

# EXPLORING THE PSALMS

## HOMEGROUP BIBLE STUDY NOTES - SESSION 2: WORSHIP TO GOD THE CREATOR

*THE EARTH, O LORD, IS FULL OF YOUR STEADFAST LOVE (Ps 119:64)*

Part of the safety and delight of the Psalmist in God's loving presence is rooted in the faith that God has brought all things into being - from nothing. God sustains all things through his power, maintaining all the intricate balances and cycles of nature. And, true to his covenant commitment, he brings his faithful people into a spacious 'broad place' where they can flourish.

### TAKE A LOOK AT

Psalm 19:1-6

*and listen to the magnificent chorale in Hayden's CREATION  
via the following link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5ZYMIR4mgk0>*

*What do these words convey to you?*

*What does the Psalmist mean by saying: "...their voice goes out through all the earth...?"*

### READ

Romans 1:20

*Even those who have never heard the Word of God spoken cannot fail to hear the word of God's revelation throughout the created universe.*

*Can you recall times when you have been overwhelmed by the presence of God in creation?*

### *What do we learn from The Psalms about 'creation'?*

- **Creation is sustained by the love of God:** Take time to read together Psalm 136 and notice how the whole of God's rule in creation - in the heavens, the waters, the sun, moon and stars - as well as in the history of God's people, is rooted in his faithful and enduring love;
- **Creation - and every creature - belongs to God:** Psalm 24:1 tells us 'The earth is the LORD'S and everything in it, the world and those who live in it'.
- **God cares for all of creation:** Life and the means of life are a gift from God (we shall see this shortly as we look at Psalm 104). Psalm 145 tells us: 'The LORD is good to all, and has compassion over all he has made'
- **Creation gives God (and us) pleasure:** Again, we can turn to Psalm 24 to see how creation gives God joy, and our joy is in him;

- **Creation praises God:** ‘Let everything that has breath praise the LORD’ (Psalm 150); Psalm 29 tells us that the ‘voice of the LORD’ is heard throughout all creation and it is The LORD to whom worship should be offered (Psalm 29:1-2); in Psalm 98:4 all the earth is called to praise God with joy;

## TAKE A LOOK AT

### Psalm 8

*What do these words tell us about the role God has given to humankind within the created world?*

*The Psalm opens with grand words:*

**O Lord our Sovereign, how majestic is your name in all the earth!**

*Even little children join in creation’s praise:*

**From the lips of children and infants you have ordained praise.**

*When we contemplate God’s handiwork in creation, we realise just how small we are!*

**When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers,  
the moon and the stars which you have set in place,  
what is man that you care for him...?**

*Yet there is something wonderfully special to God about humankind*

**You made him a little lower than the heavenly beings  
and crowned him with glory and honour.**

*God gives human beings the responsibility of stewardship,  
to represent God in caring for all creation - this is our ‘royal service’*

**You have made him ruler over the works of your hands;  
you put everything under his feet:  
all flocks and herds and the beasts of the field,  
the birds of the air and the fish of the sea...**

Additionally...

*In Psalm 115:16 we read:*

**The highest heavens belong to the LORD  
but the earth he has given to man...**

*and in Psalm 124:8, the strength to live obediently as God’s royal servants  
comes from God, the Creator, himself:*

**Our help is in the name of the LORD  
the Maker of heaven and earth.**

One of the most magnificent Psalms in the collection celebrates God’s creative love for the world. Psalm 104 is the inspiration for a hymn by Robert

Grant which we often sing. If you would like to hear it sung, click on this link:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ul9cDJMsn14>

You will have ready access to the NIV translation of Psalm 104, but it is worth also reading it expressed as a prayer in this lovely 2013 version:

## PSALM 104 REDUX

Praise God, oh my soul.

The wonder of all creation calls forth praise. The marvel of the heavens,  
stars flung into space by night,  
cotton candy clouds on a canvas of blue by day,  
source of light and life, rain and snow,  
wind whipping, cleansing,  
making music among the trees.

The solidity and strength of the earth,  
majesty of mountains ,  
verdance of valleys,  
dancing deserts and singing streams,  
inviting renewal and re-creation  
day by day, year to year.

All are at home in creation,  
from the microbe and the mite  
to the elephant and the blue whale.  
Trees shelter birds,  
seas sustain fish,  
every animal has a dwelling place.  
Streams tumble down hillsides  
and springs bubble up from below;  
grasses emerge from soil and fruit from trees.  
Watered and fed, we flourish.

The rhythm of days and seasons  
orders our work and our rest,  
cradling our creativity.

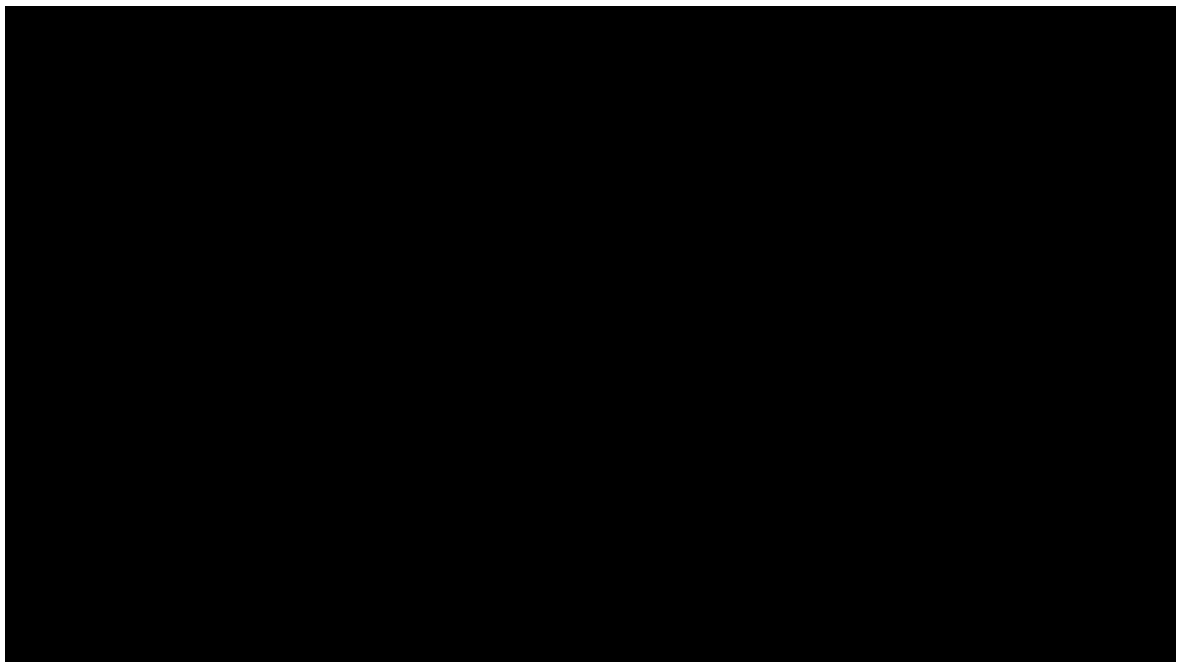
Yet still we struggle.  
Made in your image,  
we fashion a world in freedom –  
for good and for ill.  
Our generosity pales;  
our compassion fails.  
In the midst of earth's beauty and bounty,  
not all have enough to eat,

not all live in safety and security.

We look to you for life  
and for the goodness in our souls.  
Renew us to wonder.  
Lift our eyes to marvel again  
at all that you have made.  
Whisper our name Beloved –  
that we might remember  
who we are  
and to whom we belong.  
Raise us to what we can be,  
    a source of blessing to all the earth,  
    friends of creation and bearers of hope.  
Then you may rejoice in us,  
as we rejoice in you.

I will sing of your goodness all my days.  
I will seek to magnify you in my being  
as long as I shall live.  
At the end, I shall abandon myself  
entirely into your kind hands,  
and my praise shall be complete.

And if you have time, why not look at this beautiful time-lapse video  
containing the lyrics of Psalm 104 which I have attached to these Bible study



notes:

## TAKE A LOOK AT Psalm 104

*Spend some time discussing the key themes of this Psalm:  
God, the warrior-creator  
God, the sustainer and provider  
God the governor and re-creator who is there at the beginning and the end*

*Here are a few pointers to help with your discussion:*

*Notice how this Psalm begins and ends with praise to God:  
**O LORD my God, you are very great...**  
**Praise the LORD, O my soul. Praise the LORD.***

*Take a look at some of the descriptive words used in this Psalm*

- 1-4 ascribe praise to almighty God**
- 5-9 powerfully describe the foundation of the earth and the ordering of the waters**
- 10-13 describe how the waters are channelled to sustain creation**
- 14-18 describe God's provision and care for humankind**
- 19-23 describe the cycles of light, darkness and seasons**
- 24-26 describe God's power over the sea and its creatures**
- 27-30 return to cyclical themes of life, death and renewal  
and the Psalmist closes by again ascribing praise to God.**

*Notice how the words in the early part of this Psalm contrast sharply with the low-key, altogether more sedate account of these events in the creation narrative of Genesis 1:9. There, God orders that the water should be gathered to one place to allow the dry ground to appear. The Psalmist, in contrast, uses dynamic, vigorous words like "rebuke" and "thunder."*

*Why do you think he does this?  
Maybe it is to focus on the authority of the Creator himself.*

*Look at verses 10-18 and see how God continues his work in creation by providing flowing water and sustaining life. The scene is altogether more pastoral, quiet and beautiful. Animals are refreshed, birds nest and sing, there is fruit, growth, cultivation and God's provision is so generous that even wine is available!*

**He makes grass grow for the cattle and plants for man to cultivate - bringing forth food from the earth: wine that gladdens the heart of man.**

*Notice, too, how the Psalmist turns his gaze towards the heavens. Remember that both lunar and solar cycles were an important part of life in ancient times:*

**...the sun knows when to go down  
You bring darkness...all the beasts of the forest prowl**

*The Psalmist then steps back and marvels at the way God, in his creative wisdom, sustains all the intricate balances and cycles of nature - the sheer vastness of the oceans and the variety of their living contents. He refers to ships travelling on the surface of the ocean, and even mentions the mythological sea dragon Leviathan which, having ceased to be the untamed embodiment of evil, now "frolics" under God's control!*

*Verses 27-30 are spoken to God in the first-person with a series of statements each followed by another phrase emphasising the point more strongly. What do they tell us about the dependence upon God of all living creatures?*

**...when you open your hand, they are satisfied...  
when you hide your face, they are terrified...  
...when you take away their breath, they die...  
...when you send your Spirit, they are created...  
and you renew the face of the earth.**

And finally...

*In verse 33 the contemplation of this creator God moves the Psalmist to sing praise and glory, and to pray:*

**May my meditation be pleasing to him,  
as I rejoice in the Lord**

*The closing verse is striking - and may be regarded as somewhat abrupt and unexpected::*  
**May sinners vanish from the earth and the wicked be no more**

*What do you think he is saying? Maybe he is referring to those who desire to continue in wrongdoing, who - by their actions - have forfeited the privilege of sharing in God's bounty.*