



Bloom – Why We Gather

At SLE Church our vision is **to grow a community of maturing disciples who invest in the next generations**. Bloom is one small but important way this happens among the women of our church.

When we gather as women, we are stepping into something the Bible itself encourages. In **Titus 2**, older and younger women are called to know one another, to learn from one another, and to walk together in lives shaped by Christ. Growth in the Christian life is not meant to happen in isolation. God's design is that women encourage, model, teach, and support one another as we seek to follow Jesus faithfully in the many different seasons of life we find ourselves in.

Bloom provides a space where those relationships can grow. By meeting across generations, we create opportunities for wisdom to be shared, for faith to be modelled, and for encouragement to flow both ways.

It is also a rare opportunity for women in our church to gather specifically as women under God's Word. While we learn together as a whole church each week, Bloom gives us the chance to reflect more directly on what it means to live as **women made in the image of God**, seeking to honour Christ in our homes, friendships, workplaces, ministries, and everyday lives.

How We Bloom

When we come to Bloom gatherings, we come both as **recipients** and as **servants**.

As recipients, we come ready to sit under God's Word, to learn from one another, and to be encouraged and challenged to grow in biblical womanhood. Through discussion, shared experience, and prayer, we hope to be refreshed and strengthened in our faith.

At the same time, we come as servants. Each of us contributes to the encouragement of others simply by being present, by listening well, by sharing thoughtfully, and by seeking to point one another back to Christ. Our time together is not only about what we receive, but also about how we can invest in the women around us.

Our hope and prayer is that Bloom will help cultivate a community of women who **grow deeply in Christ and who invest faithfully in the generations around them**.

Take some time to introduce yourselves to the group:

1. Your name and who's in your family
2. What fellowship group you belong to
3. Is there a Christian woman who's had a significant influence on your growth as a Christian? How has God used this relationship in your life? (no need to name names if you prefer!)

Bloom Part 1: Reading the Psalms

Today at Bloom we're going to spend time thinking together about the Psalms - how we've experienced them, why they can feel both precious and difficult, and how we can read them well as those who belong to Jesus.

1. Opening discussion

In pairs or triplets, discuss:

What do you think of the Psalms? What has been your experience of them?

2. What are the Psalms?

The Psalms are songs and prayers given by God to his people. They come from real life and give us words for many different seasons - praise, sorrow, fear, confusion, gratitude, repentance, trust, and hope.

Broadly speaking, some Psalms are full of praise, while others cry out to God in times of trouble. These laments may arise from enemies, inner distress, guilt, or a sense of sorrow and struggle before God. Often, though not always, lament Psalms move toward renewed trust and praise.

There are also other kinds of Psalms. Some are Psalms of thanksgiving, responding to God's help in a particular situation. Some are Psalms of confidence, expressing trust in God as protector and refuge. Some are wisdom Psalms, reflecting on life in God's world. Some are Psalms of remembrance, recalling God's saving acts for his people. And some are kingship Psalms, focusing on God as King and on the king he appointed over his people.

Because the Psalms are poetry, they often use imagery, repetition, and emotionally rich language. This means we are helped by slowing down and noticing how the lines work together.

3. Why the Psalms are both precious and tricky

The Psalms are precious because they speak so honestly to real life. They give us words for joy, sorrow, fear, guilt, confusion, gratitude, and hope. They help us bring our hearts before God.

But they can also be tricky. Some Psalms feel hard to understand. Some feel difficult to pray. And because they are so personal and emotional, we can easily rush to read them as if they go straight from the psalmist to us.

As New Testament Christians, we want to read the Psalms carefully. We want to ask:

- How do the Psalms point to Jesus?
- How does Jesus fulfil the Psalms?
- How do we now read and pray them as those who belong to him?

4. How to read the Psalms as New Testament Christians

The Psalms speak to us on an emotional level. Because of this, it is easy to jump straight to reading them as if they are timeless poetry and apply them directly to ourselves. It is important to see them first in the context in which they were written, and also to see how they point to and are fulfilled by Jesus. The following points help us think about the relationship between the Psalms and Christ, and how we now read them in light of him.

Let's look at the following passages. What do these passages help us see about how the Psalms relate to Jesus?

Verses	How the Psalms Relate to Jesus	Key Point
Luke 24:44	What does Jesus say about the Psalms here?	Jesus identifies that he _____ the Psalms
Psalm 110:1 Luke 20:41-44 Acts 2:29-36	How do Jesus and Peter use Psalm 110 to show that this Psalm points beyond David to the Messiah?	Jesus is the _____ the Psalms look forward to

<p>Psalm 2 2 Samuel 7:12–15 Hebrews 1:5</p>	<p>How do these passages connect God’s promises to David with Jesus?</p>	<p>Jesus is _____ _____</p>
<p>Psalm 22:1 Matthew 27:46</p>	<p>What do these passages show us about Jesus and the words of the Psalms?</p>	<p>The Psalms were on the _____ _____ during his earthly life</p>
<p>1 Timothy 2:5 Heb 10:19-22 John 16: 23-24</p>	<p>What do these passages show us about why we are now able to approach the Father in prayer, and how we do so?</p>	<p>Because of the Cross we can _____ _____ _____</p>

A Helpful Framework: Singing the Psalms with Jesus as our choir leader

As we read the Psalms, we first consider their original context. But Jesus teaches us that he fulfills them. So we read them not only as songs from Israel's history, but as songs that point to Christ and are fulfilled in him. We pray and sing them now through Jesus who has joined us to Christ in the Holy Spirit.

One helpful way to think about this is that we sing the Psalms with Jesus as our choir leader. They are the songs of Jesus, led by Jesus, shaped by Jesus, and taught to his people by him. Joined to Christ, we learn to sing them too.

The Psalms are a gift from God to his people. They give us words for many seasons of life – joy, sorrow, guilt, confusion, gratitude, fear, and hope. They help us speak honestly to God, and they teach us to do that as those who belong to Jesus.

5. Discuss

In pairs or triplets, discuss:

What difference does it make to read the Psalms through Jesus, rather than only as words that express our own experience?

Bloom Part 2: Psalm 131

Q1. In what ways do you struggle to be content in the life God has given you right now?

Read Psalm 131

A Song of Ascents. Of David.

¹ O LORD, my heart is not lifted up;
my eyes are not raised too high;
I do not occupy myself with things
too great and too marvelous for me.

² But I have calmed and quieted my soul,
like a weaned child with its mother;
like a weaned child is my soul within me.

³ O Israel, hope in the LORD
from this time forth and forevermore.

Context

This Psalm was most likely written by David, King of Israel, who was author of almost half of the book of Psalms. It also comes in a section where the Psalms are titled 'Songs of Ascents'. It is likely these were sung while the pilgrims from the outlying areas made the journey to Jerusalem to worship in the temple.¹

Definitions and Meaning

Heart: the origin of decisions and thinking, what we might call the mind and will.

Eyes: organ of desire and ambition

Q2. Consider the definitions provided above. What kind of posture does David reject in verse 1, and what does that show about the heart behind discontentment? (See also *Proverbs 6:16–19*.)

Q3. In contrast to verse 1, what picture of the soul does David give in verse 2, and what does it teach us about true contentment?

Weaning:

Working out the meaning of weaning in verse 2 is tricky, however it is central to understanding this Psalm. One understanding of this verse is that in the ancient Near East, children were not weaned until they were about 3 years old. This is different to Australia today where children are often weaned as babies. Therefore, the child likely found that process difficult and only once fully weaned would trust that the mother would continue to provide for him or her and therefore was content. The appeal of this understanding is that it encourages us to see that contentment is not always easy. However, the trouble is that the metaphor breaks down a bit, not all weaned children are content! Alternatively, it could also mean a child who was satisfied and resting after being fed. This may be a less obvious interpretation; however, it does describe a picture of the peace and contentment of trusting God. However we understand this verse, the meaning of the image is clearer: it is a picture of a calmed and quieted soul.

Q4. What does verse 3 show us about where this kind of contentment comes from, and how God's people are to keep seeking it "now and forevermore"?

¹ Tremper Longman III, *Psalms*, TOTC, pg 409

Singing Psalm 131 with Jesus as our choir leader

Q5. Read Matthew 11:29, Matthew 26:36-39, and Philippians 2:5-11.

How do these passages show Jesus perfectly embodying the humility, dependence, and trust we see in Psalm 131?

Q6. How does being joined to Christ help us adopt the calmed and quieted soul of verse 2?

Application

Q7. Thinking back to Q1, what would it look like to place your hope in the Lord in that area of discontentment, rather than slipping into anxious striving or self-reliance?

Pray for these things in your pairs and triplets.