

Reading the Bible as Meditation Literature

Facilitator Guide



DATE _____	Session 1	_____	Session 6
_____	Session 2	_____	Session 7
_____	Session 3	_____	Session 8
_____	Session 4	_____	Session 9
_____	Session 5		

About This Guide

The Bible is communal literature, designed to be read and studied by groups of people learning to live within its story. BibleProject Classroom seeks to model this communal approach to Bible study and provide individuals and communities with the opportunity to participate. We designed this guide to support folks leading others through a BibleProject class. So grab a friend or gather with your small group to journey together!

Suggested Formats

To get started, we recommend picking a regular meeting rhythm. While many groups find that weekly meetings work well, every group is different. There's no single "right" way to facilitate this class, so choose what works best for your group. Here are two possible formats.

FORMAT 1 Watch Together	FORMAT 2 Watch Individually
1. Welcome Start by welcoming the group and creating space for connection. This might look like sharing a meal, doing a brief icebreaker, or opening in prayer—whatever helps your group relax and feel united.	1. Watch Before each meeting, everyone watches the assigned session(s) on their own. This can be helpful for groups that would like more time for discussion or for group members who prefer to watch the sessions at their own pace.
2. Watch Most groups choose to watch about an hour of content at a time (1-2 sessions). We've found that connecting to a larger screen (e.g., via cable or AirPlay) is often helpful. Some groups pause for reflection and discussion throughout the session.	2. Welcome Start by welcoming the group and creating space for connection. This might look like sharing a meal, doing a brief icebreaker, or opening in prayer—whatever helps your group relax and feel united.
3. Discuss Reserve some time at the end of your meeting (we recommend 30 minutes to 1 hour) to discuss questions from this guide or from your group. It's also a great time to re-read and meditate on any passages covered during the session.	3. Discuss Discuss questions from this guide or from your group. It's also a great time to re-read and meditate on any passages covered during the session.

Tips for Facilitators

Create space for connection and questions

You don't have to be a Bible nerd to be a facilitator! As a facilitator, your role is to guide the group's discussion rather than to teach the content. We try to model curiosity and humility, inviting questions and encouraging deep meditation on the biblical text, rather than rushing to interpretation and application.

We want to build a community where our unique perspectives help us see the bigger picture together, finding unity in our diversity, and where everyone feels comfortable enough to voice their real questions, even the messy ones. Rather than reaching for quick fixes, we seek to invite the group to practice holding hard truths in tension, consistently going back to the text to discover what God is revealing through the biblical writers.

A little prep goes a long way

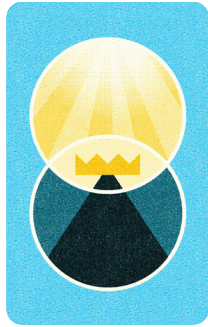
Each session includes Teacher Notes that can be a valuable digital or printed resource for notetaking or reference during your meetings. Many past facilitators have recommended watching the session(s) and reviewing the Teacher Notes for each meeting (or even the entire class!) in advance. This guide contains key takeaways to help your group recall core ideas and reflection questions to seed discussion. Some facilitators also find it helpful to prepare their own discussion questions, tailored to their group, before the meeting. If you are planning to watch the sessions together, consider setting up your viewing plan and testing the technology beforehand.

Finally, take a few minutes at the end of each meeting to confirm the date of the next meeting and which session(s) you'll cover.

Bible Study Guide

Some sessions will dive deep into a specific passage. For those sessions, you can reference this guide to help your group meditate on Scripture together. This Bible study method encourages you to allow your curiosity to drive you, and it honors the Bible as both literary art and divine wisdom.

1. **Read the Passage.** Read the selected passage slowly and with the expectation of discovery.
2. **Collect Questions.** Every question is good. Let's get them all out and write them down. The Bible is inviting us to lean in and be curious.
3. **Watch the Session.** The corresponding video shows the literary design of the passage and encourages deeper discussion.
4. **For discussion time:**
 - **Make Observations.** Continue the conversation! What other details can we observe about the passage? What is the point of repeated words or phrases? What can we see by comparing lines or comparing sections?
 - **Choose One Question and Discuss.** Which one of the questions collected during step 2 does the group find most interesting? Which question seems most aligned with what the passage wants us to ask? Choose one and discuss it.
 - **Examine Hyperlinks.** What other passages in the Bible discuss the same question? What other passages have the same key words or themes? Let's find one or two and compare them.
 - **Discern Wisdom.** What is God's invitation to us as a community through this passage?



WATCH

SESSION 1: What Is Meditation Literature?

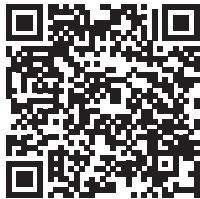
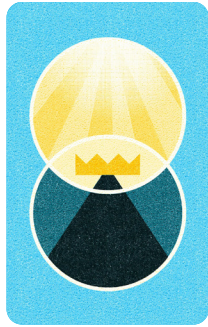
The Bible is ancient meditation literature, but what does it mean to read with this in mind? Discover the impact of reading the Bible on its own terms.

Key Takeaways

- The Hebrew Bible instructs people to *hagah* (“meditate”) on God’s words. That involves a lifelong, thoughtful, embodied, repetitive, and ongoing practice that leads to the formation of the whole person in the shape of the object of meditation.
- The Jewish communities around the time of Jesus understood their Scriptures to be meditation literature.
- The description “meditation literature” speaks not only to the content of the Bible but also to its form. The subject matter of Scripture, God’s words and deeds, is worthy of our meditation. Its form is designed for engagement through re-readings over a lifetime.

Reflection Questions

1. Consider the breadth of meaning of the Hebrew word *hagah* (meditate). What does “reading the Bible as meditation literature” entail when we allow *hagah* to shape our definition of meditation?
2. The Jewish communities around Jesus believed their Scriptures were written as meditation literature. What difference will it make if you approach the Bible not merely as information but also as an invitation to lifelong reflection and transformation?
3. If biblical authors designed texts to form us through re-reading, how might returning to the same passages again and again allow their meaning, and your understanding of God, to deepen over time?



WATCH

SESSION 2: The Biblical Authors' Toolkit

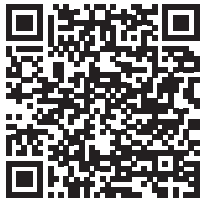
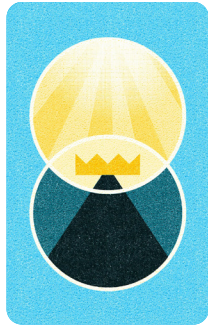
The biblical authors were literary geniuses who designed the Bible for a lifetime of meditation. Learn the tools they used to craft the text of Scripture.

Key Takeaways

- Biblical literature does not conform to modern conventions of storytelling. We can miss the message of the biblical authors if we expect the Bible to communicate like a modern text.
- Biblical literature frequently uses aspectival representation to communicate its message, presenting seemingly incongruent depictions of ideas or events side by side to portray a more dynamic perspective.
- The biblical authors use many forms of parallelism—representing ideas in coordinated, connected sets—in all different types of biblical literature (e.g., poetry, narrative, chronicle, prophecy).
- The authors use symmetrical design to organize the biblical text into a literary unity. Their design allows the connection and coordination of ideas within the smallest literary unit, as well as within entire scrolls, and even among the whole collection of scrolls.

Reflection Questions

1. How would expecting the Bible to read like a modern book affect the way you interpret it?
2. How would you describe the difference between aspectival and perspectival representation? How do these categories help us better understand biblical literature?
3. The biblical authors often communicate through parallelism, placing ideas side by side to reveal how they connect. When have you noticed this design in the Bible? How might noticing parallels help you better understand the authors' intent?
4. The Bible's literary symmetry connects ideas across passages, scrolls, and the whole collection. How might an awareness of this design shape your trust in the coherence and wisdom of the biblical story?



WATCH

SESSION 3: Meditating on Psalm 1:1-3

Biblical literature is exquisitely crafted, from the smallest line to the shape of the entire collection. Examine the intricacies of the first lines of Psalm 1.

Meditate on Scripture

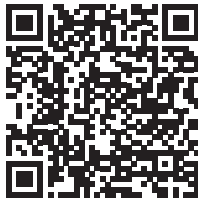
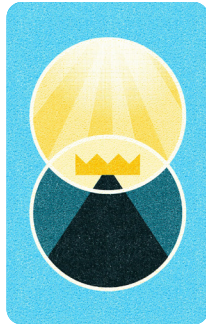
Psalm 1:1-3

Key Takeaways

- Psalms 1 and 2 were designed and placed together to communicate a coordinated message. Recognizing this coordination requires meditation on the shared themes and structure.
- The tight coordination and intricate design of Psalm 1 is apparent in its first three-word line. The psalmist uses repeated sounds and symmetry to introduce the set of three statements that follows.
- The good-life man (whose life Psalm 1:1 identifies as “blessed”) is likened to a tree in Psalm 1:3, inviting us to meditate on the way being precedes doing and to contemplate the biblical portrait of success.

Reflection Questions

1. Psalms 1 and 2 were placed together with intention. How might meditating on their shared themes and structure shape the way you read the Psalms scroll as a whole?
2. Even in its first three words, Psalm 1 reveals careful symmetry and intricate design. What does this craftsmanship show about how the author intends the reader to experience this psalm?
3. Consider the tree metaphor in Psalm 1:3. How does this image inform us about the nature of a blessed life and the biblical definition of success?



WATCH

SESSION 4: Meditating on Psalm 1:4-6

Study Psalm 1:4-6 to discover how biblical authors develop ideas and connect to ideas outside the passage.

Meditate on Scripture

Psalm 1

Key Takeaways

- The biblical authors use words that look similar to create connections within the text. For example, the Hebrew words for “like a tree” (*ke’ets*) and “like chaff” (*kammots*) in Psalm 1:3-4 differ by only one consonant and look very similar.
- Biblical literature is art. As such, it operates in both subjective and objective ways. The intricate design of these psalms leads readers on a journey of meditation in which the subjective and the objective come together.
- Just because a structural relationship links two ideas does not mean they are the same. The connection invites us to meditate on the relationship between them.

Reflection Questions

1. The biblical authors use words that look and sound alike to connect ideas such as “like a tree” and “like chaff.” How does noticing these subtle design choices draw you deeper into the meaning of the passage?
2. Poetry and art shape us in both subjective and objective ways. As you engage with the Psalms as artful literature, how does that union of experience and revelation influence what you take away from your reading?
3. Not every parallel in Scripture points to sameness. In what ways is “knowing” in Psalm 1:6 the opposite of “perishing”?



WATCH

SESSION 5: Meditating on Psalm 2:1-6

Dive into Psalm 2, where God answers the world's uproar with his unshakable plan, revealed in the anointed king established on the mountain of Zion.

Meditate on Scripture

Psalm 2:1-6

Key Takeaways

- Psalm 2 begins with a dense cluster of words about people: nations, peoples, kings, rulers, and God's anointed one. It contrasts the plotting of the many with the established plan of God, centered on the one.
- When the kings of the Earth plot their rebellion against God's plan, the unspoken subtext is that those facing the immediate consequences of their actions are not the powerful, but those who lack the influence to avoid the fallout.
- Psalm 2:1-6 shares many words and ideas with Psalm 1, but often with inverted emphasis, like how the rebellious ones "meditate emptiness" in 2:1 (see 1:2) or God being the one who "mocks" in 2:4 (see 1:1).
- The turmoil on the land versus God's unperturbed reign in the skies creates a striking contrast. The anointed king revealed on the Heaven-meets-Earth mountain of Zion serves as an answer to the disconnect between Heaven and Earth.

Reflection Questions

1. At the beginning of Psalm 2, there is a contrast between the many, who plot in vain, and the one whom God has appointed. What does this tension between human striving and divine purpose reveal about where we find true stability?
2. Psalm 2 echoes and inverts ideas from Psalm 1—the wicked "meditate" (*hagah*) on emptiness (Ps. 2:1) while God laughs from Heaven (Ps. 2:4). What might these reversals teach about the outcomes of different kinds of meditation?
3. What portrait does Psalm 2:1-6 paint of the world?



WATCH

SESSION 6: Meditating on Psalm 2:7-12

Examine the portrait of God's chosen king in Psalm 2 and see how this poem links past promises with future hope.

Meditate on Scripture

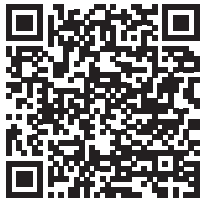
Psalm 2

Key Takeaways

- Psalm 2 presents an ideal portrait of the king in the line of David. In much the same way, Genesis 1 presents an ideal portrait of humanity as the image of God, ruling with wisdom and justice.
- The most useful skill for reading the Bible is noticing the repetition of words and similar ideas.
- The Hebrew Bible portrays various individuals and groups as God's sons. The New Testament authors further develop the portrait by showing how Jesus is the ultimate "Son of God," who fulfills the promises of God set down through the ages.

Reflection Questions

1. How does the Hebrew Bible's portrait of a chosen king in the line of David as God's son point to fulfillment in Jesus, God the Son?
2. Repetition is one of the Bible's main teaching tools. How can growing in attentiveness to repeated words or ideas help you uncover the Bible's deeper unity and meaning?
3. The phrase "son of God" is applied to different figures throughout the Bible. How does tracing this thread prepare you to recognize its ultimate fulfillment in Jesus?



WATCH

SESSION 7: Meditating on Psalms 1 and 2 Together

Consider Psalms 1 and 2 together and ponder the unexpected ways they work together to introduce the themes of the Psalms scroll.

Meditate on Scripture

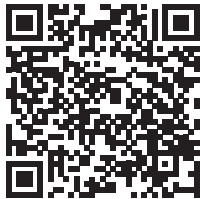
Psalms 1-2

Key Takeaways

- The biblical authors are deeply interested in the relationship between the one and the many. The path of an individual's life is analogous to the path of a whole community.
- Psalms 1 and 2 coordinate to draw two major themes about the ideal human, the wise Torah meditator and the chosen king, and focus them into a sharper outline of a promised messianic king.
- In Mark 1:11, God announces Jesus' identity in language lifted directly from Psalm 2:7 and other texts from the Hebrew Bible (Gen. 22:2 and Isa. 42:1).
- The parallels between these two psalms direct us to identify the good-life man of Psalm 1 with the messianic king of Psalm 2. The good-life man is a model for us to follow as we find our refuge in the messiah.

Reflection Questions

1. The biblical authors explore the relationship between the one and the many. How does recognizing this connection help you see your life as part of God's larger story?
2. What details come into sharper focus when considering Psalms 1 and 2 together? How do they complement and expand each other?
3. God's proclamation over Jesus, "You are my Son," echoes Psalm 2:7 and other passages. What does this show you about how the New Testament authors read the story of the Hebrew Bible?
4. The good-life man of Psalm 1 is identified with the messianic king of Psalm 2. How does reflecting on this connection draw you to both imitate and find refuge in him?



WATCH

SESSION 8: Psalms 1 and 2 and the Seams of the TaNaK

Biblical authors use the same techniques to make connections both verse by verse and beyond. Trace the links between Psalms 1 and 2 and the rest of the Bible.

Meditate on Scripture

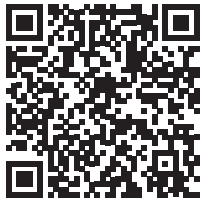
Psalms 1-2

Key Takeaways

- Psalms 1 and 2 serve as the introduction to the Psalms scroll and to the whole Ketuvim (Writings). Both the beginning and the end (Ps. 146-150) of the Psalms scroll repeat themes from Genesis 1-3.
- Repeated words and phrases coordinate Psalm 1 and Joshua 1, linking the beginning of the Prophets to the beginning of the Writings. The connections at the highest level of whole collections are tied together using the same techniques used to connect ideas within the same sentence or passage.
- The structural artistry of the biblical text actively invites meditation and teaches us how to think about God and ourselves.

Reflection Questions

1. Psalms 1 and 2 open the Ketuvim the way Genesis 1-3 opens the Torah. How does noticing this literary design enrich your understanding of the Psalms' place in the biblical story?
2. Psalm 1 and Joshua 1 echo each other as the opening of the Writings and the Prophets, respectively. What might this connection reveal about how the Bible is unified at every level?
3. A world of possibilities opens up when distantly separated parts of the Bible coordinate and connect with structural cues, repeated words, and shared themes. How would you describe your experience of discovering these connections?



WATCH

SESSION 9: Reflecting on Biblical Meditation

What are your key takeaways from this class? Listen in as the students discuss what they learned.

Key Takeaways

- Far from cold academic analysis, learning to appreciate the craftsmanship and literary design of the Bible can lead to deeper faith and refreshed devotion.
- Because the biblical text is deeply interconnected, meditation on a single passage can surface reflections on the whole of the biblical story.
- Paying attention to the way later biblical authors make connections in the text can help us verify the connections we find or lead us to notice things we missed.
- Discerning the underlying structure and noticing repeated words can support memorization of large sections of the Bible.

Reflection Questions

1. Take some time to reflect on the insights you learned in this class.
2. Appreciating the Bible's artistry can strengthen faith and devotion to God. When has insight into the Bible's design moved you toward worship or trust?
3. How might deeply meditating on individual passages shape your understanding of the larger biblical story?
4. Later authors build on earlier texts to reveal God's unfolding plan. What can their interpretive example teach you about reading Scripture faithfully?
5. How could paying close attention to the repetition and structure of biblical passages enrich our understanding and facilitate memorization?