



First Hand Truth:

*How To Study the Psalms
For Yourself*

Presenter: Rick McNally

January 29, 2026

at

JPG Resources

Battle Creek, MI 49017

First Hand Truth

¹⁰ The brothers immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to **Berea**, and when they arrived they went into the Jewish synagogue. ¹¹ Now these Jews were **more noble** than those in Thessalonica; they **received** the word with all eagerness, **examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so.** ¹² Many of them **therefore believed**, with not a few Greek women of high standing as well as men.

Acts 17:10-12 ESV

Study it for Yourself

Noble / of noble birth / a willingness to learn

Received / receive readily information and regard it as true.

Eagerness / willingness, zeal, readiness

Examine / to engage in careful study of a question, to judge, to evaluate



What is First Hand Truth?

– *The Short Answer* –

Equipping people to study God's Word

– *A Little More Info* –

First Hand Truth exists to **equip** people to study God's Word. We attempt to both **encourage** greater desire to study the Word and to **educate** people to raise their confidence to study the Word for themselves.

We do this through **weekly local workshops** in Battle Creek, Michigan (called *Adventures in Bible Study*), and through speaking opportunities and workshops with individuals, families, churches, and schools both locally and distant.

Your presenter is Rick McNally, a pastor of 30 years and a person who has a deep desire to be a part of the goal of equipping God's people to study and engage with the Scriptures in a first hand manner. He has a wonderful wife and five adult children.

His latest venture is First Hand Truth

Descriptions of the Psalms

“[The Psalms] are the anatomy of all parts of the Soul.”
John Calvin

“The most valuable thing the Psalms do for me
is to express the same delight in God
which made David dance.”
C.S.Lewis

“The epitome of the whole Scripture.”
Augustine of Hippo

“A little book for all saints.”
Martin Luther

“The Psalms foretell what I, what any,
shall do and suffer and say.”
John Donne

“You may rightly call the Psalter a Bible in miniature,
in which all things which are set forth more at length
in the rest of the Scriptures are collected
into a beautiful manual of wonderful
and attractive brevity.”
A. F. Kirkpatrick

Everything written about me in the Law of Moses
and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.

Jesus Christ / Luke 22:44

Some Obvious Pictures of Jesus in the Psalms

Jesus as the Wisdom of God / **Psalm 1**

Jesus is Messiah (Christ) the King's Son / **Psalm 2**

Jesus is Crucified / **Psalm 22**

Jesus the Good Shepherd / **Psalm 23**

Jesus at the right hand of God / **Psalm 110**

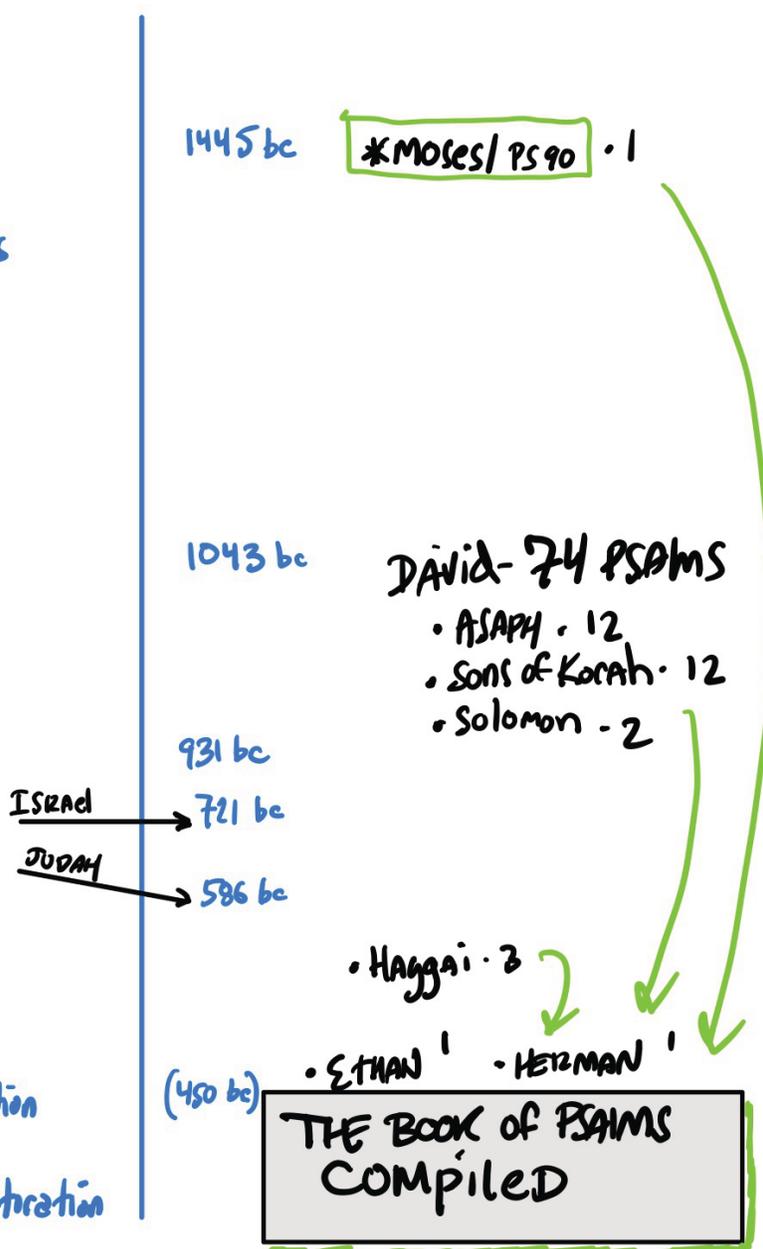
Jesus a High Priest in the order of Melchizedek / **Psalm 110**

Jesus as the rejected cornerstone of God / **Psalm 118**

THE STORY of ISRAEL

& THE TIMING of THE PSALMS

GENESIS CREATION
EXODUS Redemption
NUMBERS WANDERINGS
JOSHUA Victory
JUDGES DEFEAT
I SAM King
II SAM David
I KINGS Division
II KINGS Captivity
EXILE 70 yrs.
EZRA Spiritual Restoration
NEHEMIAH Political Restoration



There are Five Books!

What Book is Your Psalm In?

The Book of Psalms is a work of compilation that was organized during the restoration period after Judah came back from being in captivity. It is organized and loosely tells the story of Israel beginning with David, his kingship, the promise of God's Messiah (see Psalm 2), and the seeming failure of the messianic line. God is faithful still, even if mankind is not.

Book I

Psalm 1 & 2 / are an introductory set, they set the tone of the Psalms / follow God's Word (1), Follow the Messiah (2)!

Psalms 1-41 / 41 Total

Contrasting Images / Reigns of King David and Solomon, Deep Laments

Book II

Psalms 42-72 / 31 Total

Reigns of King David and Solomon; reign will extend to the ends of the earth

Book III

Psalms 73-89 / 17 Total

Divided kingdoms and Destructions / apparent failure of Davidic line, therefore the apparent failure of the covenant?

89 / seam psalm / God's faithfulness proclaimed

Book IV

Psalms 90-106 / 17 Total

Babylonian exile, rethinking identity, rethinking history of God's faithfulness despite Israel's unfaithfulness. God remembers covenant (106).

Book V

Psalms 107-150 / 44 Total

Community restoration. Enduring love of God.

When you finish your study return here to consider how it fits into this puzzle...

The Psalms

*Always Combine Bible Study with...
faith / humility / teachability / zeal / examination
questions / prayer*

Discover The Attributes of The Psalm
Highlight or circle below

STRUCTURE

- **Strophe** / 96 / Paragraphs
- **Chiastic** / 49 / X / Parallels
- **Acrostic** / 9 / A. B. C. etc.

GENRE

- **Lament** / 59 / complaint
- **Praise** / 41
- **Hymn** / 17 / follow a structure
- **Royal** / 10 / Messianic?
- **Wisdom** / 9
- **Thanksgiving** / 8
- **Trust** / 8

TAGS

- **Superscriptions** / 116 / author, setting, melody
- **Communal** / 23
- **Imprecatory** / 18 / a curse, a word against
- **Overtly Messianic** / 15 / direct conn to NT
- **Songs of Ascents** / 15 / up to Jerusalem
- **Maskil (wisdom song)** / 14
- **Zion (Jerusalem Hill)** / 7

ATTRIBUTION

- **David** / 74
- **Anonymous** / 48
- **Asaph** / 12
- **David LXX*** / 12
- **Korahites** / 12
- **Anonymous LXX** / 14
- **Haggai LXX** / 3 /
- **Zechariah LXX** / 3 /
- **Solomon** / 2 / Psalm 72 and 127
- **Herman the Ezrahite** / 1 / Psalm 88
- **Ethan the Ezrahite** / 1 / Psalm 89
- **Moses** / 1 / Psalm 90

Distribution of Attributes in the Psalms

Psalm Count Distribution List

	Book I	Book II	Book III	Book IV	Book V
Psalm Count	41	31	17	17	44

Authorship Distribution List

	Book I	Book II	Book III	Book IV	Book V
David	38	18	1	2	15
Anonymous	3	3		14	28
Korahites		8	4		
David LXX		2		9	1
Anonymous LXX		1			2
Asaph		1	11		
Solomon		1			1
Ethan			1		
Herman			1		
Moses				1	
Haggai LXX					3
Zechariah LXX					3

Genre Distribution List

	Book I	Book II	Book III	Book IV	Book V
Lament	22	18	9	3	7
Praise	3	7	4	12	15
Hymn	2				15
Royal	4	2	1	1	2
Wisdom	3	2	2		2
Thanksgiving	4		1		3
Trust	3	2		1	

Structure Distribution List

	Book I	Book II	Book III	Book IV	Book V
Strophe	24	18	16	11	27
Chiasm	15	13	1	6	14
Acrostic	5				4

Let the Psalm Soak into ~ your very soul ~

1 / Write Out Your Psalm

No, this is not busy work, its a way to see and hear what is there so you can have greater success in your study.

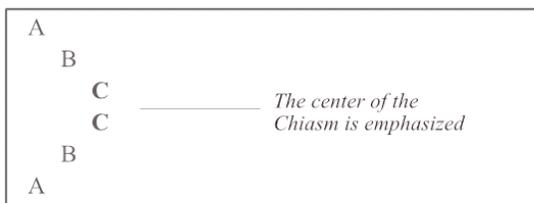
2 / Take an Emotional Walkthrough

- What does this psalm **make you feel**?
- What is your **initial emotional reaction**?
- Highlight highly emotional **words** of **phrases**
- Highlight **imagery** that is intended to paint pictures in your mind
- Highlight words that **evoke description** for the senses / seeing / smelling / hearing / tasting / feeling

3a / Consider the Structure

Determine the structure using Bible helps so that you can see the structure visually. Use this to better organize the next step below.

If your structure is **chiastic**, consider the center section of the psalm with a bit more thought. Why is this center emphasized? What is the purpose?



3b / Take a Thematic Walkthrough

For each strophe or paragraph take some time to read it and think through and assign a **subject** (*what is it about*) and a **complement** (*what does it say about the subject*) for each; this will help you see the overall flow of the Psalm as a whole unit. These should be fairly brief.

Example / Psalm 3:1-2

Subject: (many) Foes...

Complement: ...rise against and condemn me

4 / Take a Relational Walkthrough

- What does this psalm tell us about our **relationship** with God or God's relationship with us?
- How does the psalmist relate to God?
- What does he do **to** relate to God.
- What are some things to emulate? Avoid?
- What are crucial things described?

5 / Take a Theological Walkthrough

- While the Psalms are **not theological treatises** they do often help us understand who God is, who we are, and the reality of what is.
- What does this psalm say about the **God**? What does it say about **humankind**?
- What does this psalm say about being right with God? Salvation? Sin?

- Consider in particular the person of **Messiah** (the anointed (Christ), the coming Son of God, Son of David, the King eternal) is both displayed and foretold in the pages of the Psalms. 

* The Psalms are not only periodically about Messiah, they are steeped in the concept of Messiah by their very structure.

6 / Take a Applicational Walkthrough

- Consider the message of the psalmist, and apply what he intends you to do with your thoughts and your behavior in response.

~ Some Further Attributes of Psalms ~

The Psalms are Hebrew poetry. Our poetry rests in meter and rhyme, theirs emphasize structure and parallelism. We have discussed structure a bit.

Parallelism is the art of saying parallel thoughts in succession. There are different types displayed and each type has many potential alterations.

- **Synonymous Parallelism** / in two or more lines saying the same thing in a slightly different manner.
- **Antithetical Parallelism** / in two or more lines saying contrasting things about a topic or an idea.
- **Synthetic Parallelism** / in two or more lines building on one idea with more similar ideas obviously adding more information.

Inclusio / Another structural technique to look out for are called **inclusios**. When **the beginning + the end** seem like bookends separating out portions of text.

1 / Write out Your Psalm

2 / An Emotional Walkthrough!

Psalm 4 Hebrew Parallelism Structure

TITLE TO THE CHOIRMASTER: WITH STRINGED INSTRUMENTS. A PSALM OF DAVID.

A —

¹ Answer me when I call, O God of my righteousness!
You have given me relief when I was in distress.
Be gracious to me and hear my prayer!

B —

² O men, how long shall my honor be turned into shame?
How long will you love vain words and seek after lies? *Selah*

C —

³ But know that the LORD has set apart the godly for himself;
the LORD hears when I call to him.
⁴ Be angry, and do not sin;
ponder in your own hearts on your beds, and be silent.
Selah
⁵ Offer right sacrifices,
and put your trust in the LORD.

B —

⁶ There are many who say, "Who will show us some good?
Lift up the light of your face upon us, O LORD!"

A —

⁷ You have put more joy in my heart
than they have when their grain and wine abound.
⁸ In peace I will both lie down and sleep;
for you alone, O LORD, make me dwell in safety.

3 / Structural Thoughts / A Thematic Walkthrough

Psalm 4 Hebrew Parallelism Structure

TITLE TO THE CHOIRMASTER: WITH STRINGED INSTRUMENTS. A PSALM OF DAVID.

A —

¹ Answer me when I call, O God of my righteousness!
You have given me relief when I was in distress.
Be gracious to me and hear my prayer!

B —

² O men, how long shall my honor be turned into shame?
How long will you love vain words and seek after lies? *Selah*

C —

³ But know that the LORD has set apart the godly for himself;
the LORD hears when I call to him.
⁴ Be angry, and do not sin;
ponder in your own hearts on your beds, and be silent.
Selah
⁵ Offer right sacrifices,
and put your trust in the LORD.

B —

⁶ There are many who say, "Who will show us some good?
Lift up the light of your face upon us, O LORD!"

A —

⁷ You have put more joy in my heart
than they have when their grain and wine abound.
⁸ In peace I will both lie down and sleep;
for you alone, O LORD, make me dwell in safety.

4 / A Relational Walkthrough

Psalm 4 Hebrew Parallelism Structure

TITLE TO THE CHOIRMASTER: WITH STRINGED INSTRUMENTS. A PSALM OF DAVID.

A —

¹ Answer me when I call, O God of my righteousness!
You have given me relief when I was in distress.
Be gracious to me and hear my prayer!

B —

² O men, how long shall my honor be turned into shame?
How long will you love vain words and seek after lies? *Selah*

C —

³ But know that the LORD has set apart the godly for himself;
the LORD hears when I call to him.
⁴ Be angry, and do not sin;
ponder in your own hearts on your beds, and be silent.
Selah
⁵ Offer right sacrifices,
and put your trust in the LORD.

B —

⁶ There are many who say, "Who will show us some good?
Lift up the light of your face upon us, O LORD!"

A —

⁷ You have put more joy in my heart
than they have when their grain and wine abound.
⁸ In peace I will both lie down and sleep;
for you alone, O LORD, make me dwell in safety.

5 / A Theological Walkthrough

Psalm 4 Hebrew Parallelism Structure

TITLE TO THE CHOIRMASTER: WITH STRINGED INSTRUMENTS. A PSALM OF DAVID.

A —

¹ Answer me when I call, O God of my righteousness!
You have given me relief when I was in distress.
Be gracious to me and hear my prayer!

B —

² O men, how long shall my honor be turned into shame?
How long will you love vain words and seek after lies? *Selah*

C —

³ But know that the LORD has set apart the godly for himself;
the LORD hears when I call to him.
⁴ Be angry, and do not sin;
ponder in your own hearts on your beds, and be silent.
Selah
⁵ Offer right sacrifices,
and put your trust in the LORD.

B —

⁶ There are many who say, "Who will show us some good?
Lift up the light of your face upon us, O LORD!"

A —

⁷ You have put more joy in my heart
than they have when their grain and wine abound.
⁸ In peace I will both lie down and sleep;
for you alone, O LORD, make me dwell in safety.

6 / an Applicational Walkthrough

Psalm 4 Hebrew Parallelism Structure

TITLE TO THE CHOIRMASTER: WITH STRINGED INSTRUMENTS. A PSALM OF DAVID.

A —

¹ Answer me when I call, O God of my righteousness!
You have given me relief when I was in distress.
Be gracious to me and hear my prayer!

B —

² O men, how long shall my honor be turned into shame?
How long will you love vain words and seek after lies? *Selah*

C —

³ But know that the LORD has set apart the godly for himself;
the LORD hears when I call to him.
⁴ Be angry, and do not sin;
ponder in your own hearts on your beds, and be silent.
Selah
⁵ Offer right sacrifices,
and put your trust in the LORD.

B —

⁶ There are many who say, "Who will show us some good?
Lift up the light of your face upon us, O LORD!"

A —

⁷ You have put more joy in my heart
than they have when their grain and wine abound.
⁸ In peace I will both lie down and sleep;
for you alone, O LORD, make me dwell in safety.

addendum



First Hand Truth

Study the Bible Yourself... to Know God

I have a dream. It might be from God, it might be just my own thoughts and rambblings. I would like to find out which it is. I know for a fact that there will always be a need for more people to take time to take initiative to study the Word of God for themselves, and that such a thing is not a bad goal for any of us. No matter what level of growth or knowledge, there is no end to learning about the infinite God and how he has chosen to reveal himself to us. With that knowledge, I will begin down this road and see what happens. For God. For his glory. For something bigger than myself. — Rick McNally, July 2025

A ministry dedicated to...

1. To help people become committed to **first-hand devotion and study of scripture**.¹
2. To help people recognize that **God has enabled them in the Spirit to develop this devotion**, and that they are intended for it.
3. This first-hand devotion of the word provides **vast benefits** including: increased faith, increased joy, recovery from trauma or faithlessness, and the means to grow into who they ought to be.
4. Helping people see **the dangers of personally abdicating their own responsibility** to know and study the word, or **allowing other individuals** (whether intentionally or unintentionally) to **impede their God-given responsibility** to have a direct relationship with God.
5. Helping people become **more active** in regular study and **equipped** to do so firsthand.
6. Helping local **churches** and **leaders** to be more active in **encouraging** and **equipping** people to do firsthand study of the Word.

How can this be done? Through a number of ministry focuses...

- Encouragement through the internet / posts, events, etc.
- Encouragement through direct visitation of churches / teaching, demonstrations, things to gather interest.
- Equipping people through in-person seminars (electronic and conventional methodologies).
- Equipping people through periodic online classes / mini seminars / training videos /etc.
- Equipping people through multi-day retreats.
 - Study retreats / in-person dedicated study retreats to learn to study.
 - Recovery retreats / in-person spiritual recovery focused retreats.
 - Growth retreats / in-person intentional specific growth goal focuses.

¹ Of course there are teachers, but these teachers are intended to be supplemental equippers and encouragers, not overarching mediators. This is the danger of false teachers who make "disciples after themselves."

Initial Letter / Aug 2025

Purpose Statement

This is a draft



First Hand Truth exists to equip people to study God's Word. We attempt to both **encourage** greater desire to study the Word and to **educate** people to raise their confidence to study the Word for themselves.

We do this through weekly local workshops in Battle Creek, MI, called Adventures in Bible study, and through **speaking** and **workshops** with individuals, families, churches, and schools both locally and distant.

Why is it important?

Studying scripture firsthand is important because...

It is listening to the most important voice we could possibly hear, not just our own opinions, or the opinions of those around us or our culture. We must learn to listen to God first. God has given his word so that we can make sense of our world.

If we give so much attention to other avenues of knowledge, why not more attention to God's very Words? We put vast effort into other areas of knowledge, why would we pay God's Word less attention than other less important things?

Scripture has many benefits for our very soul. It enables peace with God and peace with others. It provides wisdom when we are so lacking of it. It exposes our sin and helps us find the cure in Christ. It gives us joy even when we are in difficult situations. It helps us understand the purpose of life and endure its difficulties. It can bring us to the point where we learn to truly love God and then — somehow — love others as we ought. It can help us in our making of decisions, our life priorities, and our ethics as we learn to treat others with more respect. Its benefits are literally without limit (Psalm 1, Psalm 19, Psalm 119).

What is it going to do for me?

Studying scripture firsthand helps us to know God better and know truth. It helps us...

To help people fulfill their ultimate purpose / the Westminster Shorter Catechism reminds us that the chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever. We cannot enjoy someone we do not know firsthand, and study of the Word helps us meet this great goal. If we are fulfilling our purpose, we will enjoy this life more and be a better person to those around us.

To help people become Jesus' Disciples / to connect people to Jesus as their Lord and Savior, their one **authority**, their one **guide**, and their one **teacher** is the ultimate outreach of the people of God (Matthew 28:16-20); in other words, to make disciples. We should not seek disciples after ourselves or after our churches or denominations (Acts 20:30). We primarily need a **teacher-student** relationship with Jesus, not a secondary **teacher-other teacher-student** relationship.

To help people become like Jesus, to grow / to develop in people the ability and desire to move into an intimate, Spirit-empowered, Word-driven relationship with God firsthand is necessary — it is this kind of relationship that little by little conforms us to His very image (Ephesians 4:13, 2 Corinthians 3:18). God does indeed help us grow through circumstances and trials, but we can exponentially improve that growth through desiring change, seeking the Word, applying that Word — through intentional growth by attention to scripture (2 Peter 1:3-15).

To help people be more apt to recognize error / one of the benefits of growing in the knowledge of God is being able to see the patterns of theological/spiritual error or misuse, both in our own lives and in the lives around us. We must deepen our relationship with God so that we will not be "tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness and deceitful schemes" and rather "speak truth in love" and "grow up in every way into Him who is the head, Christ (Ephesians 4:15-16)."

To help people be better witnesses / the better we understand God's will and the truth, the better we can explain those things to those around us and teach them to believe and obey Jesus (Matthew 28:19-20).

Workshop Notes

<https://firsthandtruth.org/bible-study-seminar-notes/>

At the link above you can find a few things!

PDF of this booklet

Blank Bible Study Worksheet to Reproduce

PDF of the slides used

Finances and Gifts

At the link below you can find **financial information** of contributions to date, purchases for the ministry, and more.

As of this time Rick McNally is not organizationally receiving any intentional financial support. Personal gifts can be given, of course.

Here you can find a **wishlist** of educational supplies, books and hardware we are looking to purchase for participants to use while learning to study scripture.

Any contribution is greatly appreciated!

<https://firsthandtruth.org/finances/>



Purchase educational equipment or books...



Give a financial gift at...

