



FORMED BY WHAT MATTERS

Lessons in Character through the Psalms

#WISDOM • #IDENTITY • #HONESTY
#TRUST • #COURAGE • #INTEGRITY
#RESILIENCE • #HUMILITY • #GRATITUDE • #HOPE



FORMED BY WHAT MATTERS

What kind of person am I becoming?

Character is not simply something we know about. It is formed through the choices we make, the people we listen to, the pressures we face and what we decide matters most.

The Psalms invite us to bring our real lives to God, including our questions, fears and hopes. Over ten weeks, this series explores how faith shapes who we are becoming. Each study connects a psalm with a character focus and the choices we face at school, at home and with friends. As we read, reflect and respond, we will consider what matters most and how God can shape the way we live.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOKLET



READ

Read the psalm or key passage in your Bible, then the study summary.



THINK

Reflect on what the psalm teaches us about God and our character.



TALK

Use the questions to listen, discuss and learn from one another.



LIVE

Choose one practical action and carry it into the week.

Bible references are provided for each study. Read the passages in your Bible.





THE PSALMS

FORMED THROUGH THE PSALMS

The Psalms invite us to bring our real lives to God. In these ten studies, we explore how faith shapes our character, from the influences we choose to the way we respond to fear and failure. Each psalm helps us reflect on what matters and how we can grow in trust, gratitude and hope.

01 Building your life on what matters

#WISDOM

Psalms 1

02 Knowing your worth

#IDENTITY

Psalms 8

03 Bringing our real emotions to God

#HONESTY

Psalms 13

04 Following when we cannot see everything ahead

#TRUST

Psalms 23

05 Choosing what is right when fear is real

#COURAGE

Psalms 27

06 Owning our mistakes

#INTEGRITY

Psalms 32

07 Finding steadiness when life feels unstable

#RESILIENCE

Psalms 46

08 Letting God reshape us

#HUMILITY

Psalms 51

09 Remembering the good we easily forget

#GRATITUDE

Psalms 103

10 Trusting that we are known and our story matters

#HOPE

Psalms 139

The Psalms invite us to bring our whole lives to God and let him shape who we become.



01 Building your life on what matters



#WISDOM

KEY IDEA

Wisdom grows as we let God's word shape our daily choices.



READ



THE PSALM

Psalm 1 • Key passage: Psalm 1:1-3

Psalm 1 begins with a picture of two different ways to live. One person gradually allows their life to be shaped by influences that lead them away from God. The other chooses to delight in God's instruction and regularly reflects on it.

That person is compared with a tree planted beside water. Its roots are deep. It has a source of nourishment. It remains strong and productive because it is planted in the right place.



THINK

WHAT MATTERS?

Nobody becomes wise accidentally. Our character is being shaped all the time. By the people we listen to. The things we watch. The voices we trust. The habits we repeat. Psalm 1 asks us to think about what we are allowing to shape us.

A tree does not suddenly decide to grow deep roots when a storm arrives. Its roots have been growing quietly for years. Character works in much the same way. The habits we build when life is calm help determine who we become when life becomes difficult.

The important question is not simply: "What do I believe?" It is also: "What am I repeatedly allowing to shape me?"

#WISDOM





Q1 What do you think the image of a tree with deep roots teaches us about character?

Q2 What influences have the biggest impact on teenagers today?

Q3 What is one good habit that could help shape the person you want to become?



PUT IT INTO PRACTICE

Choose one positive habit you can deliberately practise this week. Keep it small and realistic. It might be: reading a short Bible passage, putting your phone away for part of the evening, praying before school, showing gratitude, choosing better influences, or spending time with people who help you become a better person.

PRAYER

God, help me build my life around what is true and good. Give me wisdom about the voices I listen to and the habits I develop. Help my life grow deep roots in you. Amen.

QUOTE FOR THE WEEK

"People do not drift toward holiness."

— D. A. Carson

#WISDOM



02 Knowing your worth

#IDENTITY

KEY IDEA

Your worth comes from God, not from what others think.



READ

THE PSALM

Psalm 8 • Key passage: Psalm 8:3-6

David looks at the night sky. He sees the moon and stars and is overwhelmed by the size of creation. Then he asks an extraordinary question. Why would God pay attention to human beings at all? Compared with the universe, people seem incredibly small.

Yet David recognises that God has given human beings dignity, responsibility and significance. Our smallness does not mean we are insignificant.



THINK

Teenagers receive messages about their worth from almost everywhere. Marks. Appearance. Sport. Friends. Followers. Relationships. Achievements. Whether you are included. Whether people notice you.

The problem is that all of these things can change. Psalm 8 points us towards something deeper. Your worth is not created by your popularity, appearance or achievements. Human life has value because God has given it value. That means your life matters. It also means the person sitting beside you has dignity too.

A strong identity changes not only how we see ourselves. It changes how we treat other people.





Q1 Where do people your age often look for their sense of worth?

Q2 How might believing every person has God-given dignity change the way we treat others?

Q3 What is something about yourself that you sometimes allow to determine your worth too much?



LIVE

PUT IT INTO PRACTICE

Notice someone this week who might normally be ignored, overlooked or left out. Treat them in a way that communicates: **YOU MATTER.**

PRAYER

God, thank you that my worth does not depend on being impressive. Help me see myself and other people with the dignity you have given us. Amen.

QUOTE FOR THE WEEK

"We are more loved and accepted in Jesus Christ than we ever dared hope."

— **Tim Keller**

#IDENTITY



03 Bringing our real emotions to God



#HONESTY

KEY IDEA

We can bring our real feelings and questions to God.



READ



THE PSALM

Psalm 13

Psalm 13 begins with David asking God difficult questions. He feels forgotten. He feels that God is distant. He is tired of wrestling with his thoughts. This is not polished religious language. David tells God exactly what he is experiencing. He asks: "How long?"

But something changes as the Psalm continues. David moves from: HOW LONG? to: I WILL TRUST. His circumstances may not have changed yet. But he has brought his struggle honestly before God.



THINK

Sometimes people assume that having faith means pretending everything is fine.

The Psalms show us something different. God can handle honesty. Fear. Frustration. Confusion. Disappointment. Sadness. Questions.

Lament is not the opposite of faith. Lament is bringing our pain towards God rather than simply turning away from him. Healthy faith does not require us to hide what is real. It gives us somewhere to bring what is real.

#HONESTY





TALK



Q1 Why do people sometimes feel they need to pretend everything is okay?

Q2 What does Psalm 13 teach us about talking honestly with God?

Q3 What is the difference between simply complaining and honestly bringing our struggles to God?



LIVE

PUT IT INTO PRACTICE

Write a short, honest prayer this week. Begin with: "God, right now I feel..." You do not have to show your prayer to anybody.

PRAYER

God, thank you that I do not have to pretend with you. Help me bring my questions, worries and disappointments honestly before you. Help me continue to trust you even when I do not understand everything. Amen.

QUOTE FOR THE WEEK

"We must lay before Him what is in us, not what ought to be in us."

— C. S. Lewis

#HONESTY



04 Following when we cannot see everything ahead

#TRUST

KEY IDEA

God is with us as we take the next step into the unknown.



READ

THE PSALM

Psalm 23

Psalm 23 describes God as a shepherd. A shepherd leads. Provides. Protects. Guides.

But the Psalm does not say that following God means avoiding every difficult place. There is still a dark valley. There are still enemies. There are still situations the sheep cannot control. The difference is that the person walking through those places is not alone.



THINK

Trust would be easy if we always knew what happened next. But we usually do not. We cannot see every outcome. We cannot control every relationship. We cannot guarantee success. We cannot know exactly what next year will bring.

Psalm 23 does not promise a trouble-free life. Instead, it gives us something better: God's presence in the middle of real life.

Trust means learning to take the next step even when we cannot see the whole path. Sometimes we want God to give us the entire map. Instead, he asks us to trust him with the next step.





Q1 Which image from Psalm 23 stands out most to you?

Q2 Why is trusting God harder when we cannot see what will happen next?

Q3 What is one situation where you need guidance at the moment?



PUT IT INTO PRACTICE

Think about something you are worried about. Instead of trying to work out the whole future, ask: **WHAT IS THE NEXT WISE AND FAITHFUL STEP?** Focus on taking that step.

PRAYER

God, be my shepherd. Guide me when I am unsure. Provide what I need. Remind me that I do not walk through difficult places alone. Amen.

QUOTE FOR THE WEEK

"God is too wise to err, too good to be unkind."

— **Charles Spurgeon**

#TRUST



05 Choosing what is right when fear is real



#COURAGE

KEY IDEA

Trusting God helps us do what is right when we feel afraid.



READ



THE PSALM

Psalm 27 • Key passage: Psalm 27:1

Psalm 27 contains confidence. But it also contains danger. David talks about enemies, fear and trouble.

His confidence does not come because nothing frightening exists. It comes from knowing where he has chosen to place his trust. David can acknowledge fear without allowing fear to control every decision.



THINK

Courage is not the absence of fear. Courage exists because fear exists.

For teenagers, courage might look like: standing beside someone who is being excluded, admitting you were wrong, trying something difficult, telling the truth, asking for help, refusing to join in when people are being cruel, walking away from something you know is wrong, or being willing to be different from the crowd.

Courage allows our other values to survive when they are tested. It is easy to believe in something when it costs nothing. Character becomes visible when doing what is right becomes difficult.





Q1 What is the difference between being fearless and being courageous?

Q2 What situations require courage for students your age?

Q3 What can help us make good decisions when we are afraid?



PUT IT INTO PRACTICE

Identify one small courageous action you need to take this week. Do not wait until you feel completely fearless. Take the next right step.

PRAYER

God, give me courage when I am afraid. Help me choose what is right rather than simply what feels safest. Help fear not to decide who I become. Amen.

QUOTE FOR THE WEEK

"Courage is... the form of every virtue at the testing point."

— C. S. Lewis

#COURAGE



06 Owning our mistakes

#INTEGRITY

KEY IDEA

We grow by owning our mistakes and accepting forgiveness.



READ

THE PSALM

Psalm 32

Psalm 32 describes what happens when David tries to hide wrongdoing. Keeping everything buried does not bring peace. Instead, guilt weighs heavily on him.

Then David stops hiding. He acknowledges what he has done before God. And he discovers forgiveness. The Psalm moves from secrecy and heaviness towards freedom and joy.



THINK

Integrity does not mean never making mistakes. Everyone gets things wrong. Integrity becomes visible in what we do after we realise we are wrong.

Do we hide it? Blame someone else? Make excuses? Pretend it never happened? Or can we say: "I did that." "It was wrong." "I need to make it right."

Character grows when we stop protecting our image and start taking responsibility. Being honest about a mistake may be uncomfortable. But hiding it usually creates a bigger problem.





Q1 Why is admitting that we are wrong sometimes difficult?

Q2 What can happen when we keep trying to hide mistakes?

Q3 Why are confession, forgiveness and making things right important for healthy relationships?



LIVE

PUT IT INTO PRACTICE

Is there something you need to own this week? An apology? A mistake? Something you need to correct? Take responsibility without making excuses.

PRAYER

God, help me be honest about my failures. Give me humility to admit when I am wrong. Help me receive forgiveness and make things right where I can. Amen.

QUOTE FOR THE WEEK

"Repentance is a definite turn from every thought, word, deed and habit which is known to be wrong."

— **John Stott**

#INTEGRITY



07 Finding steadiness when life feels unstable



#RESILIENCE

KEY IDEA

God helps us stay grounded when life feels unstable.



READ



THE PSALM

Psalm 46 • Key passage: Psalm 46:1

Psalm 46 imagines the world becoming unstable. Mountains shake. Waters roar. Nations are in turmoil. Everything that normally feels secure seems to be moving.

Yet the repeated message is that God remains present. In the middle of chaos comes an invitation: BE STILL. Not because nothing is happening. But because God remains God even when circumstances feel unstable.



THINK

Resilience does not mean nothing affects us. It means we learn how to remain grounded when things do.

There will be moments when: plans change, relationships change, results disappoint us, people let us down, we fail at something, or things happen that we cannot control.

Psalm 46 reminds us that we need something deeper than circumstances to anchor us. Sometimes resilience begins by stopping long enough to remember what is still true. You do not have to control everything in order to keep moving forward.





Q1 What kinds of things can make life feel unstable for teenagers?

Q2 What do you think “be still” means in a stressful situation?

Q3 What helps you regain perspective when everything feels overwhelming?



LIVE

PUT IT INTO PRACTICE

Take two quiet minutes each day this week. No phone. No music. No conversation. Slow down. Breathe. Remember: GOD IS PRESENT.

PRAYER

God, be my refuge when life feels unstable. Help me slow down and remember what is true. Help me find my security in you rather than in circumstances I cannot control. Amen.

QUOTE FOR THE WEEK

“There is no moment... when his care falters.”

— J. I. Packer

#RESILIENCE



08 Letting God reshape us

#HUMILITY

KEY IDEA

Humility means asking God to change us and help us grow.



READ

THE PSALM

Psalm 51 • Key passage: Psalm 51:10-12

Psalm 51 is a prayer of repentance. David does not simply ask God to remove the consequences of his actions. He asks God to change him.

He recognises that the problem is not only what he has done. Something inside him needs renewal. He asks for a clean heart and a steadfast spirit.



THINK

Sometimes our first response after making a mistake is: “How do I get out of trouble?” Psalm 51 asks a much deeper question: “How do I become different?”

Real growth is more than avoiding consequences. It means allowing failure to teach us. Humility does not mean believing you are worthless. It means being willing to see yourself truthfully.

Humility says: I was wrong. I need forgiveness. I need to change. I need God's help. That is not weakness. That is maturity.





Q1 What is the difference between being sorry about consequences and genuinely wanting to change?

Q2 Why does humility require us to be teachable?

Q3 What helps people learn from their mistakes rather than simply repeat them?



PUT IT INTO PRACTICE

Think about one habit, attitude or behaviour you would genuinely like God to change in you. Write it privately if you want to. Pray specifically about it this week. Then choose one practical step towards change.

PRAYER

God, create in me a clean heart.
Help me not only regret my mistakes but learn from them.
Make me teachable. Help me become willing to change. Amen.

QUOTE FOR THE WEEK

"To think little of ourselves is not humility."

— **A. W. Tozer**

#HUMILITY



09 Remembering the good we easily forget



#GRATITUDE

KEY IDEA

Gratitude grows as we notice and remember God's goodness.



READ



THE PSALM

Psalm 103 • Key passage: Psalm 103:1-5

Psalm 103 begins with David speaking to himself. He tells his own soul not to forget God's benefits. Why? Because people forget. Problems demand our attention. Disappointments stay in our minds. What is wrong can quickly become more noticeable than what is good.

So David deliberately remembers. Forgiveness. Healing. Compassion. Love. Good gifts.



THINK

Gratitude is not pretending everything is perfect. It is choosing not to let what is difficult erase everything that is good.

Gratitude changes what we notice. Without it, we can quickly become entitled. We start to assume good things should always happen. We stop noticing what people do for us. We expect more but appreciate less.

Gratitude teaches us to receive good things as gifts. It also helps us notice the people whose contributions we might otherwise take for granted.





Q1 Why is it often easier to notice what is wrong than what is going well?

Q2 How can gratitude change someone's attitude?

Q3 Who is someone you probably do not thank often enough?



PUT IT INTO PRACTICE

Write down three things you are grateful for today. Then choose one actual person. Thank them specifically for something they have done for you. Do not simply say: "Thanks for everything." Tell them what you appreciate.

PRAYER

God, thank you for the good things I easily overlook. Teach me to notice your gifts. Help me become someone who expresses gratitude rather than taking people and opportunities for granted. Amen.

QUOTE FOR THE WEEK

"Gratitude is an offering precious in the sight of God."

— A. W. Tozer

#GRATITUDE



10 Trusting that we are known and our story matters



#HOPE

KEY IDEA

Being fully known and loved by God gives us hope to grow.



READ



THE PSALM

Psalm 139 • Key passages: Psalm 139:1-6, 13-18, 23-24

Psalm 139 describes a God who knows us completely. He knows where we are. What we do. What we think. There is nowhere we can go beyond God's presence. David reflects on being created intentionally and wonderfully. Then the Psalm ends with an invitation: Search me. Know me. Lead me. David does not simply want God to know him. He wants God to continue forming him.



THINK

We spend a lot of energy managing what other people see. The version of ourselves at school. Online. With friends. At home. Sometimes we worry that if people really knew us, they might think differently about us.

Psalm 139 describes being completely known by God. And still loved. That gives us hope. We do not have to build our identity around pretending.

Our mistakes are not the end of our story. Our current circumstances are not the end of our story. And because God knows us, we can invite him to change the parts of us that need changing.

The final prayer of the Psalm is a powerful way to finish this series: SEARCH ME. KNOW ME. LEAD ME. Formation is not finished.

#HOPE





Q1 How does it feel to think that God knows us completely?

Q2 Why do people sometimes work hard to hide parts of themselves?

Q3 What might it mean to invite God to “lead me” in the person I am becoming?



PUT IT INTO PRACTICE

Finish the series with three private reflections. Use the reflection page that follows.

PRAYER

God, you know me completely. Thank you that my life matters to you. Search me. Shape me. Lead me. Help me keep becoming the person you created me to be. Amen.

QUOTE FOR THE WEEK

“Hope is what you get when you suddenly realize that a different worldview is possible.”

— **N. T. Wright**

#HOPE





01 SOMETHING I WANT TO KEEP GROWING IN:

02 SOMETHING I NEED TO LET GO OF:

03 THE KIND OF PERSON I WANT TO BECOME:





Psalms

WHAT IS GOD FORMING IN ME?

Bring your whole life to God —
and let him shape who you are becoming.



Mesotes
WHOLE EDUCATION