



On your marks

The Psalms are an amazing collection of poems, prayers and songs of praise and have been the staple diet of worship both for Jews as well as Christians for centuries. They give us words for all sorts of occasions and moods as we work out our faith in God in the rough and tumble of everyday life. Many children will never have come across this book and may be surprised to discover that, for example, as well as expressing thanks and delight in God, it is also OK to argue with God, express despair and depression, shout angrily about things that are wrong and even have doubts about God's love. All this is in the Psalms and a lot more. It is an important resource to help our children grow into a mature faith.

Get set

Read through the psalm first before you work with your group. Look at different translations. The verses quoted in the outline below are from the CEV (Contemporary English Version). Any specific materials needed to step into this particular psalm are included in the instructions below. The outline includes: a key verse; a brief introduction; an idea for acting out the psalm; prompts to talk about the psalm; a craft idea; some new ways to retell the psalm; a suggestion for reflection on the psalm; and finally a focus for praying for others with this psalm.

Go!

Key verse: *Serve and honour the Lord; be glad and tremble* (v. 11).

This psalm is addressed to those who believe they are the 'movers and shakers' of this world; those who are in positions of power and influence. And in no uncertain terms the psalmist reminds them just who is in charge. They might think it is their clever policies that guide international events but the psalmist uses colourful language to tell them straight that it is God who has the last word! A true king is someone who knows that his position is a gift from God the Father.

Act out the Psalm

The writer uses some strong imagery to make his point. God laughs; God is furious; God terrifies; God smashes; the people listen; they tremble; they run to God for protection. Explore these different emotions and actions with everyone. Feel the psalm together as you act out laughter, rage, trembling and running to safety. Add in some sound effects to illustrate the words, for example the clashing of a cymbal for the smashing of the nations; a thunder sound from a piece of cardboard that is shaken as God speaks; different voices for the kings (v. 2), God (vv. 6, 7b-9) and the psalmist (vv. 1-2, 4-5, 7a, 10-12).

Create a sound drama for this Psalm.

Talk about the Psalm



The psalmist is amazed that people are trying to rule the earth without bothering about God. It is laughable. God is much greater than the greatest rulers and authorities in the whole of history. The first disciples remembered this psalm when they felt threatened by human leaders. They quoted it in their prayer to God for help, which was answered quite spectacularly. Read Acts 4:25-31.

What makes you mad at the way the world is at the moment?

What about the world, do you think, makes God both laugh and cry at the same time?

When faced by a godless world, the psalmist remembers God's promises. Promises to him as king (v. 7) and the promise that is also about the greater King, who is Jesus. All God's promises come to us in the end through Jesus ('Christ says "yes" to all God's promises' 2 Corinthians 1:20). Paul also quotes this verse when he is preaching to the Jews in Antioch to help them understand that Jesus is God's Messiah (Acts 13:33). You can also find the same arguments made in Hebrews 1:5 and 5:5.

What promises do you hold on to when the world seems to have gone mad, crazy for power and wealth?

(Look up Isaiah 43:4 for one promise.)

In the end everything on earth will belong to us because we belong to God and Jesus. So the psalm ends with a call to worship: come close to God with trembling joy. Whether we are a great leader or just an ordinary citizen, each of us will one day kneel on a level playing field before God, who both blesses and protects (v. 12).

Is this really how we see ourselves in relation to others?

Why do we so easily put others on a pedestal rather than God?

How do we hold on to these truths in our celebrity culture and in a world where many political systems make us feel small and powerless?

Craft the Psalm

As a way of visualising this psalm, use three bendy straws and put them together to make an equilateral triangle by pushing the bendy part into the open end of the next straw. Now hold this triangle so that one corner is facing downwards and the other two are both pointing up, creating a horizontal line. Here's a picture of the world that has toppled God from the throne and decided it knows best (vv. 1-3).

Now turn this triangle upside-down so that only one corner is pointing upward. Here is the true situation. God is on the throne (vv. 4-9).

Return to the first position that you held the triangle with the two points uppermost and then slowly reverse this as you read the next verses, turning the triangle 'the right way up'.



What symbols might you add to the two points to represent the kings of the earth? What might you add to the point that represents God?

Retell the Psalm

1. Here is a retelling to the tune of *London's burning* for younger children:

God is laughing, God is raging
At their plans, at their plans
Rage, rage; laugh, laugh.
God's the true King, God's the true King.

God's the true King, God's the true King
Of the whole world, of the whole world.
God rules, God rules.
He sent Jesus, He sent Jesus.

God sent Jesus; God sent Jesus.
He makes us all kings, makes us all queens.
Serve, serve; Joy, Joy.
God will help us, God will help us - **Trust God! Trust God!**

2. And here is a retelling for an older or mixed aged group:

Who do you think you are?
What you think you're doing?
Do you think you're better than God?
Do you think you can plot his ruin?

It's enough to make God laugh
It's enough to make God mad
Of course, God's the true King
God's our heavenly Dad.

God's promised us the whole world
God's given us his own Son
Come close and worship this King,
Who loves us, everyone.

So wise up, all you rulers.
Listen to what I say.
Worship God's true Son
Trust in God today.

Reflect on the Psalm



I wonder if it isn't just 'the kings of this earth' who decide to leave God out of the picture? Maybe we all do the same sometimes? We try to make our plans without talking to God. We think we know best. We imagine we can make it all on our own. This psalm reminds us that we need God and also that God also wants us to give us so much (v. 8) - but with his help, not without it.

On the base cloth for this and all the psalms (in the shape of a musical instrument, such as a harp) put down the following 3D objects slowly and carefully as you read each verse of the psalm prayerfully.

Place down a globe or small map/picture of the world on the base cloth. As you read the opening verses of the psalm, try to pile high on top a number of tiny model crowns to illustrate the kings thinking they can 'cut the ropes' (v. 3) and set themselves free.

Then, as you read the next verses (4-6), chuckle to yourself and growl (on behalf of God) as you remove the crowns and put them to one side while you put a small cross there instead.

As you read the rest of the psalm, slowly arrange the crowns - this time around the world with its cross, symbolic of serving the true King.

Pray for others with this psalm

Pray for all those who are in leadership and in positions of power and influence.