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Introduction: Good Book Guides

Every Bible-study group is different—yours may take place in a church building, in a home, in a cafe, on a train, over a leisurely mid-morning coffee or squashed into a 30-minute lunch break. Your group may include new Christians, mature Christians, non-Christians, students, business colleagues or teens. That’s why we’ve designed these *Good Book Guides* to be flexible for use in many different situations.

Our aim in each session is to uncover the meaning of a passage, and see how it fits into the ‘big picture’ of the Bible. But that can never be the end. We also need to apply appropriately what we have discovered to our lives. Let’s take a look at what is included:

- ↻ **Talkabout:** most groups need to ‘break the ice’ at the beginning of a session, and here’s the question that will do that. It’s designed to get people talking around a subject that will be covered in the course of the Bible study.
- ↓ **Investigate:** the Bible text for each session is broken up into manageable chunks, with questions that aim to help you understand what the passage is about. **The Leader’s Guide** contains **guidance on questions**, and sometimes ☑ additional ‘follow-up’ questions.
- 🗺 **Explore more (optional):** these questions will help you connect what you have learned to other parts of the Bible, so you can begin to understand how the Bible relates together as a whole.
- ➔ **Apply:** As you go through a Bible study, you’ll keep coming across **apply** sections. Some of these have questions to get the group discussing what the Bible teaching means in practice for you and your church. Sometimes, a 🗣 **getting personal** section is an opportunity for you to think, plan and pray about the changes that you personally may need to make as a result of what you have discovered.
- ⬆ **Pray:** We want to encourage prayer that is rooted in God’s Word—in line with His concerns, purposes and promises. So each session ends with an opportunity to review the truths and challenges highlighted by the Bible study, and turn them into prayers of request and thanksgiving.

The **Leader’s Guide** and introduction provide historical background information, explanations of the Bible texts for each session, ideas for **optional extra** activities, and guidance on how best to help people uncover the truths of God’s Word.

Why study *Soul Songs*?

Have you ever got the tune of a mindless song stuck in your head? You find yourself humming a song you don't even like. The world around us sings a song and that song often gets fixed in our minds. We find ourselves joining in. What the world thinks and desires becomes what we think and desire.

The Psalms help us re-tune our hearts. David says that the Lord 'put a new song in my mouth, a hymn of praise to our God. Many will see and fear and put their trust in the Lord.' (Psalm 40 v 3) The Psalms re-tune our hearts to the new song of God's redemption. As a result, we learn again to fear God instead of fearing other people. We learn again to trust God in the face of adversity.

*The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul.
The statutes of the Lord are trustworthy,
making wise the simple.
The precepts of the Lord are right, giving joy to the heart.
The commands of the Lord are radiant, giving light to
the eyes. (Psalm 19 v 7-8)*

The Word of God revives the soul like medicine. That is the theme of this selection of psalms. They are all taken from the first book of Psalms (Psalms 1-41), most of which are songs of people in trouble. They usually begin with the problems we face. But they don't leave us there. They turn us back to God; to His character and His salvation. They offer us hope in the midst of despair. They put a new song in our mouths.

You may feel as if your soul is afflicted, downcast or sick. You may be troubled by worry, sin, problems, suffering, fear or guilt. But in these psalms we will find medicine for the soul. We will learn with the psalmist to re-tune our hearts with the new song of God's redemption. And we will discover that the chorus of this new song is 'Worthy is the Lamb' (Revelation 5 v 9-13).



Psalms 3 and 4

A SONG FOR SLEEPLESS NIGHTS

talkabout

1. What thoughts or feelings keep you awake at night?

investigate

 **Read 2 Samuel 15 v 1-30**

2. What is David's situation?

3. What would you have been thinking if you had been in David's situation?
What do you think you would have been feeling?

 **Read Psalm 3**

4. Psalm 3 was written when David fled from Absalom.
How did David sleep that night?



5. David says 'I will not fear' (v 6).
What enables him to respond to the situation without fear?

6. Look at verse 3. What normally is the shield of a king?
What is the glory of a king? What is the position of a king?

7. David has lost his army, his glory and his exalted position.
But what has he *not* lost?

8. How does this enable David to respond?

David does not fear the future because he values God more than anything on earth and nothing can take God away from him.

➔ **apply**

David says 'I will not fear ...' He does not say 'I do not fear ...' He *decides* not to fear. He tells himself not to fear. It is an act of will based on the truth of God's Word. He 'preaches' the truth to himself so that he will not fear.

9. How do people cope with anxiety? How about you?

- How can we learn to 'preach the truth' to ourselves so that we do not fear?



getting personal

Think about situations in which you fear the loss of protection (your shield), pleasure (your glory) or your reputation (your exalted position). How would trust and delight in God transform your fears?



explore more

Look at 3 v 7-8. The deliverance of David = the blessing of God's people. David points to Jesus. Jesus is David's greater Son. David was anointed king over God's people and Jesus is the anointed King of God's people (the word 'Christ' = anointed One). How is the deliverance described in 3 v 7 fulfilled in Jesus? How does the deliverance of Jesus bring blessing to God's people? How can these truths help us cope with anxious nights?



➔ **apply**

10. Here is an 'anti-psalm' of Psalm 3. The song has been rewritten to make it say the opposite of what it actually says.

*I've got so many problems!
It seems as if everyone's against me.
Everyone says: 'You have to look after number one.'
My security is in my bank balance,
I glory in my possessions,
I want to rise up the career ladder.
I complain to anyone who'll hear me.
I lie awake at night
and in the morning I'm worn out with worry.
I'm worried about all the people who get in my way.
I need to get up; I need to get going.
I need to beat the opposition.
I need to show them who's best.
My success comes through my hard work.
I'm going to make sure I enjoy the good life.*

- Which of the statements in this anti-psalm sound like things you might say or think?

- Work out what the corresponding line is in the real psalm.
How do these truths set us free us from worry?



investigate

▶ Read Psalm 4

Again we see David sleeping well (v 8). Here the focus is on angry nights (v 4). David imagines someone lying in bed at night, brooding over how they have been wronged, replaying events and conversations in their mind—frustrated, bitter or fuming.

11. Look at verses 1-3. We often get angry because our reputation is at stake. What is David's response?

12. Look at verses 4-5.
What is David's prescription when anger keeps us awake at night?

13. Why does David invite us to search our hearts? See James 4 v 1.

Sometimes we get angry because we are concerned for God's glory or because we love other people. Jesus Himself was sometimes angry. But more often we get angry because of self-centred desires in our hearts. We get angry when those desires are threatened or frustrated, and when we are not getting our way.



getting personal

Think about the last time you got angry—perhaps even brooded about it at night. What triggered your anger? Anger is a sign that we are not getting what we want. What desires in your heart does your anger reveal?



➔ **apply**

14. Look at verses 6-8.
What is David's remedy for self-centred desires?

⬆ **pray**

- Look at what David says about God and his relationship with God in these two songs. Use this as a basis of praise to God.
- List some things you are anxious or angry about. Ask God to help you to remove your anxiety and anger as you delight in Him.