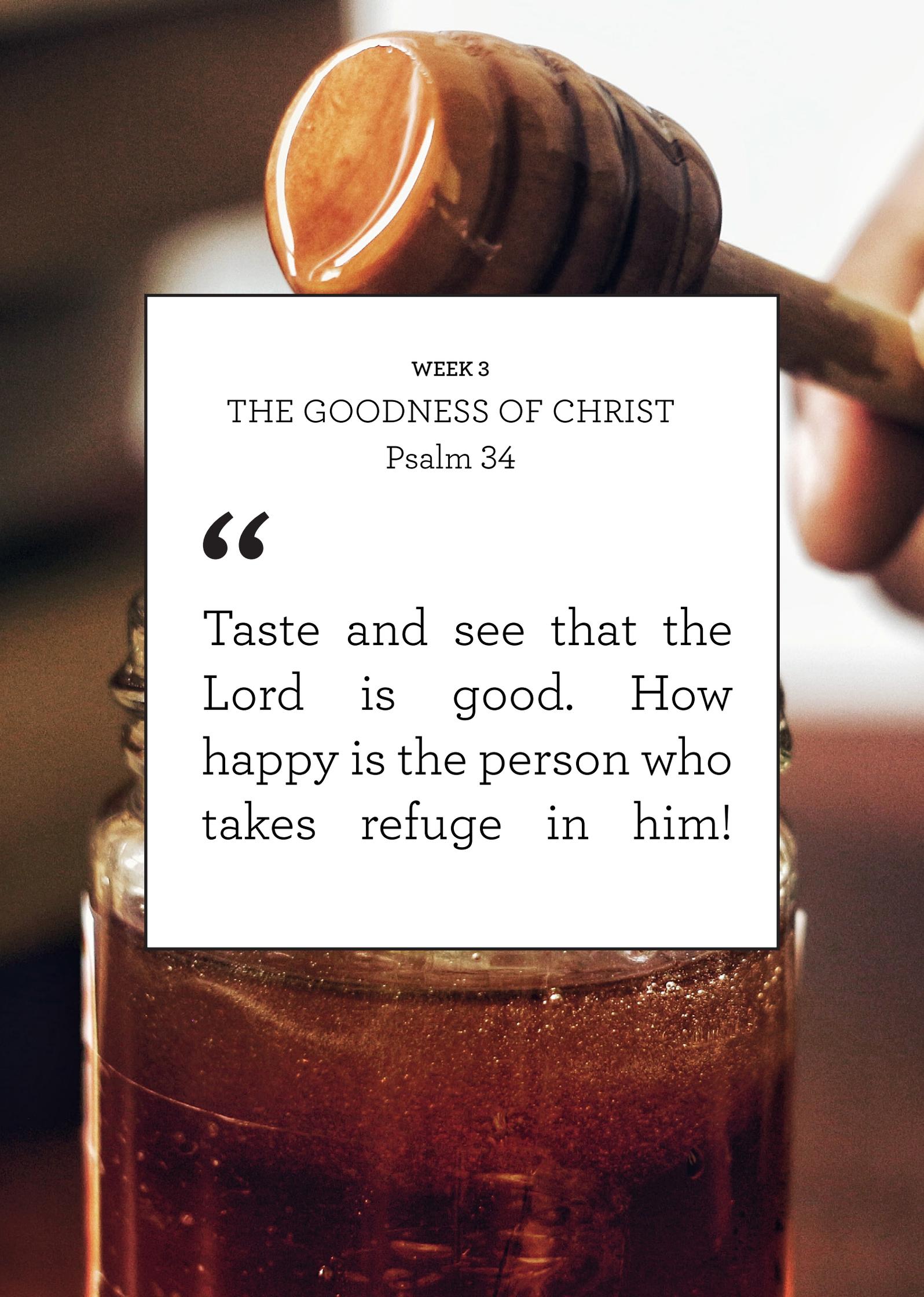
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What's one way that you could act differently this week because of this Psalm?

Your prayer

Spend some time sharing and praying for one another in light of this Psalm.

Lord, if we fed on your love, grace and truth, we would not be in any want. In this life we will never attain that, yet you are always with us, and someday you will lead us to our true country, the home we've been longing for all our lives. Help us rest in that. Amen.

A close-up photograph of a wooden mallet with a smooth, rounded head, resting on a wooden surface. In the foreground, a glass filled with a golden beer is visible, with condensation on the glass. The background is softly blurred, showing a person's hand holding the mallet.

WEEK 3
THE GOODNESS OF CHRIST
Psalm 34

“

Taste and see that the
Lord is good. How
happy is the person who
takes refuge in him!

Big idea: This song shows us how contagious and delighted our worship of Christ can be.

Your spirit

Was there anything from the talk that struck you?

In what ways do you identify (or not identify) with this Psalm?

How does this Psalm speak of your life before God?

What can you learn from this Psalm to grow in your relationship with Christ?

"There is a twofold knowledge of good of which God has made the mind of man capable. The first, that which is merely notional ... And the other is, that which consists in the sense of the heart; as when the heart is sensible of pleasure and delight. In the former is exercised merely...the understanding...Thus there is a difference between having an opinion, that God is holy and gracious, and having a sense of the loveliness and beauty of that holiness and grace. There is a difference between having a rational judgment that honey is sweet and having a sense of its sweetness. A man may have the former that knows not how honey tastes; but a man cannot have the latter unless he has an idea of the taste of honey in his mind."

Jonathan Edwards

God's Spirit

How did Christ fulfill the words of this Psalm?

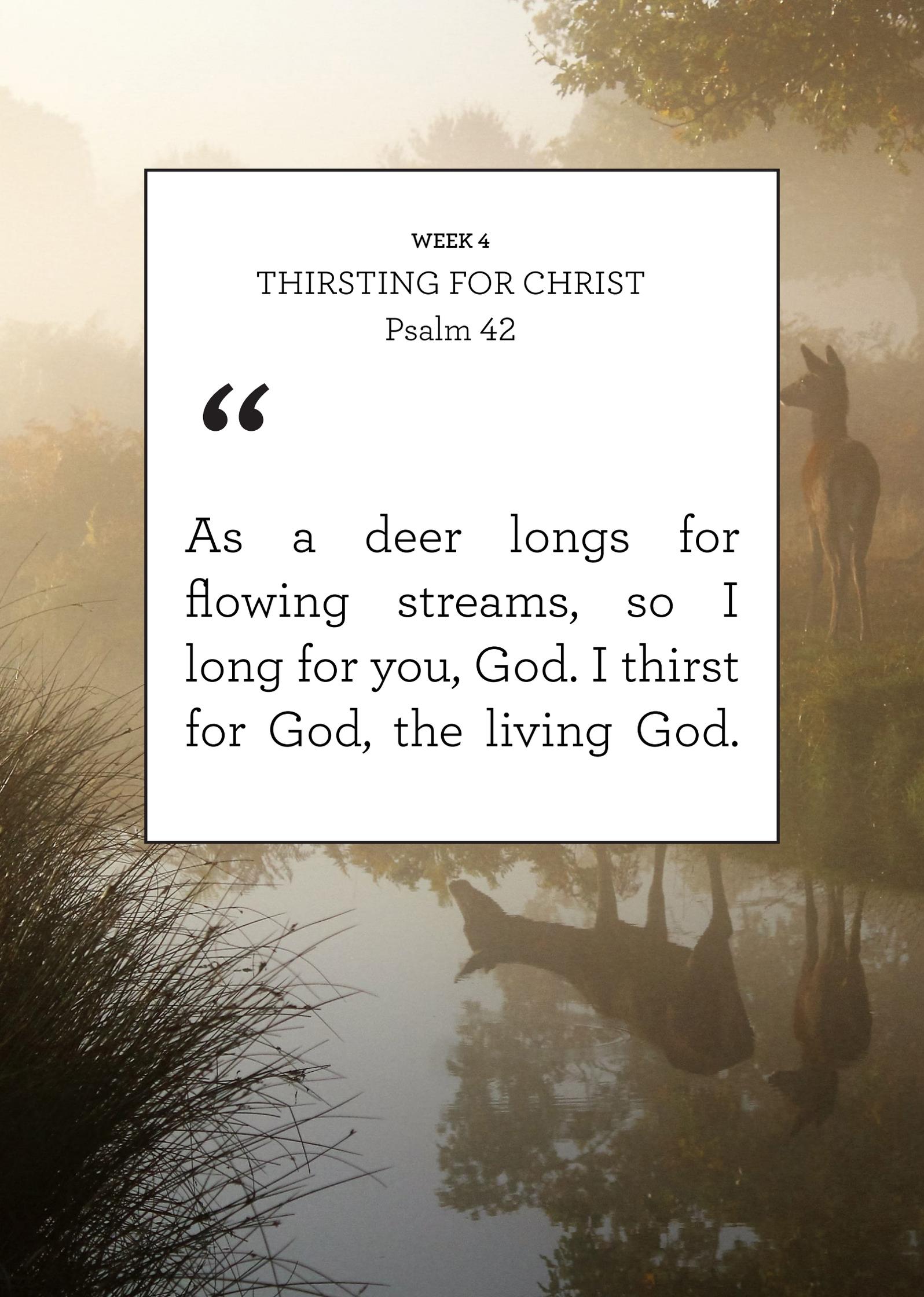
How will this help you own, sing and pray this Psalm in Christ?

What's one way that you could act differently this week because of this Psalm?

Your prayer

Spend some time sharing and praying for one another in light of this Psalm.

Father, if we want to love life, we have to love you--and loving you means doing your will with gladness. Shine your face on us, and let us know your love. Teach us how to look to you and seek you until we know the radiance of your joy. Amen.



WEEK 4
THIRSTING FOR CHRIST
Psalm 42

“

As a deer longs for flowing streams, so I long for you, God. I thirst for God, the living God.

Big idea: This is a song of spiritual dryness, where the Psalmist reminds his soul of the Gospel, even when he feels none of its joy.

Your spirit

Was there anything from the talk that struck you?

In what ways do you identify (or not identify) with this Psalm?

How does this Psalm speak of your life before God?

What can you learn from this Psalm to grow in your relationship with Christ?

"The main trouble in this whole matter of spiritual depression in a sense is this, that we allow our self to talk to us instead of talking to our self. Am I just trying to be deliberately paradoxical? Far from it. This is the very essence of wisdom in this matter. Have you realized that most of your unhappiness in life is due to the fact that you are listening to yourself instead of talking to yourself? Take those thoughts that come to you the moment you wake up in the morning. You have not originated them, but they start talking to you, they bring back the problem of yesterday, etc. Somebody is talking. Who is talking to you? Your self is talking to you. Now this man's treatment [in Psalm 42] was this; instead of allowing this self to talk to him, he starts talking to himself, 'Why art thou cast down, O my soul?' he asks. His soul had been repressing him, crushing him. So he stands up and says: 'Self, listen for a moment, I will speak to you'.

The main art in the matter of spiritual living is to know how to handle yourself. You have to take yourself in hand, you have to address yourself, preach to yourself, question yourself. You must say to your soul: 'Why art thou cast down'—what business have you to be disquieted? You must turn on yourself, upbraid yourself, exhort yourself, and say to yourself: 'Hope thou in God'. And then you must go on to remind yourself of God, who God is, and what God is and what God has done, and what God has pledged Himself to do. Then having done that, end on this great note: defy yourself, and defy other people, and defy the devil and the whole world, and say with this man: 'I shall yet praise Him for the help of His countenance, who is also the health of my countenance and my God'."

Martyn Lloyd-Jones

What do you think of this quote?

God's Spirit

How did Christ fulfill the words of this Psalm?

How will this help you own, sing and pray this Psalm in Christ?

What's one way that you could act differently this week because of this Psalm?

Your prayer

Spend some time sharing and praying for one another in light of this Psalm.

Lord, we praise you for being not just a remote force, but a living, personal God who can be known. We need your presence and love to soften our hard hearts, strengthen our fainting hearts, and to humble our hard hearts. Teach us to say to our hearts: "Put your hope in God!" Amen.

WEEK 5
WORSHIP IN CHRIST
Psalms 145-150

“

My mouth will declare
the Lord's praise; let
every living thing
bless his holy name
forever and ever.

Big idea: These songs show us that after all things, all creation will praise Christ for all eternity.

Your spirit

Was there anything from the talk that struck you?

In what ways do you identify (or not identify) with this Psalm?

How does this Psalm speak of your life before God?

What can you learn from this Psalm to grow in your relationship with Christ?

"The Psalm offers as motivation for praise God's strength and the abundance of his greatness (150:2). The Old Testament singer of this Psalm would think of God's creation and acts of redemption, most notably the exodus. The reader, after the coming of Christ, reflects preeminently on the demonstration of God's strength and greatness in his victory over sin and death in the crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus. Read from a Christian perspective, Psalm 150 calls us, who rejoice in the midst of suffering, to an exuberant celebration of God's work in Christ. We can also look forward to the day when we will sing with all of God's people through the ages in the New Jerusalem when God will wipe away every tear from our eyes (Revelation 21:4)."

Tremper Longman

God's Spirit

How did Christ fulfill the words of this Psalm?

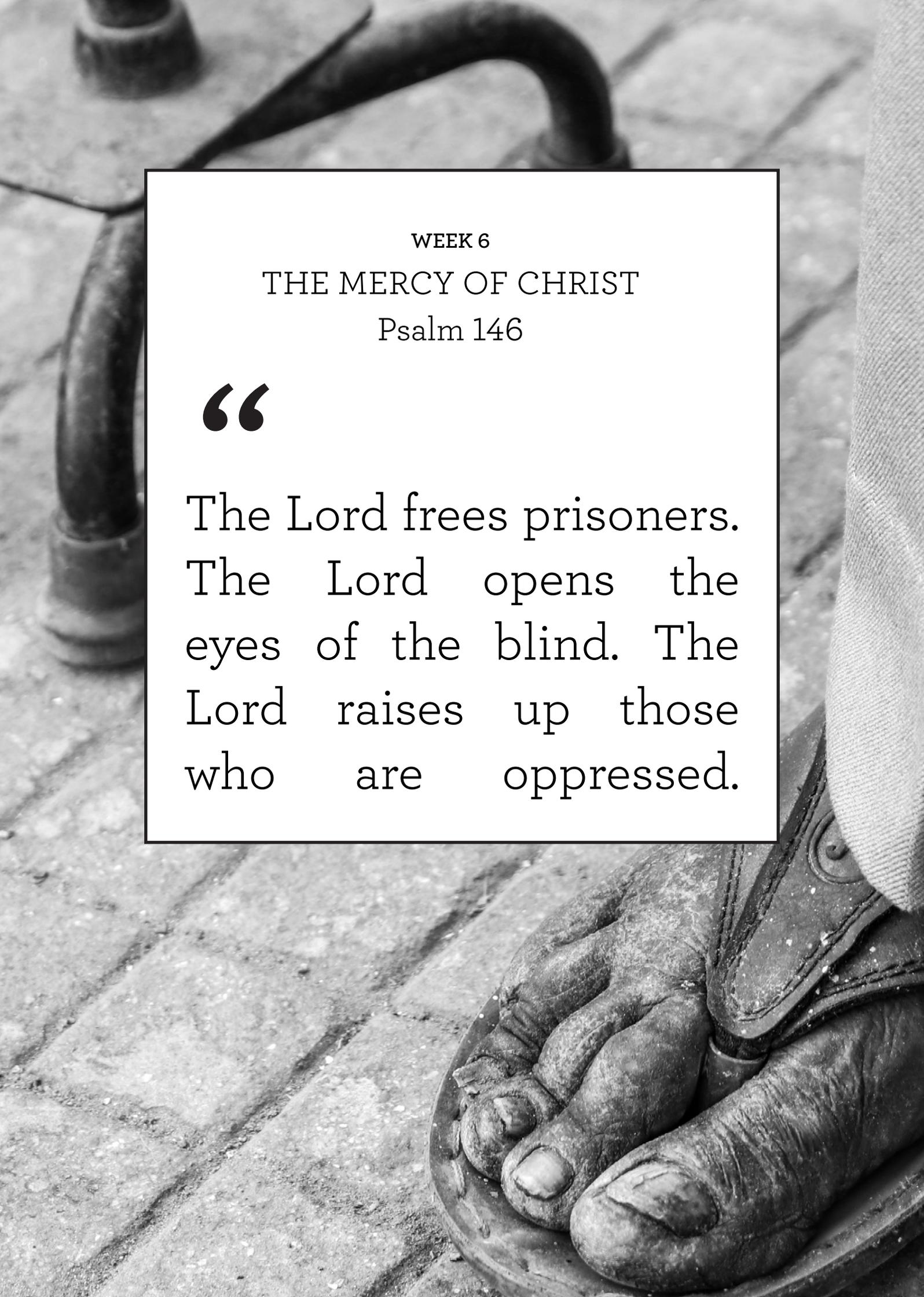
How will this help you own, sing and pray this Psalm in Christ?

What's one way that you could act differently this week because of this Psalm?

Your prayer

Spend some time sharing and praying for one another in light of this Psalm.

Lord, when we try to praise you, we can sense that our souls are out of tune. So please tune our hearts to sing your grace, by the truth of your Word, and by the moving of your Spirit in our hearts. Amen.



WEEK 6

THE MERCY OF CHRIST

Psalm 146

“

The Lord frees prisoners.
The Lord opens the
eyes of the blind. The
Lord raises up those
who are oppressed.

Big idea: Our God is praiseworthy because of his justice and mercy to the weak.

Your spirit

Was there anything from the talk that struck you?

In what ways do you identify (or not identify) with this Psalm?

How does this Psalm speak of your life before God?

What can you learn from this Psalm to grow in your relationship with Christ?

"The final five psalms are all praise and joy. This teaches us that the Psalms are a miniature of our story as a whole, which will end in unbroken blessing and delight. It also teaches us that all true prayer pursued far enough becomes praise. It may take a long time or a lifetime, but all prayer that engages God and the world as they truly are will eventually end in praise. This particular psalm praises God because he guarantees justice. He cares for the poor, hungry, prisoner, physically impaired, soul weary, immigrant, and single parent (verses 7-9) He cared so much that he became a helpless baby born to poor parents. Praise the Lord!"

Tim and Kathy Keller

God's Spirit

How did Christ fulfill the words of this Psalm?

How will this help you own, sing and pray this Psalm in Christ?

What's one way that you could act differently this week because of this Psalm?

Your prayer

Spend some time sharing and praying for one another in light of this Psalm.

Lord, we thank you that you cared so much for us that you became a vulnerable mortal and died to satisfy the demands of justice against sin. We praise you for your unspeakable gift. Amen.

WEEK 7
FORGIVENESS IN CHRIST
Psalm 103

“

For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his faithful love toward those who fear him.

Big idea: This is a song overflowing with God's blessings, the greatest being our forgiveness in Christ.

Your spirit

Was there anything from the talk that struck you?

In what ways do you identify (or not identify) with this Psalm?

How does this Psalm speak of your life before God?

What can you learn from this Psalm to grow in your relationship with Christ?

"It is difficult to imagine a lovelier psalm than Psalm 103. When our children were growing up, the price they 'paid' for their first leather-bound Bibles was memorizing Psalm 103. Across the centuries, countless believers have turned to these lines to find their spirits lifted, a renewed commitment to praise and gratitude, and incentive to prayer, a restoration of a God-centered worldview. This psalm could easily claim our meditations for the rest of the month, for the rest of the year."

Don Carson

Do you feel the same as you read Psalm 103?

God's Spirit

How did Christ fulfill the words of this Psalm?

How will this help you own, sing and pray this Psalm in Christ?

What's one way that you could act differently this week because of this Psalm?

Your prayer

Spend some time sharing and praying for one another in light of this Psalm.

Lord, when we are not near to you, we feel alone in the world. But when we praise you the most, we can hear your joy in the birds in the morning and in the rain on the water. Lord, we want to be part of this music; we want to sing our parts, thankful for all that you've given to us and promised to us in Christ. Amen.

WEEK 8

THE MISSION OF CHRIST

Psalm 96

“

Sing a new song to the Lord; let the whole earth sing to the Lord. Sing to the Lord, bless his name; proclaim his salvation from day to day.

Big idea: This Psalm is a song of longing for all nations to worship Christ.

Your spirit

Was there anything from the talk that struck you?

In what ways do you identify (or not identify) with this Psalm?

How does this Psalm speak of your life before God?

What can you learn from this Psalm to grow in your relationship with Christ?

"Missions is not the ultimate goal of the Church. Worship is. Missions exists because worship doesn't. Worship is ultimate, not missions, because God is ultimate, not man. When this age is over, and the countless millions of the redeemed fall on their faces before the throne of God, missions will be no more. It is a temporary necessity. But worship abides forever.

Worship, therefore, is the fuel and goal of missions. It's the goal of missions because in missions we simply aim to bring the nations into the white hot enjoyment of God's glory. The goal of missions is the gladness of the peoples in the greatness of God."

John Piper

What do you think of this quote? Does it help you understand Psalm 96?

God's Spirit

How did Christ fulfill the words of this Psalm?

How will this help you own, sing and pray this Psalm in Christ?

What's one way that you could act differently this week because of this Psalm?

Your prayer

Spend some time sharing and praying for one another in light of this Psalm.

Lord, fill us with the daily joy and hope that comes from our desire to see you face to face on that final day. Grow our understanding of your grace until it rids us of our self-consciousness, lethargy and pessimism that keep us silent about all you've done. Amen.



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