

# Talk It Over 45: Bible Study Edition

Teaching Series: *God's Playlist*  
Message: *Help! I'm in Trouble Again* — Todd Petkau  
Passage: Psalm 4  
Date: May 4-5, 2019

## How to use Talk It Over

This version of *Talk It Over* is designed for groups whose primary focus is studying the Word of God. There is lots of depth in information and questions about the principle passage of the weekend message. This study is designed to be done in 30 to 60 minutes.

## The Main Idea

The Psalms are the hymn book, the chorus book, the playlist of the church. More than just a book to be read, the Psalms are a set of prayers for everyday life.

## Warm Up Questions (choose 2 or 3)

**Q1: What is your favourite kind of music?**

**Q2: Do you play an instrument? Do you ever use it in personal worship and prayer times?**

**Q3: As you consider reading the Psalms until the end of May, what thoughts come to mind or what impressions do you have of reading this part of the Bible?**

## Dig a Little Deeper

The Psalms were the hymn book of the Jews. Like modern poetry, they were not designed primarily as teaching tools but instead to express emotion to God. This is either current emotion due to past or current circumstances or a hope for the future.

The Psalms can be divided roughly into three categories: hymns, laments, and thanksgiving.

In hymns we are **oriented** toward God in ideal circumstances, that is, without problems identified. Some examples are Psalms 29, 47, 96, 98, and 147-150.

In laments we call out to God in times of trouble. We could say that these are cries of **disorientation** such as, "God, where are you in my trouble?" Some examples are Psalms 3, 13, 22, and 77. The category of lament also includes a subcategory called imprecations. In these we cry out for our enemies to be punished for

what they have done. These Psalms tend to be the most troubling for modern Christians as imprecations often include calls for vengeance and gruesome violence.

In thanksgiving Psalms we are **reoriented** toward God and we praise him that he has brought us out of our troubles. Examples are Psalms 18 and 30.

Psalms can also be divided into corporate and individual. That is, expressing the feelings and desires of a person or of the people of God as a whole. You will see, as you read them, which are individual and which are corporate.

In this cycle of orientation, disorientation, and reorientation we find the breadth of human experiences and emotions. For the most part, these Psalms were not written to teach us information but, instead, they are a guidebook to prayer.

In their original contexts the Psalms were occasional writings, that is, the authors wrote them because of a specific circumstance, eg., David crying out to God because he is being pursued by enemies who want to kill him. However, they were collected together and became the cornerstone of Jewish—later Christian—worship.

While all Scripture is designed to teach us, it is important to note that we can get into trouble when we ask poems and songs provide us with theology and doctrine, they are not designed for that purpose and so we abuse them if we ask them to teach us these things. Instead, the Psalms are cries to God. They are true in that they express the real feelings and experiences of the human beings that wrote them and of us, as we see our lives reflected in them. However, we must be careful about treating them as a how-to manual on theology as they use literary devices, metaphors, and examples rather than being plain in their meaning.

*Read Psalm 4*

**Q1: What kind of a psalm is this: hymn, lament, or worship?**

**Q2: Without any context for the Psalm, that is, without knowing why the writer wrote it, what can you tell about the experience that he was going through when this Psalm was written?**

**Q3: Is there hope expressed in this Psalm? If so, what is the nature of that hope, that is, why does he have hope at all?**

Laments rarely express just distress, fear, or anger. Most of them have an element of praise or worship.

**Q4: What elements of praise and worship do you see in this Psalm?**

Think of a time when you might have prayed a prayer like Psalm 4 to God.

**Q5: How would you describe that circumstance? In what way does the content of this Psalm express your thoughts and feelings toward God and your situation?**

## Next Steps

Because the Psalms are not designed to teach theology, but instead, to guide us into prayer, they do not need to be read in a particular order. It is convenient for us to read them based on the numbers that have been assigned but it is most useful to discover those Psalms which speak to your circumstance and to read them out as prayers to God. As Todd said in his message, they encourage us to talk to God boldly, without holding back our worship, our love, our anger, or our disappointment, either with circumstance or with God himself.

The questions in this study are really assignments to help you with using the Psalms in your prayer time with God.

**Assignment 1: As you read through the first 31 Psalms this month, make note of those which are Individual and keep a list of what kind of Psalms they are (hymns, laments, thanksgiving).**

**Assignment 2: As you pray during the day, occasionally substitute a Psalm for one of your regular prayers. Try reading the Psalm aloud to God as you pray it.**

*Pray together that you would approach God boldly with your worship, with your fears, with your anger, and your disappointment, knowing that he hears and accepts the deepest cries of your heart.*

## Reading Coming Up

Riverwood has embarked on a quest together: to become intimate with Scripture—and with the Good News story that started In the Garden of Eden and continues to this day—by **reading** Scripture. This quest will be 1000 days long so if you miss a day you can catch up and if you start late you can just keep going from where everyone else is. The reading list is available on the Riverwood app but you can also get the monthly bookmark at any of the Welcome Centres in our various worshipping communities. It is recommended that you read from a modern Bible translation. If you do not have a Bible and cannot afford to buy one, stop by the Welcome Centre in your worshipping community and they can help you get one.

### **Here are the readings for the coming week:**

Monday May 6, 2019: Psalm 6

Tuesday May 7, 2019: Psalm 7

Wednesday May 8, 2019: Psalm 8

Thursday May 9, 2019: Psalm 9

Friday May 10, 2019: Psalm 10

Saturday May 11, 2019: Psalm 11

Sunday May 12, 2019: Psalm 12