

# Psalms

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## Session 1: God loves me

Series: Psalms

Themes: prayer, God's love

Bible Passage: Psalm 139:1-18

Suggested age group: 11-14's

Session aim: To reflect on how much God cares about even the smallest details of our lives; to show that we can be honest in God's presence and talk to him about all our concerns

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## Way In 1 - Challenges

Time: 5 mins

Bible knowledge: n/a

With: pens, paper, and an unseen eccentrically dressed volunteer (for example, odd shoes, different coloured gloves, vivid make-up, and other imaginative accessories)

1. Choose one of the following challenges to set the group thinking about the importance of detail:  
**Challenge 1:** Begin by welcoming the group. The volunteer should interrupt the welcome, make a dramatic entrance into the room and immediately run back out again. Divide the group into teams giving them one minute to complete a description of the "visitor". The team with the most accurate and comprehensive list is the winner.  
**Challenge 2**  
Ask three volunteers to leave the room. When they are out, make some obvious and some subtle changes to both the room and the group. For example, open a window, move some books, ask two group members to swap places or to swap bags or shoes. Ask the volunteers to come back in one at a time and see how many changes they are able to identify.

## Way In 2 – Mask-making

Time: 10 mins

Bible knowledge: n/a

With: resource sheet 1 'Mask Making' (one per person), scissors, glue

1. Give each person a copy of the mask resource sheet. Ask them to write on the mask what they think they are really like and then to cover that with the image that they would prefer their friends to see, following the instructions on the resource sheet.
2. Comment that often we don't let people get to know us completely because we feel insecure in our relationship and we project an image that we think makes us more socially acceptable. Our relationship with God however is at a completely different level; he knows everything about us and continues to love us.

## Connecting 1 – God's love

Time: 10 mins

Bible knowledge: limited

With: resource sheet 'God's Love' (one per group), highlighter pens

1. Divide into three groups giving each group a copy of the Bible passage. Allocate a section to each group (What does God know about me? Where can I find God? How is God involved in my life?). Ask the young people to highlight relevant phrases as the passage is read out.

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2. This Psalm reveals a great deal about the nature and character of God. He knows everything (he is omniscient), his presence is everywhere (he is omnipresent) and he is intimately and continuously involved in creation (omnipotent).

## Connecting 2 – David’s response

**Time:** 10 mins

**Bible knowledge:** *limited*

1. Make the following points
  - David was amazed at the extent of God’s care and love towards him. He did not feel threatened by God’s detailed knowledge of him; rather he was reassured that God knew and understood the complexities of his personality.
  - David was convinced that he was treasured by God who not only had created him but continued to be engrossed in every detail of his daily life.
  - No subject was off-limits to chat to God about. David did not try to hide his feelings from God. He was direct, telling God how he thought the situation should be handled, but at the same time recognising that God was in control. He did not act on his feelings but left his anxious thoughts with God, secure in the knowledge that God loved him and would be close to him.

## Responding 1 – Prayer time

**Time:** 5 mins

**Bible knowledge:** *limited*

1. Read the Psalm again.
2. Ask each group to pick out some of the things that David praises God for.
3. Conclude by leading in prayer using the phrases highlighted by the groups and thanking God that he is involved in the lives of each one of us and loves us intently.

## Responding 2 – Taking off the mask

**Time:** 3 mins

**Bible knowledge:** *limited*

**With:** *completed mask handout*

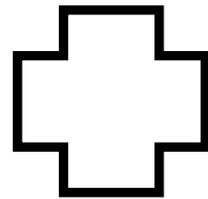
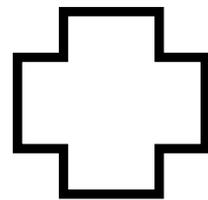
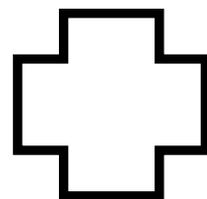
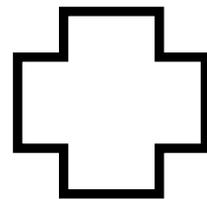
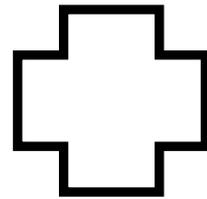
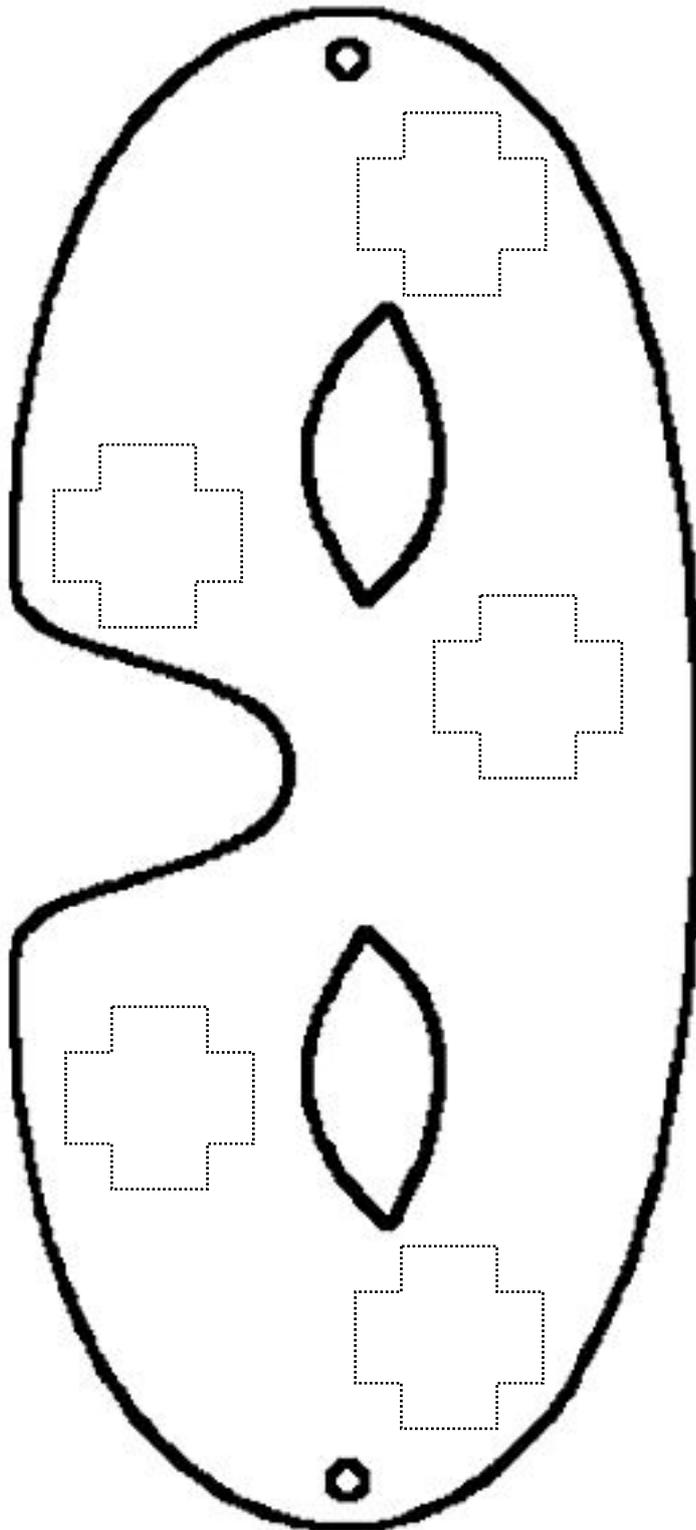
1. Ask the young people to take their mask home with them.
2. Suggest that they spend some time talking to God about who they pretend to be and who they really are.
3. After they have done this encourage them to tear up the mask as a sign that they are not hiding anything from God.

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## Resource Sheet 1 – Mask Making

Cut out the mask outline. Write on the mask (in the dotted cross shape) what you are really like then cut out and stick on one of the patches to cover up and show the image you would prefer your friends to see. You could use the suggestions on the left or write your own thoughts on the blank patches.



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## Resource Sheet 2 – God’s Love

### Psalm 139:1-18

LORD, you have examined me  
and know all about me.  
You know when I sit down and when I get up.  
You know my thoughts before I think them.  
You know where I go and where I lie down.  
You know everything I do.  
LORD, even before I say a word,  
you already know it.  
You are all around me—in front and in back—  
and have put your hand on me.  
Your knowledge is amazing to me;  
it is more than I can understand.

Where can I go to get away from your Spirit?  
Where can I run from you?  
If I go up to the heavens, you are there.  
If I lie down in the grave, you are there.  
If I rise with the sun in the east  
and settle in the west beyond the sea,  
even there you would guide me.  
With your right hand you would hold me.  
I could say, "The darkness will hide me.  
Let the light around me turn into night."  
But even the darkness is not dark to you.  
The night is as light as the day;  
darkness and light are the same to you.

You made my whole being;  
you formed me in my mother's body.  
I praise you because you made me in an amazing and  
wonderful way.  
What you have done is wonderful.  
I know this very well.  
You saw my bones being formed  
as I took shape in my mother's body.  
When I was put together there,  
you saw my body as it was formed.  
All the days planned for me  
were written in your book  
before I was one day old.  
God, your thoughts are precious to me.  
They are so many!  
If I could count them,  
they would be more than all the grains of sand.  
When I wake up, I am still with you.

What does God  
know about me?

Where can I  
find God?

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How is God  
involved in my  
life?

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## Session 2: God forgives me

Series: Psalms

Themes: prayer, sin, forgiveness

Bible Passage: Psalm 32

Suggested age group: 11-14's

Session aim: To discover what the Bible means by sin; to show the positive impact coming clean with God about sin has in our lives

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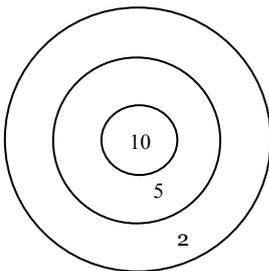
## Way In 1 – Target Quiz

Time: 5 mins

Bible knowledge: n/a

With: target, general knowledge quiz questions (prepared by you), an object (such as a bean bag) to throw

1. Draw a target on a large sheet of paper and place it on the ground.
2. Divide the group into teams and ask the quiz questions.
3. The person who answers correctly should throw a small object at the target to determine the number of points their team gets. Compare the winning team's points with the number of points possible.
4. Alternatively, play any competitive game that is popular with your group.
5. Introduce the concept that no one is always on the winning side, can always hit the mark or know all the answers.



## Way In 2 – Would you rather...?

Time: 5 mins

Bible knowledge: n/a

1. Ask the young people to discuss and then vote on the situation they would prefer out of two unpleasant options. For example:
  - a. Would you rather eat a pizza that is covered in hair or a sandwich that has been dropped on the beach?
  - b. Would you rather live in the desert or in the arctic?
  - c. Would you rather commit murder and allow someone else to take the blame or be falsely convicted of murder?
  - d. Would you rather eat hamburgers three times a day or cauliflower at every meal?
  - e. Would you rather ruin your favourite shirt or spill coke on a stranger's outfit?
  - f. Would you rather wear shoes that are too small for a month or dress like a clown for a month?
  - g. Would you rather have your money stolen or steal someone else's?
  - h. Would you rather be stuck upside down on a rollercoaster or be trapped in a lift?
  - i. Would you rather apologise to someone or be apologised to?
  - j. Would you rather save your dog from drowning or save the person who threw him into the river?

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- k. Would you rather go for a week without a shower or not brush your teeth for a week?
- l. Would you rather live a lie or lie to live?

## Connecting 1 – Sin hurts

*Time: 10 mins*

*Bible knowledge: limited*

*With: resource sheet 1 'Sin Hurts' (one per group), pens*

1. Ask the group what they understand by the word 'sin'.
2. Comment that the word 'sin' itself is seldom used today and when it is tends to be with a restricted meaning, namely the breaking of a religious or moral code. However, David' understanding of sin was much wider:
  - Sin is a decision to rebel against God's friendship and love. In choosing to do wrong we damage our relationship with God and with other people. We also become the victims of our own sin.
  - Sin is when we miss the mark or fail to live up to God's perfect standards (compare Romans 3:23).
  - All sin is destructive. There is no distinction between "major" and "insignificant" sin.
3. Read and discuss Psalm 32:1-5 from resource sheet 1 'Sin Hurts'.
4. Comment that the psalm begins with David recognising that life is fantastic when we are right with God but when sin creeps in our experience quickly deteriorates.
5. Use the word search to highlight some of the depressing emotions that can build up when we cut God out of our lives.
6. Sensitivity will be necessary at this point. David was aware of specific sin in his life and related his anguish directly to that sin. (This Psalm along with Psalm 51 is often considered to be written after David had committed adultery with Bathsheba and arranged for her husband to be murdered). Likewise some young people may be able to relate an emotion back to a specific incident and use the opportunity to "clear the air" with God. For others the situation will be more complex. Negative emotions can ultimately be traced back to the fact that sin has entered the world and we all still struggle with it. It is important to talk to God about how we feel because he has the power to come along side and help us find our way through a minefield of emotions.

## Connecting 2 – Forgiveness rocks

*Time: 10 mins*

*Bible knowledge: limited*

*With: paper, pens*

1. Read out the whole of Psalm 32, asking young people in groups to note down words that describe how David felt when his sins were forgiven.
2. Point out that verse 5 is a key part of the Psalm. David decided to talk openly to God and confess his sin with the result that God forgave him, his guilt was gone.
3. Asking God to forgive our sins is a starting point in our relationship with God. God sent His Son to carry the guilt for our sin so that we could be friends. God will forgive us and be with us for ever. He will not hold our sins against us.
4. At present we live in a sinful world and Christians struggle with sin. David was already God's friend (verses 1-2) but he still got it wrong. He allowed guilt to spoil their friendship and as a result he was unhappy. Often Christians fall into the same trap, sin spoils things, they believe that they have let God down, so they ignore God and life rapidly goes from good to bad. This is not the quality of life God wants us to have. He is always there for us and willing to forgive when we ask him.

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## Responding 1 – Praying Psalm 32

**Time:** 5 mins

**Bible knowledge:** *limited*

**With:** *two copies of resource sheet 2 'Praying Psalm 32'*

1. Using the resource sheet, pray through Psalm 32.
2. Ask one person to read the Psalm from the resource sheet pausing after each section for another reader to lead the group in prayer.

## Responding 2 – Talking to God

**Time:** 3 mins

**Bible knowledge:** *limited*

1. Encourage the young people when they go home to make a note of any negative emotions they are dealing with at the moment.
2. Challenge them to talk to God about how they feel and if necessary ask God to forgive them.
3. Suggest they look out for change in their lives.

**Psalm 32:1-5**

Happy is the person  
 whose sins are forgiven,  
 whose wrongs are pardoned.  
 Happy is the person  
 whom the LORD does not consider guilty  
 and in whom there is nothing false.

When I kept things to myself,  
 I felt weak deep inside me.  
 I moaned all day long.  
 Day and night you punished me.  
 My strength was gone as in the summer heat.  
*Selah*

Then I confessed my sins to you  
 and didn't hide my guilt.  
 I said, "I will confess my sins to the LORD,"  
 and you forgave my guilt.

How did David feel when sin was  
 spoiling his relationship with God?

How does sin make you feel?

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Hidden in the grid are some of the negative feelings that bombard us when we sin. How many can you find  
 and which ones do you identify with most?

U	A	L	R	R	C	A	R	E	A	E
N	N	T	H	N	D	S	D	G	L	I
S	G	M	E	I	R	R	I	P	E	G
U	R	S	L	M	A	W	R	A	I	O
C	Y	S	P	P	I	R	R	L	H	E
C	M	S	L	A	N	X	I	O	U	S
E	N	S	E	T	E	L	T	N	R	G
S	S	L	S	I	D	R	A	E	T	U
S	M	I	S	E	R	A	B	L	E	I
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U	A	A	S	T	L	N	E	S	S	T
L	E	T	D	O	W	N	R	N	R	Y

- Alone**
- Angry**
- Anxious**
- Drained**
- Guilty**
- Helpless**
- Hurt**
- Impatient**
- Irritable**
- Let down**
- Miserable**
- Unsuccessful**

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## Resource Sheet 2 – Praying Psalm 32

### Psalm 32

Happy is the person  
whose sins are forgiven,  
whose wrongs are pardoned.  
Happy is the person  
whom the LORD does not consider guilty  
and in whom there is nothing false.

When I kept things to myself,  
I felt weak deep inside me.  
I moaned all day long.  
Day and night you punished me.  
My strength was gone as in the summer heat.

*Selah*

Then I confessed my sins to you  
and didn't hide my guilt.  
I said, "I will confess my sins to the LORD,"  
and you forgave my guilt.

*Selah*

For this reason, all who obey you  
should pray to you while they still can.  
When troubles rise like a flood,  
they will not reach them.  
You are my hiding place.  
You protect me from my troubles  
and fill me with songs of salvation.

*Selah*

The Lord says, "I will make you wise and show you  
where to go.  
I will guide you and watch over you.  
So don't be like a horse or donkey,  
that doesn't understand.  
They must be led with bits and reins,  
or they will not come near you."

Wicked people have many troubles,  
but the Lord's love surrounds those who trust him.  
Good people, rejoice and be happy in the Lord.  
Sing all you whose hearts are right.

Thank you for being such a great friend. Help us to appreciate your friendship.

There have been times when we, allowed sin to spoil that friendship. We have tried to ignore sin and instead ignored you.

We are sorry about that Lord. In fact we are sorry about all the wrong we have done, the obvious sins and the ones we have hidden or tried to block out.

Thank you that you love us and will protect us. You will keep us strong.

Help us to always look to you for help because we know that your way is best.

Lord, following you brings happiness. Let others see your joy reflected in our lives.

Amen

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**Session 3: God is real to me**

**Series: Psalms**

**Themes: prayer, doubt, assurance**

**Bible Passage: Psalm 73**

**Suggested age group: 11-14's**

**Session aim: To encourage the group to be open with God about every doubt they face; to show that we can get a different perspective on our problems when we share them with God**

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## Way In 1 – Uncertainty

**Time:** 10 mins

**Bible knowledge:** n/a

Play one of the following games which majors on uncertainty and doubt:

### **Is it or Isn't it?**

Divide the young people into groups of three or four. Give each group an obscure word and its definition from the list below. Ask them to invent two more meanings for the word making them as convincing as possible. Each group then reads the word and all the meanings to the rest of the young people who have to vote for which definition they think is accurate. The winners are the group that misleads most people.

#### **ZAMPONA**

A musical instrument better known as the pan pipes

#### **SENECENCE**

To grow old

#### **UMIAQ**

A kayak style boat used for whale hunting

#### **MUSCARDINE**

A disease that is particularly dangerous to silk worms

#### **GLAIR**

A term for the white part of an egg

#### **ROUSTABOUT**

An unskilled temporary worker

#### **LEMNISCATE**

The symbol used for infinity

#### **STAPES**

A small bone in your ear

#### **KAMIK**

A boot made from seal skin

#### **LING**

A type of fish caught for food

#### **HAPTIC**

Relating to the sense of touch

#### **SCOP**

An Anglo-Saxon poet

### **The Real Me**

Ask each person to share four things about themselves, three of which are true and one that is not. The others try to identify the false statement.

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## Way In 2 – Trust

**Time:** 10 mins

**Bible knowledge:** n/a

**With:** blindfold and Obstacles, or one copy of resource sheet 1 'Line Drawing', paper and pens

Contrast by playing a second game where trust is highlighted

### **Blindfolded Obstacle Course**

1. Ask for a volunteer to leave the room.
2. Either re-arrange the furniture or set up a short obstacle course.
3. Blindfold the volunteer and bring him/her back into the room.
4. Let them choose a second person (who they trust) to guide them verbally through the course.

### **Line Drawing Game**

1. Divide into teams giving each person a piece of paper and a pen.
2. One person from each group should be shown one of the drawings from the resource sheet.
3. They describe to their group how to draw an object (using simple geometric shapes and lines) without revealing what the object is.
4. The person who guesses the object correctly becomes the instructor for the next object.
5. The first team to guess all the objects wins.

## Connecting 1 – Big issues

**Time:** 15 mins

**Bible knowledge:** limited

**With:** resource sheet 2 'Big Issues', pens, highlighter pens

1. It is not easy to be a Christian. Psalm 73 was written by Asaph, a person who had placed his trust in God (verse 1) but wondered if God was really active in his life or even had his best interests at heart. Asaph compared his life with that of people who had no time for God. The wicked prospered (verse 3), enjoyed good health (verse 5) and led carefree lives (verse 8), privileges out with Asaph's experience (verses 13-14).
2. Use the Big Issues resource sheet to help the young people identify with Asaph's problem. They may have asked some of the same questions themselves or they may have other issues (some suggestions are on the sheet). Point out that Asaph talked his problem through with God expressing his doubts and grievances. God wants us to be honest with him, saying what we feel, not what we think we should.
3. "The Case for Christ – Student Edition" by Lee Strobel (ISBN 03100234840) is a useful resource for Christian young people aiming to understand some of these issues.

## Connecting 2 – Trusting God

**Time:** 5 mins

**Bible knowledge:** limited

1. In the second part of this Psalm Asaph shares how he moved from doubt back to trusting in God:
  - He went to worship God, taking his mind off his problems and focusing it on God instead (verse 17).
  - He began to see things from God's eternal perspective. Life's problems are only temporary; those who despise God have no hope for the future (verses 18-20).
  - He is reminded that he has a special relationship with God and is secure in the fact that God loves him and will never leave him.

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2. Read Psalm 73:15-26, asking young people to note Asaph's change of attitude.
3. Have a vote. Why do group members think Asaph decided to stick with his faith?
  - He knew that God was the most important thing in his life
  - He knew that God loved him and cared for him
  - He realised that life was not any better for people who do not believe in God
  - He knew that there is no real future for those who do not follow God
  - He knew God would come through for him
  - Another reason
4. Discuss why group members voted as they did. What factors do they think help people stick with their faith these days?

## Responding 1 – Seeing our big issues through God's eyes

*Time: 5 mins*

**Bible knowledge:** *limited*

**With:** *one copy of resource sheet 2 'Big Issues'*

1. Select a couple of the problems raised in the Big Issues resource sheet.
2. Discuss how you would see the problem if you were looking at it from different points of view. For instance, what would your view on third world poverty be if:
  - You lived thousands of miles away in the prosperous west.
  - You were starving to death.
  - You were a multi-millionaire who had emigrated from a poor country and made a fortune.
3. Ask whether group members feel there should be a difference of attitude depending on our situation, or should there be one 'Christian' view.
4. Emphasise that God looks at the problems in the world with love. He cares deeply and we can trust that he is already active in the situation.

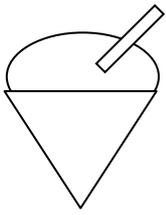
## Responding 2 – Praying for Christians in difficult situations

*Time: 5 mins*

**Bible knowledge:** *limited*

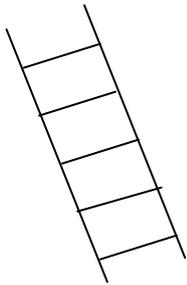
**With:** *Up-to-date information gathered from websites such as [www.vinetrust.org](http://www.vinetrust.org) and [www.feba.org.uk](http://www.feba.org.uk)*

1. Spend some time talking about and praying for Christians who may be struggling with their faith because of the circumstances they find themselves in.
2. You may choose to focus on Christians who are persecuted for their faith or think about those caught up (both victims and relief workers) in poverty, natural disasters or civil war ([www.vinetrust.org](http://www.vinetrust.org) and [www.feba.org.uk](http://www.feba.org.uk), are useful websites)
3. Bring in relevant newspaper articles and information so that you can discuss as a group the issues they may be facing and pray meaningfully for them.

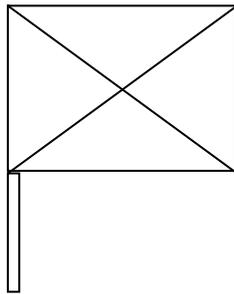


Example: “99” ice cream cone

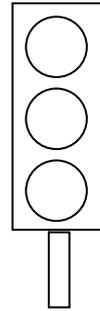
Draw an upside down isosceles triangle. Draw a semicircle on the short top side of the triangle using this as the semicircle’s diameter. Draw a rectangle coming out of the semicircle at an angle of 45 degrees.



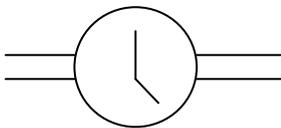
Ladder



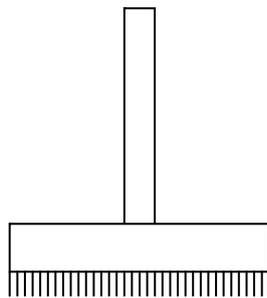
Scottish Flag



Traffic Lights



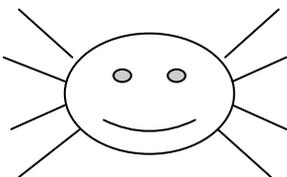
Wrist watch



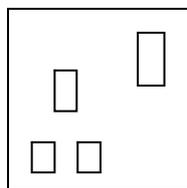
Brush



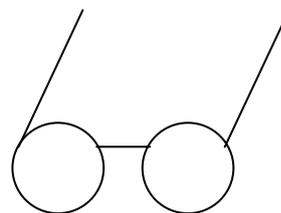
Snowman



Spider



Socket



Glasses

## Resource Sheet 2 - Big Issues

### Psalm 73: 1-14

God is truly good to Israel,  
to those who have pure hearts.  
But I had almost stopped believing;  
I had almost lost my faith  
because I was jealous of proud people.  
I saw wicked people doing well.

They are not suffering;  
they are healthy and strong.  
They don't have troubles like the rest of us;  
they don't have problems like other  
people.  
They wear pride like a necklace  
and put on violence as their clothing.  
They are looking for profits  
and do not control their selfish desires.  
They make fun of others and speak evil;  
proudly they speak of hurting others.  
They brag to the sky.  
They say that they own the earth.  
So their people turn to them  
and give them whatever they want.  
They say, "How can God know?  
What does God Most High know?"  
These people are wicked,  
always at ease, and getting richer.  
So why have I kept my heart pure?  
Why have I kept my hands from doing  
wrong?  
I have suffered all day long;  
I have been punished every morning.

Here are some of the issues that bother people today. Put a tick in any of the boxes that bother you.

- Why do so many people throughout the world live in extreme poverty?
- Why do people who work hard not always get the results they deserve?
- Why do bad things happen to good people?
- Why do Christian families break up?
- Why are some children born with serious and painful illness?
- Why does God not prevent natural disasters from happening?
- Why do people who are not Christians seem to have easier lives than people who are?

The writer of this Psalm had some big issues with God. Use a highlighter pen to pick out what the issues were.

Do you agree with his complaint that non-Christians seem to get a better deal out of life than those who follow God? Why or why not?

Do you have any other issues with God? If so what are they? (You don't need to write this answer down or share it unless you want to).

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**Session 4: God looks after me**

**Series: Psalms**

**Themes: prayer, God's love, God's care**

**Bible Passage: Psalm 121**

**Suggested age group: 11-14's**

**Session aim: To encourage the young people to involve God in their problems; to show how God helps us when we are under pressure**

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## Way In 1 – Quiz

*Time: 10 mins*

*Bible knowledge: limited*

*With: resource sheet 1 'Quiz Categories', a dice, quiz questions (prepared by you)*

1. Prepare questions in the following categories: movies, nature, science, Bible, current affairs and history. If your group has limited bible knowledge you may wish to broaden the Bible category to "religion". The quiz categories resource sheet contains pictures of hills illustrating these categories.
2. Divide into quiz teams.
3. Each team should roll the die to select which category of question their team will answer. (1 = movies, 2 = nature, etc.)
4. Give each group a 10 second time limit to answer the question and begin counting as soon as you have asked the question, building up pressure as the quiz continues.

## Way In 2 – Pile on the pressure

*Time: 5 mins*

*Bible knowledge: n/a*

Play one of the following fast moving games to keep the pressure on.

### **Follow the Leader**

1. Ask the group to sit in a circle.
2. One young person begins the game by performing an easy action, for example tapping their foot.
3. The person to their left copies the original action and adds in a new one.
4. The person to their left now has two actions to perform and think of a third one to add in.
5. Play continues round the circle becoming more complicated each time.
6. If someone makes a mistake they are eliminated and the person on their left starts a new sequence.

### **Keep to the Beat**

1. Ask the group to sit in a circle.
2. Establish a beat sequence with everyone hitting their knees on beat one, clapping their hands on beat two, clicking the fingers on their right hand on beat three, and their left on beat four.
3. When everyone has caught the beat the first player says their name on beat three and the name of a second player (anywhere in the circle) on beat four.
4. The second player then says their own name on beat three and the name of another player on beat four.
5. Players who are unable to keep to the beat are out.
6. Increase the tempo to make the game harder.

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## Connecting 1 – Who can help?

Time: 10 mins

Bible knowledge: limited

With: list written on flip chart or white board, coloured sticky dots

1. Often we can feel pressurised by events and circumstances which are out with our control. In the games pressure was caused by having a lot to do in a little time, which is fun in a game but not if there are exams looming. Young people face many challenges and it is important to emphasise that help is available.
2. Ask young people, 'Where do we find help?'
3. Psalm 121 was written by David who, having found himself under pressure, lifted his eyes up to the hills and asked the question "where does my help come from?" What we see when we look into the hills may colour how we answer that question (discuss the pictures on the Quiz Categories resource sheet – we may think of laws safeguarding the vulnerable or armies keeping the country secure).
4. When David looked to the hills he would have seen idols and temples dedicated to false gods, signs that many people were looking for help where it could not be found. David looked beyond the hills and claimed that his help came from God who had not only made the hills but had made everything.
5. Read Psalm 121:1.
6. When we need help we usually talk to somebody – write the following list on flip chart or white board: friend your own age, teacher, sports coach, youth worker, internet chat room acquaintance, pen pal, writer of an advice column, older brother or sister, parent or adult relative, complete stranger, police officer, minister, no one - I can work out my own problems, other. Ask group members to put a red sticky dot next to any of the people from the list they would turn to for advice. Look at the results to see which is the most common.
7. Ask pupils to put a blue sticky dot next to the three people they have most respect for. Look at the results. Are the most respected people also the ones most likely to be turned to for advice? Why/why not? Discuss what makes group members respect or admire these people.
8. Read Psalm 121:2.
9. It is good to be able to talk over issues with someone we respect but it is fantastic to be able to involve God as well. Our help is then not just coming from someone who is vaguely familiar with our circumstances or has experience in similar matters but our help comes from God who created everything, who sees the entire picture and is in complete control of everything.
10. Ask pupils what difference they think it would make if they could speak directly to God about their problems.

## Connecting 2 – How does God help?

Time: 10 mins

Bible knowledge: limited

With: resource sheet 2 'How does God help?', pens, highlighter pens

1. Read Psalm 121 (this works well with two people – the first reading verses 1-2 and the second responding with 3-8).
2. Ask the groups to highlight on the resource sheet how God helps and to write down what they think this means.
3. This Psalm was one of a number enjoyed by pilgrims going to worship God in his Temple in Jerusalem. The journey was often long and hazardous and the Psalmist mentions three different dangers:
  - Losing your footing - the trip to Jerusalem was steep and could be treacherous. A slip of the foot could lead to serious injury or death.
  - The sun – a threat in a hot country like Palestine.

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- The moon – night time had its own dangers with attack from people and animals.

As they journeyed they prayed for safety and praised God in the knowledge that he would be with them.

4. The Psalm has a wider application as we view life as a journey with God.
5. The Psalm does not claim that trusting in God means no more stubbed toes. Christians still get injured, fall ill, are involved in accidents and have bad things happen to them to the same extent as everyone else. The difference lies in the fact that they know God is always with them every step of the way keeping them safe from evil and not letting their circumstances destroy them.

## Responding 1 – Praying for each other

**Time:** 5 mins

**Bible knowledge:** *limited*

**With:** *paper, pens*

1. This Psalm states that God would not let your foot slip.
2. Ask group members to each draw an outline of a foot.
3. Divide into pairs. Ask each person to write the name of their partner in their foot outline. If appropriate, they could tell their partner a particular thing that they would like prayer about.
4. Challenge group members to take away the foot outline and continue to pray that God would keep their partner safe and would not let their foot slip in life.

## Responding 2 – My personal Psalm

**Time:** 5 mins

**Bible knowledge:** *some*

1. The Psalms we have looked at in this series emphasise that we can talk to God about anything and everything. We can tell God how we feel if life is going well and we can even complain if we are angry or hurt. God loves us and is interested in every aspect of our lives.
2. Challenge the young people to read the four Psalms (139, 32, 73 and 121) when they go home and then write their own Psalm to God (just between them and God).
3. Encourage them to be honest in expressing themselves.
4. Ask them to think about what they know of God's character especially where it is relevant to their problems and include that in their Psalm aiming to conclude their Psalm on a positive note stating something that they believe to be true about God.

## Resource Sheet 1 – Quiz Categories



1. movies1.



2. nature



3. science



4. Bible



5. current affairs



6. history

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## Resource Sheet 2 - How does God help?

In the Psalm below, highlight the ways in which David is sure that God looks after him.

Write on the sides what you think David means

### Psalm 121

I look up to the hills,  
but where does my help come from?  
My help comes from the LORD,  
who made heaven and earth.

He will not let you be defeated.  
He who guards you never sleeps.  
He who guards Israel  
never rests or sleeps.

The LORD guards you.  
The LORD is the shade that protects you  
from the sun.

The sun cannot hurt you during the day,  
and the moon cannot hurt you at night.  
The LORD will protect you from all dangers;  
he will guard your life.

The LORD will guard you as you come and  
go,  
both now and forever.

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