

COURTNEY REISSIG



STUDY GUIDE

FOR INDIVIDUALS AND SMALL GROUPS



## INTRODUCTION

### HOW I LEARNED TO FEEL (OR, MEDITATIONS IN A HOSPITAL BED)

1. What is your relationship with your feelings? Do you consider yourself to be someone who knows what you feel or someone who struggles to identify your feelings—or both?
2. How well do you know the psalms? Have you spent time in them before this book? Why, or why not?
3. If God is the one who created us to feel (and he is), what do your feelings—or lack of feelings—teach you about him?
4. In what ways do you need your feelings to be shaped by God?



## CHAPTER 1

### HAPPY IS THE WOMAN WHO... (PSALM 1)

1. How does being prepared for things help you to face uncertainty? How does Psalm 1 prepare you for a life of uncertainty?
2. Can you think of a time in your life when you spent time in God's word and it didn't make a difference right away, but it did later on?
3. Can you think of a time in your life when you didn't spend time in God's word? What effect did that have in your life?
4. How does knowing God's promise that "The LORD knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish" (v 6) change how you view your circumstances right now?
5. How has Psalm 1 changed or expanded your understanding of a blessed life?



## CHAPTER 2

### A KING AND A KINGDOM (PSALM 2)

1. How does knowing the end at the very beginning prepare you for the rest of the book of Psalms? How does it help you personally?
2. Have you ever faced a circumstance in which all you could see were “the nations rag[ing]” against the one true King (v 1)? Perhaps you are currently in a circumstance like that. How did (or how does) that make you feel?
3. Where is your allegiance? In what ways are you tempted to trust in earthly “kings”, rather than the one true King?
4. How is Psalm 2 relevant for you right now? How is it relevant in times when you struggle see the rule and reign of King Jesus happening?
5. In what ways is Psalm 2 creating expectancy and hope in you as you wait for the King to return?



## CHAPTER 3

### LET DOWN (PSALM 55)

1. Have you ever been let down or betrayed by a close friend? How did that make you feel?
2. David seems to be all over the place in Psalm 55 as he cries out to God. Why do you think that is the case? Have you ever prayed this way to God?
3. How does understanding Psalm 1 and Psalm 2 help reorient David in this psalm? (Look at Psalm 55 v 22.)
4. How does the betrayal of Jesus by his own familiar friends comfort you in your sadness over your own betrayal?

#### DIG DEEPER

Read one of the extra psalms at the end of the chapter and consider these questions:

- What is happening in this psalm? What is the psalmist's biggest problem?
- What words, emotions, and feelings stand out to you?
- Where is God in this psalm? What is the psalmist's posture toward God?
- How does knowing Psalm 1 and Psalm 2 help you to understand this psalm?



## CHAPTER 4

### DESPAIR (PSALM 88)

1. Have you ever felt like the psalmist in Psalm 88? Do you currently feel that way?
2. Is the psalmist displaying trust in God? How do you know this?
3. How does knowing the background of the author of Psalm 88 encourage or discourage you?
4. Think about the foundations laid in Psalms 1 and 2. How do they help to comfort a despairing Christian?

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## CHAPTER 5

### FORSAKEN (PSALM 22)

1. Have you ever felt forsaken by God or by others? What did you do when you felt that way?
2. How does knowing that Jesus quoted this psalm on the cross encourage you when you feel forsaken?
3. What are some truths you can remember about God that will guide you as you pray to him when you feel forsaken? You could list them in the journal section of the book, or pray them back to God.
4. God's answer is revealed in the middle of this psalm. Have you ever experienced something like this—seeing God answer you immediately? Write that experience down as a mark of God's faithfulness which you can come back to when you feel forsaken again.

#### DIG DEEPER

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## CHAPTER 6

### IN PAIN (PSALM 6)

1. How does pain uniquely impact our walk with the Lord? How does Psalm 6 show you what worship can look like in times of pain?
2. Read Psalm 6 out loud. What words or phrases does David use to describe his experience? How do David's words mirror your own experience?
3. Can you think of a time when pain drove you toward God? How did that change your experience in the pain?
4. Can you think of a time where pain drove you away from God? How did that change your experience in the pain?

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## CHAPTER 7

### WORTHLESS (PSALM 8)

1. Have you ever felt worthless? What led you to feel this way?
2. How does seeing your own smallness change your feelings of worthlessness?
3. According to Psalm 8, what is the basis for your worthiness? How would that help you the next time you feel worthless?
4. Of the three things mentioned which are helpful to remember when you feel worthless, which one could you begin applying right now? How will you apply it to your life?

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## CHAPTER 8

### WEARY (PSALMS 42 & 43)

1. Have you experienced a season in which you prayed to God repeatedly and did not get the answer you were hoping for, or you felt like he was not listening? Describe that time.
2. Three times (42 v 5, 11; 43 v 5) the psalmist asks the question “Why are you cast down, my soul?” What does he then say to himself each time? What does the repetition of the question and the self-talk tell you about prayer and finding hope when you are weary?
3. How does the memory of a former life sometimes compound our sorrow in suffering?
4. What is the comfort in these psalms despite the lack of a swift resolution?

#### DIG DEEPER

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## CHAPTER 9

### HELPLESS (PSALM 46)

1. Do you have a psalm or a verse that is committed to memory, like Psalm 46 v 1 is for Courtney? How is your chosen verse a comfort to you?
2. Psalm 46 speaks of very real fears, and even some imagined ones. What do you think this psalm has to say about the fears that you face?
3. How do we know that God is a “very present help”? (Think of John 14 v 18.) Can you think of a time when you felt helpless and God’s presence was a comfort to you?
4. What “works of the LORD” (v 8) in your own life can you recount that could anchor you when you feel helpless? You could use the journaling pages in the book to make a list you can come back to in the future to strengthen your faith.

#### DIG DEEPER

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## CHAPTER 10

### GRIEF (PSALM 31)

1. Consider David's personal crisis (and personal pronouns) in this psalm. How does that help you to think about grief—either personal grief or the grief of someone you know?
2. Read through Psalm 31 again. Make a list of the phrases or words that describe what David is going through. What stands out to you and why?
3. Have you ever experienced grief and trust at the same time? What was that experience like for you? What did you learn about God?
4. David includes a corporate element to the ending of this psalm. Our suffering is never in isolation, and the same is true of our deliverance. How have you seen your suffering—or the suffering of another—become community suffering? And how have you seen a deliverance become community deliverance, in which everyone is able to rejoice?

#### DIG DEEPER

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## CHAPTER 11

### ENVY (PSALM 73)

1. Can you think of a time when you were confronted with your own envy of someone else? What did it feel like?
2. How does envy distort our understanding of God? What lies does envy cause us to believe about God?
3. Where did the psalmist go to find resolution to his envy? What practical steps can you take to turn away from envy?
4. How does knowing the end of the psalm (v 24-28) help you in your struggle with envy?

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## CHAPTER 12

### ASHAMED (PSALM 51)

1. If you feel comfortable, can you share a time when you were both confronted with your sin, but also confessed your sin like David does?
2. Are you ever tempted to label some sins as more serious than others? What are some we are comfortable with? What sins are we uncomfortable with?
3. Where do you go when you are confronted with your sin? Do you go to God or do you wallow in your feelings of shame or do you pretend like it isn't there? Why?
4. Spurgeon says this is a song for an "assembly of the poor in spirit," so it is not just for the individual, but all of us. How does public confession of sin unite us, convict us, and drive us to Christ?

#### DIG DEEPER

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## CHAPTER 13

### ANXIOUS (PSALM 13)

1. What makes anxiety so debilitating and hard on our bodies and minds?
2. This psalm is addressed to the choirmaster, meaning it was meant to be song. How would you feel if we sang a song like this in corporate worship? Why do you think it would make you feel that way?
3. What are some bold requests you can make to God in your distress? Ask God to help you see these requests as a cry of faith in the midst of distress.
4. The psalmist says he will trust even when the resolution hasn't come yet. Can you think of a time in your life when you were able to look at God's character in trust even without resolution?

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## CHAPTER 14

### FEARING DEATH (PSALM 116)

1. How do you feel about death? If your answer is “afraid,” what scares you most about death?
2. How does death simplify life and show you what really matters? What are those things that matter?
3. How does an awareness of death change how we live right now?
4. Have you ever had an experience where the memory of it paralyzed you and made you afraid?

#### DIG DEEPER

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## CHAPTER 15

### SUSTAINED (PSALM 66)

1. How does feeling sustained by the Lord change how you live right now or grow your trust in him?
2. Tell a friend of a time you have seen God deliver you. The psalmist longs to tell stories of deliverance not only to others but to the entire earth (v 1, 5)!
3. Think of a time when God sustained you, your family, or people in Bible. Make a list of what those past deliverances tell you about his character and how he can be trusted for the future.
4. How do Psalms 1 and 2 help you to understand psalms of deliverance like Psalm 66?

#### DIG DEEPER

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## CHAPTER 16

### STUCK IN MY FAITH (PSALM 119)

1. Psalm 119 is one long chapter on God's word. What does that tell you about its value? Do you value God's word enough to spend that much time talking about it?
2. When you feel stuck in your faith, what helps you to get unstuck?
3. What are some ways you have seen God's word work in your life? This could be a specific instance, a longer story, or a verse that helped you.
4. How does Psalm 1 help you to understand Psalm 119, especially when you get to the end and the psalmist says he has "gone astray" (v 176)?

#### DIG DEEPER

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## CHAPTER 17

### CONTENT (PSALM 131)

1. How does “staying in your lane” help you to stay content? What are the ways in which you are tempted to drift into other lanes that are not your own?
2. This is a psalm about giving up self-sufficiency, self-focus, and self-worship. Which one of those do you most struggle with? How does this psalm fight against these things?
3. In what ways do you need to guard your heart and eyes against focusing on things that are beyond you, which leads to discontentment?
4. What does it mean that “the weaned child enjoys his mother for who she is”? How does understanding that truth help you to grow in contentment?

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## CHAPTER 18

### GRATEFUL (PSALM 103)

1. Make a list of at least five things you are grateful for. When you are done making the list, thank God for the things he has provided for you. How does the list change your perspective?
2. Make a list of five attributes of God that you are grateful for. How does this list change your perspective?
3. Does knowing who God is help you to rest in your own limitations? If not, why not? If so, how is that a comfort to you?
4. Courtney says: “Gratitude is a discipline that is best honed and expressed together.” If you are discussing this chapter with a friend, spend some time remembering the ways God has been kind toward you. If you are not, think of a friend you can invite into your gratitude.

#### DIG DEEPER

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## CHAPTER 19

### IN NEED OF CONFIDENCE (PSALM 27)

1. Have you ever had false confidence in a thing or person that could not make good on the promise to make you confident?
2. What is the fixed reality in verse 1? How does that fixed reality give you confidence?
3. David still prays real and raw prayers even when he feels confident in the Lord. How does that help you to feel confident even when the ground beneath you feels unsettled? What is the thing that shakes your confidence, and how do David's prayers help you pray?
4. This psalm doesn't end with a resolution. But remember Psalm 1 and 2. How do those psalms inform the lack of resolution in this psalm?

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## CHAPTER 20

### ANGRY (PSALM 4)

1. Have you ever been so angry that you couldn't sleep? What did you do with your anger? How did you recover?
2. Is it okay for Christians to be angry? How does Psalm 4 help you answer that question?
3. How can you tell the difference between righteous anger and unrighteous anger?
4. How do silence and pondering help you process your anger?

#### DIG DEEPER

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## CHAPTER 21

### FORGIVEN (PSALM 32)

1. How does knowing your sins are forgiven make you happy, or help you to know that you are blessed? You could think back to before you were a Christian, or a time when you have felt conviction over sin.
2. Have you ever tried to convince yourself that your sin was not a big deal? How did that make you feel over time?
3. How does knowing what you are saved for help you even when the worst conceivable thing happens to you (v 6-7)?
4. Is there a sin in your life that you need to confess? Let David's exhortation in verses 8-9 convict you. Seek this forgiveness.

#### DIG DEEPER

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## CHAPTER 22

### HOPEFUL (PSALM 84)

1. What makes you hopeful? How does knowing where you are going after death change your hope in this life?
2. Why don't the things that make us hopeful in this life ever fully satisfy us?
3. What makes God's house hopeful for the Christian? Make a list from this psalm of all the ways in which God's house is hopeful.
4. Have you ever found similar strength and refreshment to the psalmist's (v 6-8) on your own pilgrim road?

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## CHAPTER 23

### FULL OF WORSHIP (PSALM 145)

1. Read Psalm 145 v 8-9 again. As you do, make a list of all God's attributes—you could even say them out loud. Does it make you want to worship?
2. Read Psalm 145 v 14-20. Which works of God stand out to you? Why?
3. What would you include in a list of specific ways in which God has worked in your life?
4. What would it look like in your life if your "flesh" blessed the Lord (v 21)? How would you serve?

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## CHAPTER 24

### FULL OF PRAISE (PSALM 150)

1. Why do you think it takes so long for the book of Psalms to get to psalms of simple praise?
2. How does Psalm 1 help us understand Psalm 150?
3. What are some of God’s “mighty deeds” (v 2) toward you and your church community that you can praise him for?
4. What would it look like in your life if you praised him with everything you did—your job, your home, your service to your church, and so on?

#### DIG DEEPER

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