

# **Soundtrack**



The  
Seedbed  
Daily Text



# Soundtrack

A Forty-Day Playlist  
through the Psalms

Lent

J. D. WALT

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This book is but the tip of the iceberg of a much larger project which must be duly acknowledged before going one step further. Many have lamented the loss of psalm-singing in the modern church, but few have gone beyond their lament to do anything about it. Julie and Timothy Tennent took on the challenge. Together they embarked on the gargantuan challenge of translating all 150 psalms into the poetic, metrical format of a Psalter. Standing on the shoulders of the giants of this craft from across the centuries, they crafted psalm after psalm into the rhythms and rhymes that will encourage this practice for a new century of psalm singers. The most beautiful part of the whole project, in my estimation, is the way they went about the work. It happened in the early light of a thousand mornings as they together sang their way through these ancient songs in worship to Almighty God. On behalf of many, I want to thank them for this liturgical labor of love.

*Soundtrack: A Forty-Day Playlist through the Psalms* is a small effort to shed light on this big aspiration of restoring psalm-singing to new generations of followers of Jesus in our time. I offer it as tribute to Timothy and Julie, my dear friends, mentors, and co-laborers in the global mission of the gospel.

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*Sola sancta caritas!*

John David Walt Jr.

# Invitation to Awakening

This resource comes with an invitation. The invitation is as simple as it is comprehensive. It is not an invitation to commit your life to this or that cause or to join an organization or to purchase another book. The invitation is this: to wake up to the life you always hoped was possible and the reason you were put on planet Earth.

It begins with following Jesus Christ. In case you are unaware, Jesus was born in the first century BCE into a poor family from Nazareth, a small village located in what is modern-day Israel. While his birth was associated with extraordinary phenomena, we know little about his childhood. At approximately thirty years of age, Jesus began a public mission of preaching, teaching, and healing throughout the region known as Galilee. His mission was characterized by miraculous signs and wonders; extravagant care of the poor and marginalized; and multiple unconventional claims about his own identity and purpose. In short, he claimed to be the incarnate Son of God with the mission and power to save people from sin, deliver them from death, and bring them into the now-and-eternal kingdom of God—on earth as it is in heaven.

In the spring of his thirty-third year, during the Jewish Passover celebration, Jesus was arrested by the religious

authorities, put on trial in the middle of the night, and at their urging, sentenced to death by a Roman governor. On the day known to history as Good Friday, Jesus was crucified on a Roman cross and then was buried in a borrowed tomb. On the following Sunday, according to multiple eyewitness accounts, he was physically raised from the dead. Jesus appeared to hundreds of people, taught his disciples, and prepared for what was to come.

Forty days after the resurrection, Jesus ascended bodily into the heavens where, according to the Bible, he sits at the right hand of God as the Lord of heaven and earth. Ten days after his ascension, in a gathering of more than three thousand people on the day of Pentecost, a Jewish day of celebration, something truly extraordinary happened. A loud and powerful wind swept over the people gathered. Pillars of what appeared to be fire descended upon the followers of Jesus. The Holy Spirit, the presence and power of God, filled the people, and the church was born. After this, the followers of Jesus went forth and began to do the very things Jesus did—preaching, teaching, and healing—and planting churches and making disciples all over the world. Today, more than two thousand years later, the movement has reached us. This is the great awakening, and it has never stopped.

Yes, two thousand years hence and more than two billion followers of Jesus later, this awakening movement of Jesus Christ and his church stands stronger than ever. Billions of ordinary people the world over have discovered in Jesus Christ an awakened life they never imagined possible. They

have overcome challenges, defeated addictions, endured untenable hardships and suffering with unexplainable joy, and stared death in the face with the joyful confidence of eternal life. They have healed the sick, gathered the outcasts, embraced the oppressed, loved the poor, contended for justice, labored for peace, cared for the dying and, yes, even raised the dead.

We all face many challenges and problems. They are deeply personal, yet when joined together, they create enormous and complex chaos in the world, from our hearts to our homes to our churches and our cities. All of this chaos traces to two originating problems: sin and death. Sin, far beyond mere moral failure, describes the fundamental broken condition of every human being. Sin separates us from God and others, distorts and destroys our deepest identity as the image-bearers of God, and poses a fatal problem from which we cannot save ourselves. It results in an ever-diminishing quality of life and ultimately ends in eternal death.

Because Jesus lived a life of sinless perfection, he is able to save us from sin and restore us to a right relationship with God, others, and ourselves. He did this through his sacrificial death on the cross on our behalf. Because Jesus rose from the dead, he is able to deliver us from death and bring us into a quality of life both eternal and unending.

This is the gospel of Jesus Christ: pardon from the penalty of sin, freedom from the power of sin, deliverance from the grip of death, and awakening to the supernatural empowerment of the Holy Spirit to live powerfully for the good of

others and the glory of God. Jesus asks only that we acknowledge our broken selves as failed sinners, trust him as our Savior, and follow him as our Lord. Following Jesus does not mean an easy life; however, it does lead to a life of power and purpose, joy in the face of suffering, and profound—even world-changing—love for God and people.

All of this is admittedly a lot to take in. Remember, this is an invitation. Will you follow Jesus? Don't let the failings of his followers deter you. Come and see for yourself.

Here's a prayer to get you started:

Our Father in heaven, it's me, [insert your name]. I have a sense of you and some things about you, but I want to actually know you. I confess I am a sinner. I have failed myself, others, and you in many ways. I know you made me for a purpose and I want to fulfill that purpose with my one life. I want to follow Jesus Christ. Jesus, thank you for the gift of your life, death, resurrection, and ascension on my behalf. I want to walk in relationship with you as Savior and Lord. Would you lead me into the fullness and newness of life I was made for? I am ready to follow you. Come, Holy Spirit, and fill me with the love, power, and purposes of God. I pray these things by faith in the name of Jesus, amen.

It would be our privilege to help you get started and grow deeper in this awakened life of following Jesus. For some next steps and encouragement, visit [seedbed.com/awaken](http://seedbed.com/awaken).

# Introduction

Have you been to a wedding lately? They've changed. Yes, they still do vows and rings, bridesmaids and groomsmen, and, at times, sappy, made-up vows. The change comes at the reception. Sure, there's cake and punch and the usual toasts and niceties. And, yes, there's the traditional first dance and so forth.

The big change comes in what happens next. At some point over the past couple of decades someone had the idea to hire a deejay; that took the wedding reception to a whole new level. The song selections can consume quite a lot of attention. I've known couples that actually got into some pretty big fights over the playlists for these festive occasions.

Why is a playlist so important? These playlists serve as a kind of intergenerational soundtrack. Nothing has the power to unite different generations quite like a song. There's just nothing like that moment at a wedding reception when the deejay cues up the 1976 golden one-hit wonder "Play That Funky Music"! Everyone (from grandmas to toddlers) hits the floor with bodily contortions usually reserved for football games and shuffleboard tournaments. Somehow everyone knows the words and they sing it with an almost liturgical exuberance. The corporate singing of songs has a way of doing this like nothing else. If you don't believe me, just

behold what happens when someone turns up the volume on the wonder song of 1978 by none other than Village People. You know it: “YMCA.”

Now that you are with me, you may be pondering the point I’m trying to make. This notion of an intergenerational catalog of songs sung together by men, women, and children from every tongue, tribe, and nation across the earth was God’s original idea. In fact, God has actually written these songs down in a book, and this book can be found in the very heart and center of the Book of all books, the Bible. See where this is going? Yes, I’m talking about the book of Psalms.

Something that came so naturally to generations of God’s people before, now seems utterly foreign to us. Who sings the Psalms? Answer: monks, nuns, and the occasional Presbyterian church.

*People of God, the Psalms are our soundtrack!*

It’s time we start singing them again. Why? That’s what this book is all about. Melody transforms a message into a movement. Said another way, it takes a “groove-ment” to start a movement. The Psalms groove our soul with the soundtrack of God.

Speaking of groove, vinyl is making a comeback in the music recording industry. Have you ever thought about how a vinyl record gets made? First, the sound waves of live music are recorded onto a tape reel. Next, these sound waves are transmitted through a sapphire stylus (think: very expensive writing instrument), which literally cuts a groove



into the master record, etching the intricacies of the sound waves onto the record. Next, the now-grooved master record is pressed against a circular piece of vinyl, imprinting the grooves onto the vinyl record. To listen to the record, we place it on a turntable where another stylus (we called it a needle back in the day) reads the sound waves and transmits them through speakers, amplifying the sound. It's hard to imagine that we refer to such a complex, beautiful process like this as *analog*. So let me make the “analog-y” that you've already started to process.

The Psalms are the master record. We are the vinyl. God, our Father, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, engaged the lathe-like stylus of people like David and Asaph and other worship leaders of the day to cut deep, intricate grooves of melody and message into the lives of the people of God. This music was recorded onto scrolls and later pressed into books and now comes to us in the format we call the Psalms.

Henceforth, I'll not be calling them the Psalms. Rather, I will refer to the 150-track playlist at the center of our Bibles as the Songs. Yes, it is without rival the best-selling record of all time.

Now, speaking of analog, this is our challenge. If ever we could appropriately use the term *analog*, it would have to be with respect to the recording of the Songs. All we have are the words. It would be akin to someone giving you the liner notes of your favorite band's most recent record without the record. You would look at the person and perhaps use some

version of this poignant phrase of my nine-year-old son, “What the what?!”

That’s what we are dealing with. We’ve managed to content ourselves with the liner notes of the best-selling record of all time. What started out as the Spirit-inspired heart-cries of the human race grooving the Word of God into the ruts of their lives now comes to us mostly in the polished tones of Elizabethan English.

We rave about those lyrics, as we should, but what if we could sing them again? The ancient melodies are lost forever; it’s probably for the best because every generation must make its own melody.

It brings us to the idea of a metrical Psalter. Sure, there’s good old Gregorian chant, but the Protestant Reformation brought a new form of psalm-singing into the church. A metrical Psalter is a type of Bible translation wherein the Psalms are formed into vernacular poetry that can be sung like a hymn in a particular meter (think: metronome). In other words, the Psalms are translated into lyrically rhyming stanzas so they can be sung to a variety of commonly known hymn tunes.

Here’s an example of how this works. Following are the words from Psalm 100:

Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth.  
Worship the LORD with gladness;  
come before him with joyful songs.

Know that the LORD is God.  
It is he who made us, and we are his;  
we are his people, the sheep of his pasture.

Enter his gates with thanksgiving  
 and his courts with praise;  
 give thanks to him and praise his name.  
 For the LORD is good and his love endures forever;  
 his faithfulness continues through all generations.

The following is Psalm 100 arranged in common meter (86.86). This simply means there is a repeating pattern of eight syllables in one line and six syllables in the next line. One of the most well-known hymns in the world, “Amazing Grace,” is written in common meter. Try singing Psalm 100 as written below to the tune of “Amazing Grace.”

Shout joyfully unto the LORD;  
 Let all the earth now sing!  
 Come worship; serve with gladsome heart,  
 Your songs before Him bring.

Know that the LORD Himself is God,  
 He made us; not ourselves;  
 We are His people and His sheep;  
 His pasture's where we dwell.

Enter His gates with thanksgiving,  
 Into His courts with praise.  
 Give thanks to Him and bless His name,  
 Your praises sing always.

For God is good, His love endures,  
 Forever it does last;  
 His faithfulness from age to age,  
 Till life and time are past.

That's how you sing a metrical psalm, and that's how this book will work. Each day will offer a psalm followed by a short

reflection authored by yours truly. I recommend reading the psalm through slowly first. Next, read the reflection. Finally, try singing the psalm.

Why are we doing this? We are doing this because some words were meant to be sung—not just for singing’s sake, but for the sake of our souls. This will be different, so give it time. Because we will be working with some pretty old hymn tunes, it’s just not going to sound as cool as the latest song from Jesus Culture. Stick with it anyway. We will provide resources to help with the singing at **[seedbed.com/soundtrack](http://seedbed.com/soundtrack)**.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote: “Whenever the Psalter is abandoned, an incomparable treasure vanishes from the Christian church. With its recovery will come unsuspected power.”<sup>1</sup>

When Scripture and song—two of the greatest realities in the universe—come together, unsuspected power starts flowing. It brings me to close where I began, with wedding parties. Do you realize at the heart of the heart of the heart of Scripture a song is playing? It is commonly referred to as the Song of Songs. The song, in its core essence, consists of five primal Hebrew words: *my, beloved, mine, I, his* (Song 2:16a).

That’s it. In the deepest heart of the Word of God sings this song of all songs. It never stops playing. We might consider it as the groove of eternity. The Father sings this song over the church, the bride of his Son, in a melody only the Holy Spirit can sound. Yes, this song underwrites and underscores the entire soundtrack of the Psalms.

This song of songs will play without pause until one bright day when the sky will seem to roll back as a scroll. The doors

of heaven will fling wide open and we, the bride of Christ, will behold the image of the one by whom and in whom and through whom we were made, the Son of God.

The soundtrack will suddenly give way to another song: “The Wedding Song of the Lamb.”

“Hallelujah!

For our Lord God Almighty reigns.

Let us rejoice and be glad  
and give him glory!

For the wedding of the Lamb has come,  
and his bride has made herself ready.”

(Rev. 19:6b–7)

And, who knows, maybe it will be playing from a vinyl record! I do know this, we will be dancing and singing and moving to the grooving.



# How This Reader Works

For the next seven weeks I will be leading you through a season of deep devotion to God by reading, singing, praying, and reflecting on the Songs (the Psalms). Each day begins with a psalm and is followed by a short reflection designed to spark your own rumination. I will not be giving you a lot of things to do. Each day will call for a simple application: sing the song. That's it.

As always, the study of Scripture works best when other people are involved. I encourage you to engage this journey with a spouse or a friend or, even better, a group of friends or couples. This journey is designed to help people have nonthreatening yet meaningful conversations about how the Holy Spirit is at work in one another's lives. So often we are reluctant to talk about God with other people, not because we do not know what to say, but because we have no idea how to say it. This guide will help with that.

## ***Navigating Meters and Tunes***

The psalms for our daily readings have been carefully and artfully crafted into a metrical, poetic format known as a Psalter. Seedbed is grateful to Dr. Timothy and Mrs. Julie Tennent for their labor to work the biblical Psalms into this time-tested format.

At the start of each psalm in this book, you will find both the meter and a hymn tune. Remember that the meter is simply the pattern of syllables in each line of the song. (For example: 87.87 means a line with eight syllables followed by a line with seven syllables, repeated throughout the song.) It may be helpful to note the following abbreviations and their corresponding meter:

C.M.	Common Meter	86.86
L.M.	Long Meter	88.88
S.M.	Short Meter	66.86
D	Double	

Finally, you'll see numbers listed alongside the text of the psalm. These correspond with the verse numbers just as they are in the book of Psalms. This format helps us to remember that these metrical settings follow the actual text of the biblical psalm, and that the tune is simply a vehicle for the journey. Both the meter and the tune are meant to carry the message of the psalm into the deep places of the heart and soul; however, the journey is ultimately in the text, not the music.

### ***The Forty Days of Lent***

For well more than a thousand years, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the church has set aside certain times to practice the rhythms of repentance and restoration—seasons of fasting followed by periods of feasting. Lent is one of these seasons. Begin on Ash Wednesday. (If you are



engaging the guide at another point in the year, any day will do.) Truth be told, the season of Lent runs for forty-six days. Lent begins on Ash Wednesday and concludes on the Saturday prior to Easter. The six Sundays do not count in the forty days. Sunday, the day of resurrection, is always a feasting day and never a fasting day. The text will reflect this reality.

Lent is part of the larger calendar of what we call The Awakening Year. The Word of God (a.k.a. the Bible), by which we know the Word (a.k.a. Jesus), is the single most important time-telling device in the history of history and in the future of eternity. Take a look at the map-like drawing on page xxix of this book. You will note it is the life of Jesus Christ mapped out in a linear movemental fashion. It coheres around three epic journeys: the journey of Advent through Epiphany: darkness to light; the journey of Lent through Easter: death to life; and the journey of Pentecost through Kingdomtide: brokenness to wholeness.

It begins at the highest summit where we gaze upon the furthest horizon we can grasp and behold the second Advent (coming) of our Lord Jesus Christ. From there we embark on a journey of descent, narrated by prophets and leading us to a field with shepherds and angels and onward to a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and laying in a manger—Christmas. After a twelve day celebration we enter the next leg of the journey: Epiphany. It always begins on January 6 with the telling of the story of the wise kings who came from the far east, who discovered the mystery not from the prophets but from the stars. From here we move on a path

of ascent through miracles, mysteries, and manifestations until we reach the summit of what history calls “The Mount of Transfiguration.” It is another of the high places of the story where we can almost reach out and touch eternity—so glorious we will want to make permanent encampment. This begins the second epic journey.

Journey two takes us into the descent of all descents as we follow Jesus through forty days of wilderness all the way down to the cross. Maundy Thursday leads to Good Friday and Holy Saturday and the surprise of all surprises: Easter Sunday and the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Here begins an ascent leading us through fifty days we call Eastertide. On the fortieth day we watch as Jesus ascends into the clouds to the right hand of God. Ten days later we gather on the day of Pentecost where he sends the promised Holy Spirit upon the gathered people of God and the church is born.

Journey three finds us filled with the Spirit on the now well-worn path of descent into the valley of vision where we follow Jesus into the kingdom of “on earth as it is in heaven,” doing the things he did and even greater things. From here we embark on a movement we call Kingdomtide, winding our way back up to the summit of the King of all kings, where we again gaze upon the far Advent horizon to behold his coming again.

This map sketch is meant to convey the reality that time is not a never-ending cyclical process but, rather, the movement of God with us. Though there be a beginning, middle, and end, this is the world without end.

There is much more to say. This is only the sketch. It is time for Lent now.

Lent . . . the season the world's company of chocolatiers loves to hate. How on earth have we managed to reduce Jesus' forty-day, fiercely conflicted fast in the desert to, "I'm going to give up chocolate for Lent"? Or, in my case, "I'm going to give up the grande, five-pump, no-water chai latte with a shot of espresso"? I suppose it has merit, letting go of these small indulgences, but, in my experience, it typically only ratchets up my focus on them. Fasting must lead to a bigger focus than the thing being fasted from.

### ***Finding Our Focus, Grooving Our Gaze***

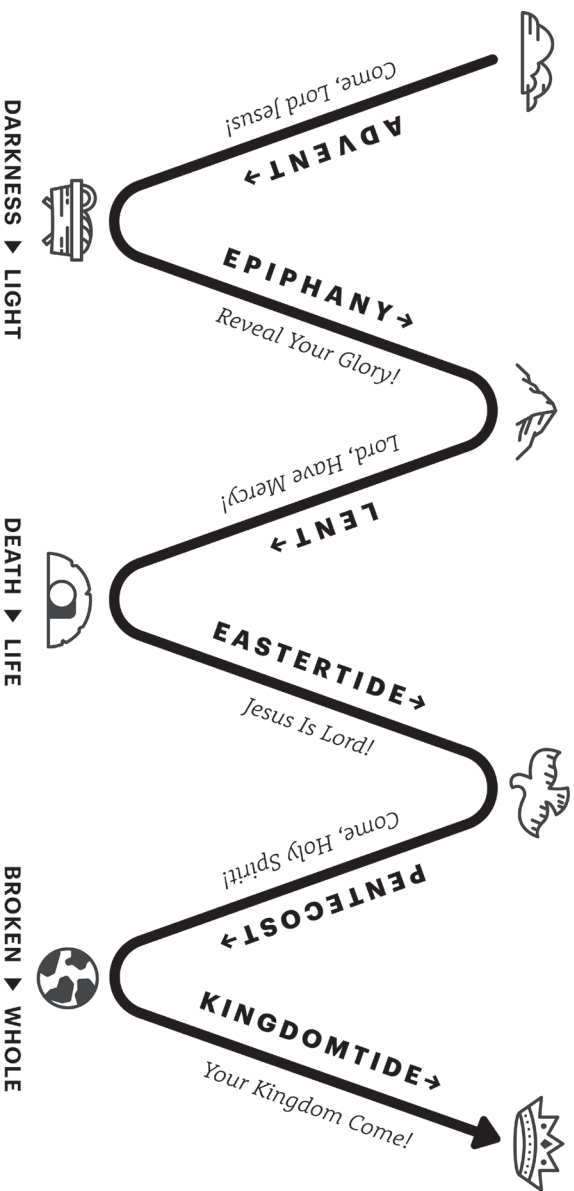
The big idea of the forty days of Lent is not first and foremost about fasting. It's about focus. We must covenant not to talk about our fasting, but about our focus. Focus on what? Jesus Christ, God's Son, the Savior, the Lord. Why? Because he is:

- the Word made flesh (John 1:14)
- the image of the invisible God (Col. 1:15)
- the exact representation of God's being (Heb. 1:3)
- the one who created all things and for whom all things were created (Col. 1:16 and Rev. 4:11)
- he who is before all things and in whom all things hold together (Col. 1:17)
- the author and perfecter of our faith (Heb. 12:2 NASB)
- he who was, and is, and is to come (Rev. 1:4b, 8; 4:8)

- he who reconciled all things to himself by making peace through his blood shed on the cross (Col. 1:20)
- the light of the world (John 8:12)
- the bread of life (John 6:35)
- the way and the truth and the life (John 14:6)
- the gate (John 10:7, 9)
- the door (John 10:7, 9 NASB)
- the resurrection and the life (John 11:25)
- the true vine (John 15:1)
- the one who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage, but made himself nothing (Phil. 2:6–7)
- the King who humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross (Phil. 2:8)
- he whom God highly exalted and gave the name that is above every name (Phil. 2:9)
- the one before whom every knee will bow and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Phil. 2:10–11)
- the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End (Rev. 22:13)
- he who is making all things new (Rev. 21:5 NASB)

Stretched out before you now are forty days of focus. At your hands are the Word of God and the Spirit of God. All that remains is the consecration of your attention to the risen Lord Jesus Christ, the singer and songwriter of the ages. Get ready to turn up the music and sing your heart inside-out.

# The Awakening Calendar





# **Soundtrack**





**First Day of Lent: Ash Wednesday**  
**The Journey from**  
**“Born This Way” to**  
**“Born Again”**

1

**Psalm 51**

To the tune of “Amazing Grace”

C.M.

- 1 From Your unfailing love, O God,  
Have mercy upon me;  
Blot out transgressions, cleanse from sin,
- 2 Purge my iniquity.
- 3 For my transgressions and my sin  
are always in Your sight;
- 4 'Gainst You alone, I've evil done,  
And turned from what is right.  
  
So You are right when You do speak  
and judge me from within;
- 5 For from the time I was conceived,  
I have been trapped in sin.
- 6 For truth is what You call us to,  
Formed in our inward parts;  
You teach me wisdom day by day,  
In the depths of my heart.
- 7 Cleanse me with hyssop, make me clean;  
Wash me—I'll be as snow;
- 8 Let me hear joy, let bones rejoice  
which You once crushed below.

- 9 O hide Your face from all my sins,  
Blot out iniquity;
- 10 Create in me a pure heart, God;  
Renew Your life in me.
- Renew my steadfast spirit, God,  
11 And cast me not from You;  
Don't take Your Holy Spirit, Lord,  
From me; Your Spirit true.
- 12 Restore to me salvation's joy,  
And grant, O Lord, to me  
a spirit willing to praise You  
and then sustained I'll be.
- 13 Then I'll teach sinners of Your ways  
and they will turn to You;
- 14 Save me from bloodguilt, Savior God;  
My tongue will sing Your truth.
- 15 Lord, open up my lips, my mouth  
will Your great praise declare;
- 16 You don't delight in sacrifice,  
Or I would bring it there.
- 17 The sacrifices You require  
are broken, contrite hearts;  
O God, You won't despise these if  
they're from our inward parts.
- 18 With pleasure, prosper Zion, Lord,  
Build up Jerusalem;
- 19 Then righteous off'rings will be made;  
And You'll delight in them.

**Consider This . . .**

Can you remember your first real sin? I remember mine. I stole twenty dollars from my mother's wallet, and to make it okay, I went out into the backyard, wadded up the money, threw it on the ground, and walked away about ten yards. Then I turned back around and walked back over to—surprisingly and delightfully—find a twenty-dollar bill wadded up on the ground. Someone must have dropped it! Brilliant! Then I invoked the “finders keepers” rule. Next, I made the ill-fated decision to run and tell my mom of my good fortune. How long do you think it took her to do the math on that one? Exactly.

That's the junior version of stealing someone else's wife, getting her pregnant, and then arranging her husband's death. Song 51 was David's confession in response to his treacherous sin.

I used to think I became a real sinner on that ill-fated day in the backyard. Now I know better. I used to think I was a sinner because I sinned. This Song tells me the hard truth: I was born this way. I was born into the corrupted lineage of the human race. I am not a sinner because I sin. I sin because I am a sinner. Major difference!

There are bigger questions afoot here: Am I destined to always sin? Am I forever stuck in the broken category of “sinner”? Can this cancer be cured, or is managing the size of the tumor the best we can hope for? If I was born this way, what are the implications of being born again?

Though a far, far cry from it today, the Methodist movement believed in and experienced a cure. They used the old-fashioned biblical term for it: *sanctification*. They believed a person could become so infused with the holiness of the love of God that sin would actually lose its hold on him. Another way of saying this is these men and women took the gospel at its word.

In a letter he wrote to a Mr. Walter Churchey, John Wesley put into words what he saw happening:

Entire sanctification, or Christian perfection, is neither more nor less than pure love; love expelling sin, and governing both the heart and life of a child of God. The Refiner's fire purges out all that is contrary to love, and that many times by a pleasing smart. Leave all this to Him that does all things well, and that loves you better than you do yourself.<sup>2</sup>

Do you believe this is possible? Your answer will be determinative of your future.

Song 51 is the beginning of the cure.

***Ask Yourself. Share with Another.***

Do you believe it is possible to grow so full of the love of God that sin as you know it loses its power over you? Why or why not?

Sing it at [seedbed.com/soundtrack](http://seedbed.com/soundtrack)

# How the Psalms Work More like Orange Juice Concentrate than Simply Orange

## 2

### Psalm 90

To the tune of "O God Our Help in Ages Past"

C.M.

- 1 Lord, You have been our dwelling place,  
through generations all;  
From age to age, our hiding place;  
our refuge whom we call.
- 2 Before the mountains came to be,  
or earth sprang from Your word;  
From everlasting to all time,  
You are the only God.
- 3 You turn men back to dust and say,  
"Return, O sons of men";  
For dust we are, to dust return;  
we go to dust again.
- 4 A thousand years are merely like  
a day within Your sight;  
A day soon gone, or like a watch  
that passes in the night.
- 5 We're swept away as in death's sleep;  
like new grass in the morn;

6 Though it sprouts up with morning light,  
by dusk it's dry and worn.

7 For by Your anger we're consumed;  
in terror at Your wrath;

8 You've set our sins before You, and  
Your light reveals their path.

9 Our days pass quickly in Your wrath;  
years like a sigh are past;

10 Our length of days are seventy,  
or eighty if strength last.

And yet their span's with trouble filled,  
and sorrow marks our way;  
Days quickly pass and soon are gone;  
and we just fly away.

11 Who knows the power of Your wrath?  
It's great as fear You're due!

12 Teach us to number right our days  
and gain Your wisdom true.

13 Relent, O LORD! How long till You  
have mercy on Your saints?

14 Come satisfy us in the morn  
with love that never faints.

Then we will sing for joy, and will  
be glad for all our days;

15 O make us glad as many days  
as we've known troubled ways.

16 May Your deeds and Your works be shown  
unto Your servants all;

Your splendor to their children and  
to those who on You call.

- 17 May God's good favor rest on us;  
our work before Him stand.  
Yes, Lord our God, establish firm  
the work of our own hands.

**Consider This . . .**

Growing up, we didn't have the present-day luxury of bottled juices such as Simply Orange. We actually got those little cans out of the freezer, often thawing them overnight, and mixed the contents with water to make our orange juice. The cans contained an ingredient known as *concentrate*, a thick, syrupy, profoundly orange substance. I used to love prying the lid off early before breakfast and sneaking a small spoonful of the stuff into my mouth. It produced a bit of a mouth-explosion effect of goodness. But who could take more than a spoonful? The taste vividly remains with me.

That's what the Psalms are like and how they work. They gather up all of the glorious details from Scripture of the character of God and all of the dastardly depths of the human condition and combine them into a powerful concentrate. We can only take about a spoonful at a time. And that's okay, because over time they mingle with the water that is our lives and result in something unexpectedly good. At times the concentrate is so strong that it's bitter; at other times it tastes pleasantly sweet.

Song 90 gives us a massively concentrated contrast between the incomprehensible infiniteness of God and the frail finiteness of human beings:

Before the mountains came to be,  
or earth sprang from Your word;  
From everlasting to the same,  
You, only You, are God.

You turn men back to dust and say,  
“Return, O sons of men”;  
For dust we are, to dust return;  
we go to dust again.

We need this concentrated reminder. As for me, “dust, dust, dust, dust. You, only You, are God.”

Something about actually singing these songs brings out the fullness of their taste. And, yes, it is a bit of an acquired taste. It will take time. Just sing this one today.

***Ask Yourself. Share with Another.***

Can you think of a story or situation in your past when you realized your own frailty and finiteness? What might it mean to think of yourself as made of dirt yet filled with the breath of God? How do those two realities work together? Or not?

**Sing it at [seedbed.com/soundtrack](http://seedbed.com/soundtrack)**



# The Penitential Psalms as a Counterinsurgency Field Manual

## 3

### Psalm 38

To the tune of “God Moves in a Mysterious Way”

C.M.

- 1 LORD, don't rebuke me in Your wrath,  
in anger don't chide me;
- 2 Your arrows pierce me and Your hand  
is heavy upon me.
- 3 Because of Your great wrath, I'm sick;  
my bones are weak from sin;
- 4 My guilt o'erwhelms me like a weight,  
too deep to bear within.
- 5 My wounds, they fester loathsomely,  
because of sinful pride;
- 6 I am bowed down, brought very low;  
and mourn all day inside.
- 7 My back is filled with searing pain;  
in me no health is found;
- 8 I'm feeble and crushed utterly;  
my anguished groans abound.
- 9 My longings lie before You, Lord;  
and You hear all my sighs;
- 10 With pounding heart, my strength fails me;  
the light's gone from my eyes.

- 11 My friends and neighbors stay away,  
because they see my lot;  
12 Foes set their traps and seek my life,  
and all day long they plot.
- 13 I'm like the deaf who cannot hear;  
like mute, who cannot speak;  
14 I'm like the one who does not hear,  
whose mouth no words can speak.
- 15 I wait for You, O LORD my God;  
and You will answer me;  
16 For I said, "Do not let them gloat;  
exalt themselves o'er me."
- 17 For I am just about to fall;  
always my pain's within;  
18 So I confess iniquity;  
I'm troubled by my sin.
- 19 Too many are my enemies,  
who hate me without cause;  
20 They pay me evil for my good;  
and slander without pause.
- 21 O LORD, do not forsake me now,  
and be not far from me;  
22 O Lord, my Savior, hear me now;  
come quickly to help me.

**Consider This . . .**

Do you remember those days in our recent national history when we thought the war in Iraq was over? President George W. Bush, dressed in fighter pilot garb, landed on the deck

of the USS *Abraham Lincoln* aircraft carrier. After stepping out of the Navy S-3B fighter jet to great fanfare, he gave a speech while standing in front of a massive banner, which read: “Mission Accomplished.” In the sense that the sovereignty of Saddam Hussein’s rule of Iraq had been defeated and temporarily transferred into the hands of the United States, yes, mission accomplished. No one seemed to realize the real war hadn’t even started yet. The rule of Saddam had been cancelled, and yet this cancelled rule retained a form of rogue power and presence. It became known as the “insurgency.” The United States, in cooperation with Iraqi police, began a war of a completely different order, known as the “counterinsurgency.” General David Petraus wrote what is now famously known as the *Counterinsurgency Field Manual*.

When we place our faith in Jesus Christ as Savior, we are saved from the penalty of sin. In other words, any sin on the ledger of our lives—past, present, and future—is cancelled. The debt is paid in full by the atoning work of Jesus through his life, death, resurrection, and ascension to the right hand of God. The trouble with cancelled sin is that it retains a form of rogue power and presence. Recall a verse of Charles Wesley’s most celebrated hymn, “O, For a Thousand Tongues to Sing”:

He breaks the power of canceled sin;  
 He sets the prisoner free.  
 His blood can make the foulest clean,  
 His blood availed for me.

Are you seeing the analogy? Justification by grace through faith is mission accomplished, in the sense that the sovereignty of Satan's rule has been defeated and transferred into the hands of Jesus Christ. But the real war against the insurgency of sin is only getting started. What we need is a counterinsurgency field manual. And that's precisely what Song 38, and others like it, offer us.

The great reformer John Calvin once said of the Psalms that they are an anatomy of all parts of the soul. Today's psalm, Song 38, offers us one of the seven penitential psalms (6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, and 143). They are songs designed to help us repent and believe the gospel. The greatest impediment to our believing the gospel beyond mere assent to its truth is the sin believers continue to carry within them. The penitential psalms offer us a counterinsurgency field manual for the war against the insurgency of sin.

***Ask Yourself. Share with Another.***

Can you in any way identify with Song 38? Do you have any sense of the power of cancelled sin in your life? If not, you'd better be on the lookout for roadside bombs. Pray for the Holy Spirit to reveal the reality of your inner life, not for condemnation, but for the sake of deep change. Prepare yourself, though; it will awaken in you a holy discontent for more of God than you presently know. Trust that. Obey the promptings. It's the way that leads to life.

And don't forget to sing.

Sing it at [seedbed.com/soundtrack](http://seedbed.com/soundtrack)

# How the Psalms Get beyond Anger Management

## 4

### Psalm 43

To the tune of “O, For a Thousand Tongues to Sing”

C.M.

- 1 O vindicate and plead my cause,  
O God, against the foe;  
Come rescue me from wicked men,  
a nation vile and low.
- 2 You are my stronghold and my God;  
why do You reject me?  
Why must I mourn all day oppressed  
by the vile enemy?
- 3 Send forth Your light and send Your truth,  
and let them guide me well.  
O let them bring me to Your mount,  
the place where You do dwell.
- 4 Then I'll go to God's altar—God,  
my joy and my delight;  
And I will praise You with the harp,  
O God, my God, my light.
- 5 Why are you so downcast, my soul?  
Why so disturbed in me?  
Put hope in God—I'll praise Him yet;  
my Savior God is He!

### ***Consider This . . .***

Jesus instructed us to love our enemies and to pray for those who persecute us (Matt. 5:44). This sounds good . . . until I actually have an enemy. Then it's a pretty big stretch. Song 43 models a more doable strategy. At least it's a starting place. The singer decides to take the battle not to the throat of the enemy, but to the heart of God.

Though he wrote these words in another context, John Calvin's words ring true throughout the Psalms: "It is God with whom we have to deal."<sup>3</sup> Whether our situation is for better or worse, for richer or poorer, in sickness or in health, the Psalms always redirect our attention, affections, angst, and emotions to God alone.

Are you facing an irreconcilable injustice somewhere in your life today? Does it seem your enemies are prevailing? Do you need to be vindicated in some situation? Is there a painful chasm in your marriage or a divisive feud in your community? How about an incomprehensible tragedy? In the face of well-intentioned people (often pastors) who console with words like, "God has a reason for this," or, "God is allowing this to happen for his glory," today's song and many more like it teach a different set of rules for divine engagement. And there's really only one rule: it is God with whom we have to deal.

Don't hold back. Cry out for vindication. Sing out your angst to God against your enemies. Not only is this a healthy way of dealing with our problems, but it is a holy way. Frankly, it

is the only way if we are ever to arrive at a true place of loving our enemies.

It is God with whom we have to deal.

There's something about singing these words (over time) that takes them to a whole new level. It's like going from black and white to full Technicolor. Sing this one now.

***Ask Yourself. Share with Another.***

Do you carry around anger or angst at people or situations? Do you tend to express it to them? Or do you have a lot of angry fantasy conversations with them in your head? If this describes you, chances are you are a passive-aggressive person. What is a better strategy?

**Sing it at [seedbed.com/soundtrack](http://seedbed.com/soundtrack)**





## First Sunday of Lent

# What to Do with a Psalm When You're Just Not Feeling It

## Psalm 44

To the tune of "How Firm a Foundation"

11.11.11.11

- 1 O God, we have heard what our fathers have told,  
What You did in their days, days glor'ous of old.
- 2 With Your hand You drove out the nations and gave  
our fathers their land, crushed all foes in the grave.
- 3 It was not by sword that they took all the land;  
Their arm brought no vict'ry—it was by Your hand.  
Your right hand, Your arm, and the light of Your face,  
You loved them so truly, and showed them Your grace.
- 4 O Lord, You're my God, and You are my great King;  
And vict'ries for Jacob You plan and You bring.
- 5 Through You we push back, enemies we depose;  
Through Your name we trample upon all our foes.
- 6 I trust not my own bow, nor sword for my fame;
- 7 For You give the vict'ry; put our foes to shame.
- 8 In God we will boast all throughout the day long;  
And we'll praise Your name, Lord, forever in song.

- 9 But now You reject us and humble us, too;  
Our armies go out, but no longer with You.
- 10 You made us retreat, as the enemy closed,  
And we have been plundered by vi-o-lent foes.
- 11 Now we are de-vour-ed like sheep that are lost;  
You let us be scattered and helplessly tossed.
- 12 You sold us, Your people, and nothing did gain;  
You gave up Your people for others to reign.
- 13 We're now a reproach to our neighbors and friends;  
The scorn and derision of them never ends.
- 14 You've made us a byword among nations all;  
They shake their heads at us, and mockingly call.
- 15 Disgrace is before me throughout all the day;  
My face must be covered; shame won't go away.
- 16 They taunt and revile me; reproach never ends;  
Because of my foes who are bent on revenge.
- 17 Now all this has happened, though we had been true;  
We broke not Your cov'nant; did not forget You.
- 18 Our hearts had not turned back; our feet had not strayed;  
19 You crushed us in darkness; a jackal's haunt made.
- 20 If we had forgotten the name of our God,  
Or spread out our hand to a false, foreign god;
- 21 Would God not have seen it, since He knows our heart?  
22 For Your sake we face death, like sheep torn apart.
- 23 Awake, Lord! Why sleep? Don't reject us again.  
24 Why hide Your face? When will our misery end?  
25 We're brought down to dust, our life's flung to  
the ground;
- 26 Rise up now and help us! Let Your love abound!

**Consider This . . .**

I remember, years ago, the first time I walked into a Gold's Gym. The sheer number of different weight-lifting machines and exercise stations stunned me. I thought to myself, *Who could do all this?* In one of my early novice workouts, I decided to try out every machine and station. I think I took the next year off from the gym. Seriously, I discovered muscles I never knew I had. I learned it would take a structured approach over a long period of time to develop my atrophied muscular system. In that season of my life, I grew stronger than ever before, and it improved every aspect of my health and wellness.

Writing in the latter part of the fourth century, Ambrose, the archbishop of Milan, in his commentary on the Psalms, described them as “a gymnasium which is open for all souls to use, where the different psalms are like different exercises set out before him. In that gymnasium, in that stadium of virtue, he can choose the exercises that will train him best to win the victor’s crown.”<sup>4</sup>

When I come to a psalm like today’s, I’ve got to be honest; I’m just not feeling it. All the angst of being forsaken, forgotten, and rejected for no apparent reason is just not my present experience. It’s kind of like what happened to me in the gym over time. Little by little, my exercise regimen got smaller and smaller and also much less diverse. I went for my favorite lifting machines that strengthened my already developed muscles. When it came to the cable crossover exercises, it got easier and easier to “skip that one today.”

Ambrose nailed it in his word on the Psalms. As it is in the gym, so it is with the Psalms. Think of the soul as a type of muscular system. The muscles I exercise will strengthen. The muscles I neglect will atrophy. The trouble with the soul is I have no mirror to assess my condition. It takes a real, live situation to expose the soul. If I am not working out with psalms like today's text, the muscles will simply not be there when the time comes.

Song 44 is a long way from Song 23. "The LORD is my Shepherd" is in a completely different part of the gym than, "Yet now we face death, and like sheep we're disowned."

I am going to address you as a maturing believer. Do the exercise. It doesn't matter if you feel it. Sing it now.

***Ask Yourself. Share with Another.***

Can you remember a time when you did not have the inner strength to deal with a person or situation in the way you wanted? How might you exercise and strengthen that part of your soul?

**Sing it at [seedbed.com/soundtrack](https://seedbed.com/soundtrack)**