

JOHN WESLEY CHURCH

Wednesday Bible Study · Summer 2026

Songs *in a Strange Land*

NINE WEEKS · NINE SONGS · ONE GOD WHO KEEPS SHOWING UP

*“How can we sing the songs of the LORD
while in a foreign land?”*

— Psalm 137:4 —

THIS BOOK BELONGS TO

your name

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Sitting by the River

PSALM 137

Before we learn how to sing in a strange land, we have to sit down and weep — grief is the first honest note of faith.

THE LAND THEY WERE IN

Babylon, 586 BC. Jerusalem is rubble. The temple is gone. The people are deported — not just relocated, but humiliated. Their captors ask for entertainment: *“Sing us one of the songs of Zion.”*

The “rivers of Babylon” weren’t the Jordan — they were engineered irrigation canals. Even the water reminded them they weren’t home. The words **“remember”** and **“forget”** appear five times in nine verses. This is a master class in what to do with memory when you’re sitting in a strange land.

THE SONG IN THE TEXT


Open your Bible to **Psalm 137**. Read all nine verses — out loud if you can. Don’t skip verse 9.

THREE MOVEMENTS


vv. 1–4 • Sit Down Before You Sing

 **Where they are:** Sitting was the official mourning posture. They gathered by canals because Jewish worship required water — but every drop reminded them this wasn’t the Jordan.

 **What the captors wanted:** “Sing us one of the songs of Zion” wasn’t a music request — it was sarcasm with teeth. The unspoken question: Where is your God now?


 **Why they refused:** Temple songs weren’t for pagan entertainment. Their captors wanted “songs of mirth” — but they had no joy to give. They’d lost everything but God and their lives.

 Key word: _____

 **Note for you** — *Memories can bring pain — and burying them only makes it worse. Healing requires honesty before it requires answers.*


vv. 5–6 • Don’t Let Me Forget What I Almost Lost

 **The vow:** Before the psalmist names what Babylon deserves, he turns the knife on himself: “If I forget Jerusalem — let me lose what I love. Let my hand forget its skill. Let my tongue stick.”

 **What “Jerusalem” really means:** Not just a city — the Lord, the temple, the people of God, Israel’s mission to the world.


 **The lesson:** Sometimes we have to lose things to appreciate them. Did we really value what God gave us — our worship, our family, our home, our peace?


 Key word: _____

 **Note for you** — *Before you ask God to deal with what hurt you, ask God to deal with what you let slip. (Psalm 90:12)*

vv. 7–9 • Hand It to God, Don’t Hold It Yourself


 **The verses we want to skip:** Verse 9 is brutal. The church has wrestled with it for centuries. We’re not skipping it.

 **What’s actually happening:** This isn’t revenge — it’s prayer for justice. The psalmist isn’t picking up a sword; he’s praying Scripture back to God (Isaiah 13, Jeremiah 50–51, Obadiah).

 **Why Babylon, why Edom:** Babylon went too far — atrocity beyond discipline (Isaiah 47). Edom were Esau’s descendants — blood relatives who should have helped, but cheered while Jerusalem burned.

 **What “blessed” means here:** Not “happy.” Not “favored.” Morally justified — whoever finally stops this evil is doing right by God (Psalm 106:3).

 Key word: _____

 **Note for you** — *We don't take revenge — God does (Romans 12:17–21). The psalm ends with the exile handing the weight to God. That's the song of a strange land: “God, this is too heavy. You carry it.”*

SING IT TOGETHER

1. What does it look like to “hang up the harp” in your life — to set down something you used to do with joy?
2. Where is your Babylon right now? Name the strange land you're sitting beside this season.
3. Why do you think God let this psalm — anger and all — make it into the Bible?
4. What's the difference between grieving and giving up?

YOUR OWN SONG

Take 5 minutes. Write, don't think.

Finish this sentence — and then finish it twice more, each time deeper than the last:

“The song I used to sing that I can't sing right now is _____.”

CARRY IT WITH YOU

Before next Wednesday:

- Name your strange land out loud — to God, in prayer, with no clean-up.
- Identify one “harp” you've hung up. Don't pick it up yet. Just notice it.
- Read Psalm 137 once more — slowly, out loud, all nine verses.

BEFORE YOU GO

Grief is not the opposite of faith. Grief is faith refusing to lie about what hurts. Sit by the river. The song is coming — but first, the tears.

NEXT WEEK • When the Government Feels Strange • Luke 1:46–55

Psalm 137:4 — “How can we sing the songs of the LORD while in a foreign land?”

When the Government Feels Strange

LUKE 1:46–55

Mary sings the Magnificat under Roman occupation — the church keeps prophesying when the state feels unstable.

THE LAND THEY WERE IN


Palestine, 1st century. Rome occupies the land. Caesar is called “lord” and “savior.” Heavy taxes crush the poor. A teenage girl from a backwater town gets pregnant before her wedding — and instead of hiding, she sings. The song is called **the Magnificat** — Latin for the first word, *magnifies*. Mary quotes the Psalms and echoes Hannah’s song (1 Sam. 2). She hid God’s Word in her heart and turned it into a song. She says “**He hath**” eight times — naming what God has done before naming what He’ll do.

THE SONG IN THE TEXT


Open your Bible to **Luke 1:46–55**. Read it slowly — and notice every time Mary says what God has already done.

THREE MOVEMENTS


vv. 46–49 • My Soul Magnifies, Not My Situation

 **Mary’s posture:** She doesn’t magnify Rome. She doesn’t magnify her scandal. She magnifies the Lord — making Him bigger than the politics, bigger than the gossip, bigger than her fear.

 **What God did for her:** He saved her (v. 47 — even Mary needed a Savior). He regarded her — looked with favor on a nobody from Nazareth. He chose her when He could have chosen anyone.

 **What God did through her:** “He that is mighty hath done to me great things.” Because she believed and yielded, God worked a miracle through her — and brought the Savior into the world.


 Key word: _____

 **Note for you** — *Whatever you magnify gets bigger in your sight. Magnify your problem, and the room shrinks. Magnify the Lord, and the room finds its proper size.*

vv. 50–53 • He Came to Turn It Upside Down

 **The great reversal:** Mary names three groups God moves toward — the helpless, the humble, and the hungry. The proud get scattered. The mighty get unseated. The rich are sent away empty.

 **This isn’t poetry — it’s policy:** Mary is announcing the kingdom platform before Jesus preaches a single sermon. God’s grace works against the way the world is currently arranged (1 Cor. 1:26–28).

 **Who fills the room:** The ones the empire ignored. The ones the system overlooked. The ones the religious leaders judged. Those are the ones God seats at the table.

 Key word: _____

OUR PLACE IN THE SONG

Mary’s song isn’t private devotion — it’s public, political prayer. To follow Jesus is to be pulled into the work of justice:

- **The prophets sang first.** Isaiah, Amos, and Micah named injustice without flinching — God’s people don’t get to look away (Amos 5:24, Micah 6:8).
- **Jesus prayed political prayers too.** “Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven” is a prayer for regime change — Jesus taught us to pray for God’s government every single day.
- **James Cone** reminded the church that the gospel always stands with the oppressed — neutrality is a vote for the way things already are.
- **Frank Thomas** teaches that prophetic preaching tells the truth about power, names what hurts, and refuses to baptize the comfortable.

- **Our role:** to be present, prayerful, and prophetic — neither silent in the sanctuary nor partisan in the pulpit, but always honest about what God’s kingdom demands.

vv. 54–55 • The Long Memory of God

📖 God keeps His receipts: Mary ends her song by reaching all the way back to Abraham. The covenant didn’t expire. God remembered what He promised Israel — and Jesus is the proof.

🕒 Mercy is generational: “As he spake to our fathers, to Abraham, and to his seed for ever.” What God did for the ancestors, He’s still doing for us. Your faith stands on someone else’s prayers.

🎯 Why this matters now: When the government feels strange, the church remembers a longer story. Empires rise and fall. God’s covenant outlasts every administration.

👉 Key word: _____

📌 Note for you — *God’s memory is longer than the news cycle. He hasn’t forgotten His promises, His people, or you.*

🗨️ SING IT TOGETHER

1. What are you tempted to magnify right now — and what would it look like to magnify the Lord instead?
2. Mary’s song names a God who flips the room. Where do you most need to see Him flip it?
3. How do you balance being “present, prayerful, and prophetic” when politics feels exhausting?
4. Whose prayers got you to where you are? Whose faith are you standing on?

👉 YOUR OWN SONG

Take 5 minutes. Write, don’t think.

Like Mary, name what God has already done. Finish this sentence three times:

“He hath _____.”

🎯 CARRY IT WITH YOU

Before next Wednesday:

- Pray the Lord’s Prayer slowly once a day — and mean the “Thy kingdom come” part.
- Name one person whose prayers got you here — and thank God for them out loud.
- Identify one place in your life where you need God to turn it upside down.

🙏 BEFORE YOU GO

When the government feels strange, the church sings anyway. Caesar comes and goes. The Magnificat keeps preaching. So lift your voice — your soul magnifies a Lord no election can unseat.

NEXT WEEK • When You Feel Strange to Yourself • Psalm 42

Luke 1:46 — “My soul doth magnify the Lord.”

When You Feel Strange to Yourself

PSALM 42

Sometimes the strangest land is the one between your own ears — and faith is learning to preach to your own soul when your soul won't preach back.



PRE-RECORDED THIS WEEK — Pause when you need to. Rewind when something hits. The Bible study is yours — set the pace.



THE LAND THEY WERE IN

A worship leader, far from home. The psalmist was a Levite — one of the sons of Korah — who used to lead pilgrims to Jerusalem for the festivals. Now he's stuck somewhere up north, far from the sanctuary, surrounded by people who taunt him: "Where is your God?"

It's the same refrain three times — "**Why are you cast down, O my soul?**" (42:5, 42:11, 43:5). Most scholars believe Psalm 42 and 43 were originally one psalm. The man isn't just sad. He's a worshipper who can't worship the way he used to — and he's discovering that the strangest land isn't Babylon or Rome. It's the one inside his own chest.



THE SONG IN THE TEXT

Open your Bible to **Psalm 42**. Watch for the refrain that repeats. Notice how the psalmist talks to God — and to himself.



THREE MOVEMENTS

vv. 1–4 • My Tears Have Been My Food

The deer at the dry creek: He pictures a hind in a drought — panting, struggling, searching for water that isn't there. That's his soul. Not lazy, not faithless. Just thirsty in a season when the creek ran dry.

The essentials of being alive: Air (panting), water, food — and worship. He names worship like it's oxygen. Without God, the rest doesn't feed him.

What he's been eating instead: "My tears have been my meat day and night." He's been feeding on his grief — and grief is real, but it isn't nourishment. You can survive on it for a while. You can't live on it forever.

Key word: _____



Note for you — Sometimes you're not backslidden — you're just thirsty. The drought is real. Don't add shame to a season God already understands.

vv. 5–8 • Preach to Yourself Before You Drown

The turn: He stops talking to God and starts talking to his own soul. "Why are you cast down? Hope in God." He doesn't wait for someone else to encourage him — he becomes his own preacher.

The storm picks up: The image shifts from drought to flood — "deep calleth unto deep, all thy waves and thy billows are gone over me." Drowning, not drying. But notice: even the waves are called HIS waves. The storm is still on God's leash.


Songs in the night: "In the night his song shall be with me." God can put a melody in your mouth in the dark. That's grace — the song doesn't wait for the sun.


Key word: _____




Note for you — Faith isn't the absence of the question. Faith is asking the question and then preaching the answer to yourself anyway.

vv. 9–11 • Hope Again. Hope Anyway.

 **The sermon you have to preach twice:** The refrain returns. The doubt looped back. He preached to himself in v. 5 — and by v. 11, he has to do it all over again. That’s not failure. That’s how faith actually works.

 **What he holds onto:** “God my rock.” Not God my mood. Not God my circumstances. God my rock — stable when he’s shaking, steady when he’s spinning.

 **The promise underneath:** He still doesn’t see the sanctuary. The taunters haven’t stopped. But he chooses hope — not because it feels true, but because God is true. Hope again. Hope anyway.

 Key word: _____

 **Note for you** — *If you have to preach the same sermon to yourself twice, you’re not weak — you’re honest. The refrain repeats because the soul does.*

SING IT TOGETHER

These questions work alone, around your table, or on a phone call with someone you trust.

1. Where is your soul thirsty right now? Name the dry creek.
2. What have you been feeding on instead of God — grief, news, scrolling, replaying?
3. What’s the sermon you need to preach to your own soul this week?
4. Is there someone in your life who needs to hear you say, “Hope in God” — including yourself?

YOUR OWN SONG

Take 5 minutes. Write, don’t think.

Write a short sermon to your own soul. Start it the way the psalmist did:

“Soul, why are you cast down? Here’s what I need you to remember...”

CARRY IT WITH YOU

Before next Wednesday:

- Read Psalm 42 out loud — slowly. Let yourself say the refrain like you mean it.
- Name one thing you’ve been feeding on that isn’t God — and fast from it for a day.
- Call one person. Don’t walk through this strange land alone.

BEFORE YOU GO

If your soul is in a strange land this week — you’re not alone, and you’re not the first. The psalmist was a worship leader who couldn’t worship. He still made it into the Bible. So will you. Don’t do this season by yourself.

Reach out to Pastor or someone you trust. The song is coming.


NEXT WEEK • When the Culture Feels Strange • Daniel 2:20–23

Psalm 42:5 — “Why art thou cast down, O my soul? ... hope thou in God.”

When the Culture Feels Strange

DANIEL 2:20–23

Daniel sings doxology while Babylon tries to rename, retrain, and remake him — you can live in the culture without being remade by it.

 **PRE-RECORDED THIS WEEK** — JWC is hosting Annual Conference. Pause when you need to. Rewind when something hits. The Bible study is yours — set the pace.

THE LAND THEY WERE IN

Babylon, around 605 BC. Daniel is a teenager when he's deported. The empire enrolls him in a three-year program designed to remake him — new name, new diet, new language, new gods. Then Nebuchadnezzar has a dream, panics, and orders every wise man in the kingdom killed when they can't interpret it.


Daniel and his three friends pray through the night. God reveals the secret. **And before Daniel speaks a single word to the king, he sings a song.** The word “secret” appears eight times in this chapter — God hides truth, and then reveals it to the ones who pray.


THE SONG IN THE TEXT


Open your Bible to **Daniel 2:14–23**. Notice the setup — the threat, the prayer, the night. Then watch the song.

THREE MOVEMENTS

vv. 14–19 • They Tried to Rename Him

 **The renaming campaign:** New name (Beltshazzar), new diet, new language, new curriculum. The empire wanted Daniel's identity before it wanted his execution.


 **The all-night prayer meeting:** When the death edict comes down, Daniel doesn't panic — he gathers his three friends and prays. The room they were renamed in becomes the room where they remember who they are.

 **The secret is revealed:** God doesn't answer the king. God answers His servants. The boys who refused to be remade became the only ones in Babylon who could see.


 Key word: _____

 **Note for you** — Empire wants your identity. Prayer is how you give it back to God.

vv. 20–22 • God Changes Times and Kings

 **The God of the calendar:** “He changeth the times and the seasons.” Nebuchadnezzar thought he ran the kingdom. Daniel sings about the One who runs the clock above the kingdom.

 **The God of the cabinet:** “He removeth kings, and setteth up kings.” Empires have a lease, not a deed.

 **The God of the deep things:** “He revealeth the deep and secret things... and the light dwelleth with him.” The light isn't hiding — it's waiting for the people willing to pray through the dark.

 Key word: _____


OUR PLACE IN THE SONG


Babylon didn't kill Daniel — it tried to rebrand him. The culture still does that work. The prophetic tradition has named it:

- **Babylon's strategy was formation, not just oppression.** New name, new diet, new language, new curriculum. The empire wanted Daniel's mind before his body. Same playbook today.
- **James Cone** taught that the gospel asks who is being remade — and whose image they're being remade in. The cross stands against every system that erases people.
- **James Baldwin** wrote that the most dangerous moment is when you start to believe the names the culture gives you. Daniel knew his real name was given in the worship that woke him at night.

- **Our role:** to live in the culture without being remade by it — to know what God called us before the world tried to rename us, and to keep singing back what is true.


v. 23 • He Answered ME

 **The song turns personal:** Daniel shifts: “I thank thee... O Thou God of MY fathers... thou hast made known unto ME.” The corporate God becomes the personal God.

 **He shares the credit:** “What WE desired of thee.” Daniel names his three friends in the song. The God who answered you probably used somebody’s prayers to get to you.

 **He sings before he preaches:** Daniel sings in private before he walks back to the throne room. Praise comes before the platform.

 Key word: _____

 **Note for you** — *Make it personal before you make it public. The God of the headlines also has your name in His mouth.*

SING IT TOGETHER

These questions work alone, around your table, or on a phone call with someone you trust.

1. What name has the culture tried to give you — and what name did God give you first?
2. When was the last time you prayed through a night instead of scrolling through one?
3. Where do you need to remember that empires have a lease, not a deed?
4. Whose prayers are you standing on right now — and have you thanked them out loud?

YOUR OWN SONG

Take 5 minutes. Write, don’t think.

Like Daniel, write your own short song of thanks. Start it personal:

“I thank thee, O God of my fathers — for _____.”

CARRY IT WITH YOU

Before next Wednesday:

- Name one place the culture has tried to rename you — and refuse it out loud in prayer.
- Pray with someone — a friend, family member, or small group. Don’t pray alone this week.
- Sing or speak your thanks before you ask for anything next time you pray.

BEFORE YOU GO

The culture will try to name you. It will hand you a curriculum, a diet, and a label. But the people who know how to pray through the dark already know what God called them — and no empire has the authority to overwrite that. Sing your name back to yourself.

NEXT WEEK • **When the Economy Feels Strange** · Habakkuk 3:17–19

Daniel 2:23 — “I thank thee, and praise thee, O thou God of my fathers.”

When the Economy Feels Strange

HABAKKUK 3:17–19

Habakkuk sings when the fig tree fails and the stalls are empty — rejoicing isn't proof of prosperity, it's proof of trust.

THE LAND THEY WERE IN

Judah, around 605 BC. Habakkuk has been arguing with God for two chapters — Why don't You do something about the violence? Why are You using Babylon to discipline us? Then God answers. And the answer is: invasion is coming. The fields will be stripped. The economy will collapse. The empty cupboard is on its way.


Habakkuk knows what's coming — and **before the disaster arrives, he sings.** The song doesn't deny the loss. He names six failures in a row — fig tree, vine, olive, field, flock, stall — and then he says one word that changes everything: **“yet.”**


THE SONG IN THE TEXT

Open your Bible to **Habakkuk 3:16–19**. Watch how the prophet describes his body, then the economy, then his feet.

THREE MOVEMENTS


v. 16 • Trembling Faith Is Still Faith

 **His body tells the truth first:** “My lips quivered... rottenness entered into my bones... I trembled.” Habakkuk doesn't pretend he's not afraid. The prophet's knees are knocking before his mouth opens to sing.

 **He chooses to wait:** “I will rest in the day of trouble.” Faith isn't the absence of trembling — it's what you do while you're trembling. He picks 'still' instead of 'scheme.'


 **Three places to be still:** Stand still (Ex. 14:13), sit still (Ruth 3:18), be still (Ps. 46:10). When you feel yourself getting “churned up,” the answer is rarely faster movement — it's usually deeper stillness.

 Key word: _____

 **Note for you** — *Your shaking is not evidence that your faith is failing. Sometimes the trembling is just your body telling the truth before your soul learns to sing over it.*


vv. 17–18 • The “Yet” That Saves Your Faith

 **He names what's breaking:** Six failures, listed plainly — fig tree, vine, olive, field, flock, stall. No spin, no spiritual bypass. He looks the empty cupboard in the eye and writes it down.

 **Then comes the hinge word:** “YET I will rejoice in the Lord.” The whole song turns on three letters. He doesn't rejoice in the loss. He doesn't rejoice because of the loss. He rejoices in spite of it — and that's a different muscle entirely.


 **What he rejoices in:** Not the harvest. Not the herd. Not the market. “The God of my salvation.” When the stuff goes, God is still there — and that's enough.


 Key word: _____

 **Note for you** — *You can pray about money without lying about money. Habakkuk doesn't. He names what's empty before he names what's eternal — and that order matters.*


v. 19 • Deer's Feet on Dangerous Ground

 **From trembling legs to deer's feet:** Look at the arc — v. 16 his legs are shaking. By v. 19, those same legs have become deer's feet. God didn't fix the economy. He fixed the man's feet.

 **He's not running away — he's climbing:** “He will make me to walk upon mine high places.” God doesn't lower the mountain to meet Habakkuk's fear. He gives Habakkuk the feet to go higher than he's ever been.

 **The strength shows up in the song:** “The LORD God is my strength.” Strength didn’t come before the song. Strength came through the song. Sometimes you sing your way into the legs you need.

 Key word: _____

 **Note for you** — *God doesn’t always change the circumstances. Sometimes He changes us to meet the circumstances. That’s what it means to live by faith.*

SING IT TOGETHER

1. Where is your body telling the truth before your mouth catches up — money, work, family, future?
2. What “yet” do you need to add to your current sentence? (“Though _____, yet I will rejoice in the Lord.”)
3. Is there a place where you’ve been waiting for God to lower the mountain — when He may be wanting to give you new feet instead?
4. What would it look like to sing before the strange land arrives — not after?

YOUR OWN SONG

Take 5 minutes. Write, don’t think.

Write your own Habakkuk verse. Name what’s failing — and then put your “yet” on the other side:

“Though _____, yet I will rejoice in the Lord.”

CARRY IT WITH YOU

Before next Wednesday:

- Be still on purpose once a day. Five minutes. No phone. Just you and God.
- Name your “yet” out loud — in prayer, in the car, in the mirror. Train your mouth to say it.
- Pick one mountain you’ve been asking God to lower — and start praying for new feet instead.

BEFORE YOU GO


When the cupboard is empty, faith doesn’t pretend it’s full. Habakkuk names the loss, looks God in the eye, and sings anyway. Your “yet” is not naïve — it’s defiant. Let your trembling legs become deer’s feet. The high places are waiting.

NEXT WEEK • When Our Families Feel Strange • 1 Samuel 2:1–10
Habakkuk 3:18 — “Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation.”

When Our Families Feel Strange

1 SAMUEL 2:1–10

Hannah sings in a fractured household where Peninnah provokes and the priest misjudges — sometimes the strangest land is your own living room.

 **PRE-RECORDED THIS WEEK** — District Vacation Bible School this week. Pause when you need to. Rewind when something hits. The Bible study is yours — set the pace.

THE LAND THEY WERE IN

Shiloh, around 1100 BC. Hannah is married to a good man — but he has two wives. The other wife, Peninnah, has children. Hannah doesn't. Every year the family goes to the sanctuary to worship, and every year Peninnah “provoked her sore.” The strange land is her own living room.


And it gets worse at the altar. When Hannah finally pours her soul out in prayer, the high priest Eli accuses her of being drunk. **Household wound, church wound — same week.** A thousand years later, a teenage girl named Mary will sing a song that echoes Hannah's almost line for line. Mary knew this song by heart.


THE SONG IN THE TEXT

Open your Bible to **1 Samuel 2:1–10**. For context, glance back at **1 Samuel 1** to remember what Hannah walked through to get to the song.

THREE MOVEMENTS


vv. 1–3 • The Rock the Mockers Can't Move

 **Her heart speaks first:** “My heart rejoiceth in the LORD, mine horn is exalted in the LORD.” The woman the household mocked and the priest accused finally opens her mouth — not to defend herself, but to praise.

 **What she names God as:** Holy. Unique. A Rock. When the people closest to her shifted under her feet, she found ground that doesn't move. The Rock holds when the household and the sanctuary don't.

 **The God who hears:** “The LORD is a God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed.” Peninnah's words got heard. Eli's words got heard. Hannah's silent prayer got heard too. God doesn't miss the meek voice in a loud room.


 Key word: _____

 **Note for you** — When the people who should know you misjudge you, run to the Rock. God already heard what they wouldn't.


vv. 4–8 • God Reads the Room Backwards

 **The great reversal:** The mighty get their bows broken. The full hire themselves out for bread. The barren bears seven. The proud get pulled off the throne. God reads the room backwards from how the world reads it.


 **What this meant for Hannah:** Peninnah had the household. Eli had the platform. Hannah had a closed womb and a misjudged prayer. And by the end of the chapter, the boy she carried is on his way to anoint kings.

 **Mary picked up this song:** “He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree.” The Magnificat is Mary singing Hannah's tune. The God who lifted Hannah lifted Mary too. He's been doing this same work the whole time.

 Key word: _____

 **Note for you** — If the people in charge of your room have written you off, take heart — God has a habit of writing the next chapter from the bottom of the page.

vv. 9–10 • The King Hannah Couldn't See Yet

 **He guards the feet of His saints:** “He will keep the feet of his saints.” Hannah doesn't promise the household will get easier. She promises God watches the steps of those who belong to Him — even when the floor is shifting.

⚡ The song reaches past her: Hannah ends by singing about a king and an anointed one — and Israel doesn't even have a king yet! She's prophesying past her own lifetime. She's singing David before David. She's singing Jesus before Jesus.

🎯 Her son will anoint that king: Hannah doesn't know that the baby she just dropped off at Shiloh will one day pour oil over David's head. She's singing about a kingdom her child will help start — from the ash heap of her own grief.

👉 Key word: _____

🗨️ Note for you — *Sometimes your song reaches further than your life does. Hannah's grief built a kingdom she'd never live to see.*

🗨️ SING IT TOGETHER

These questions work alone, around your table, or on a phone call with someone you trust.

1. Where has family — or church family — felt like a strange land to you?
2. Who has been your Peninnah (the person who provoked you) or your Eli (the one who should have understood but didn't)?
3. What part of Hannah's prayer do you most need to borrow this week — the praise, the patience, or the prophecy?
4. What song are you singing now that might bless a generation you'll never meet?

👉 YOUR OWN SONG

Take 5 minutes. Write, don't think.

Like Hannah, start with praise — not because the household is fixed, but because the Rock is real:

"My heart rejoices in the LORD because _____."

🎯 CARRY IT WITH YOU

Before next Wednesday:

- Pray Hannah's way once a day — pour it out to God before you talk back to a Peninnah.
- Name one person you've been misjudging — and ask God to help you read them backwards.
- Speak one blessing over your household out loud this week — even if no one knows you did it.

🙏 BEFORE YOU GO

Family pain is real — whether it comes from the household or the sanctuary. You don't have to carry it alone, and you don't have to sing this week's song by yourself.

Reach out to someone safe. The Rock is still steady. The song is still coming.


NEXT WEEK • Teaching the Children the Song • Psalm 78:1–8

1 Samuel 2:2 — "There is none holy as the LORD: for there is none beside thee: neither is there any rock like our God."

Teaching the Children the Song

PSALM 78:1–8

We don't just sing the song — we hand it down, because the next generation has to know the tune before they ever see the strange land.

 **PRE-RECORDED THIS WEEK** — JWC Vacation Bible School this week. Pause when you need to. Rewind when something hits. The Bible study is yours — set the pace.

THE LAND THEY WERE IN

Judah, after the kingdom split. Asaph looks north and sees the ten tribes who abandoned the faith of their fathers. He looks at his own people and sees the same drift starting. So he writes a history psalm — not to nostalgize the past, but to **warn the next generation.**


His thesis is brutal and beautiful: faith can be lost in a single generation. Everything — the temple, the covenant, the king — can vanish if one generation forgets to hand the song down. *The German philosopher Hegel said the one thing we learn from history is that we don't learn from history. Asaph is determined to break that rule.*


THE SONG IN THE TEXT


Open your Bible to **Psalm 78:1–8**. Notice who Asaph addresses — and who he keeps mentioning in the third person.

THREE MOVEMENTS


vv. 1–3 • The Songs We Were Handed

 **We heard it before we read it:** “Which we have heard and known, and our fathers have told us.” Faith arrives by ear before it arrives by eye. Before anybody studied theology, somebody sang over them, prayed at their bedside, or told them the story at the table.


 **The inheritance is older than us:** Asaph isn't reciting current events. He's drawing from generations back. The song you sing today was put in your mouth by people who passed it on without asking permission first.

 **Who was your messenger:** A mother. A grandmother. A neighbor lady. A pastor. A Sunday school teacher whose name you forgot. Somebody handed you the tune. Today's lesson asks: are you handing it on?


 Key word: _____

 **Note for you** — Faith is rarely caught in solitude. Almost always, someone sang it over you first. The grace you have is somebody else's obedience showing up in your life.


v. 4 • Don't Let the Song Die With You

 **The verb is “hide,” not “teach”:** Asaph doesn't say “teach them.” He says “we will not hide them from their children.” The bar isn't expert instruction — the bar is honest witness. Don't hoard what God gave you.


 **The audience is wider than parents:** Asaph addresses the whole nation — not just biological mothers and fathers. Aunts, uncles, grandparents, godparents, single saints, retired saints, youth leaders, neighbors. The whole village holds the song.


 **What gets handed down:** “The praises of the LORD, and his strength, and his wonderful works.” Not Bible trivia. Not church culture. The acts of God — what He did, what He kept, who He saved. Tell what you've seen.


 Key word: _____

 **Note for you** — You can teach the song you're still learning to sing. Asaph doesn't say “perfected ones, teach the children.” He says don't hide it. You don't have to be fully formed to be a faithful witness.


vv. 5–8 • Break the Pattern Before It Breaks Them

 **Why the song matters:** “That the generation to come might know them... that they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments.” Three results — they know, they hope, they obey. The song does all three.

 **The pattern Asaph fears:** “And might not be as their fathers — a stubborn and rebellious generation.” He’s not afraid of strangers corrupting the kids. He’s afraid of the kids inheriting the parents’ drift.

 **The cycle doesn’t break itself:** Somebody has to interrupt it on purpose — by telling the truth, naming what didn’t work, and pointing toward what did.

 Key word: _____

 **Note for you** — *The next generation doesn’t inherit your faith automatically. They inherit your habits. What you make holy in your home, they will treat as holy. What you make small, they will leave behind.*

SING IT TOGETHER

These questions work alone, around your table, or on a phone call with someone you trust.

1. Who handed the song down to you? Name them out loud.
2. Where in your life are you hiding the song instead of sharing it — out of fear, busyness, or feeling unqualified?
3. Who is the next generation in your life — biological children, grandchildren, nieces, neighbors, youth at church? What do they need to hear from you?
4. What pattern in your family or community needs to break with you?

YOUR OWN SONG

Take 5 minutes. Write, don’t think.

Write a short word of testimony for the next generation. Start it like Asaph:

“I will not hide from them what the Lord has done — He _____.”

CARRY IT WITH YOU

Before next Wednesday:

- Tell one young person something God has done in your life. Don’t over-prepare it. Just tell it.
- Thank the person who handed the song down to you — by call, text, prayer, or visit.
- Name one pattern in your family line — and pray for it to break with you, not through you.

BEFORE YOU GO

The song you’re singing was handed to you on purpose — through somebody’s prayer, somebody’s patience, somebody’s witness. Don’t let it die with you. The next generation is waiting to hear what God has done. Don’t hide it.

NEXT WEEK • When the World Our Children Are Inheriting Feels Strange • Deuteronomy 32

Psalm 78:4 — “We will not hide them from their children, shewing to the generation to come the praises of the LORD.”

When the World Our Children Are Inheriting Feels Strange

DEUTERONOMY 32

Moses teaches the assembly a song before he dies — what we leave behind is the song the next generation will sing in our absence.

THE LAND THEY WERE IN

The plains of Moab, just east of the Jordan. Moses is 120 years old. He's about to die. The promised land is in sight — but he won't enter it. He's spent 40 years leading a people who tested his patience and broke his heart, and he knows that the moment he's gone, they will drift. So he doesn't write a sermon. He writes a song.


God told Moses to put the song in their mouths so that when they forgot, the song would preach back at them from inside. **This is the last thing Moses ever teaches.** It's the song he wants the next generation singing in the strange land he'll never get to see.

THE SONG IN THE TEXT


Open your Bible to **Deuteronomy 32:1–14** and **32:44–47**. The middle of the song names how Israel will drift — we'll come back to that. Today, we listen to how Moses opens and how he lands the song.

THREE MOVEMENTS


vv. 1–4 • Drop My Words Like Rain

 **Heaven and earth as witnesses:** Moses opens like a courtroom. He calls the sky and the dirt to testify if the people forget. The world is a witness to whether we kept our word.


 **Not a storm — a soft rain:** “My doctrine shall drop as the rain.” Moses doesn't shout. He chooses the slow, soaking image — formation that goes deep enough to grow something.


 **The Rock at the center:** “He is the Rock, his work is perfect.” The first thing Moses wants in the next generation's mouth is a name. Before any rule, they need to know who God is.


 Key word: _____

 **Note for you** — *You don't form the next generation by shouting. You water them — slowly, faithfully, drop by drop, until something grows.*


vv. 5–14 • Like an Eagle Over Her Young

 **Remember the days of old:** “Ask thy father, and he will shew thee; thy elders, and they will tell thee.” The next generation needs the long memory. They can't set their hope on a story they've never heard.


 **He found them in the wilderness:** “He found him in a desert land... he led him about, he instructed him, he kept him as the apple of his eye.” God didn't wait until they had it together. He found them in the dry place and carried them out.


 **Like an eagle stirring the nest:** “As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young... beareth them on her wings.” The eagle teaches the eaglet to fly by making the nest uncomfortable — and stays close enough to catch them when they fall.


 Key word: _____

 **Note for you** — *God found Israel in the wilderness — not because they were searching, but because He was. Some of the people you love are still in the wilderness. Keep singing the song over them anyway.*


vv. 44–47 • This Is Not a Vain Thing for You

 **Moses puts the song in their mouths:** He doesn't just teach it — he plants it. So that when he's gone, the song will keep preaching from inside the next generation.

 **Set your hearts unto these words:** Not your ears. Not your heads. Your hearts. What doesn't go down deep won't survive the strange land their children are walking into.

 **“It is your life”:** “It is not a vain thing for you; because it is your life.” The song isn’t supplementary. It’s how the next generation stays alive in a world Moses won’t navigate for them.

 Key word: _____

 **Note for you** — *Some of you have been singing this song over people for years. You haven’t seen the harvest. Keep singing. It is not a vain thing.*

SING IT TOGETHER

1. If you had to leave behind a song instead of a sermon, what would yours sound like?
2. What “rain” has been falling on you slowly — and what is it growing?
3. Whose nest has God stirred in your life, and how did He carry you when you fell?
4. Who in your life needs you to keep singing — even though you haven’t seen the harvest yet?

YOUR OWN SONG

Take 5 minutes. Write, don’t think.

Write one verse you want the next generation to know by heart. Start it like Moses:

“Remember — the Lord _____.”

CARRY IT WITH YOU

Before next Wednesday:

- Sing or speak one verse of Scripture over someone younger than you. Don’t explain it — just leave it with them.
- Name one person you’ve been praying for whose “harvest” hasn’t come yet — and pray for them again anyway.
- Ask an elder one question about “the days of old” — what they remember about how God showed up before you got here.

BEFORE YOU GO

What we leave behind is the song the next generation will sing in our absence. So sing carefully. Sing honestly. Sing the Rock louder than the storm. The world they’re walking into needs a song that tells them the truth about God — and we are the ones holding the tune.

NEXT WEEK • The Song That Outlasts the Strange Land • Revelation 15:2–4
Deuteronomy 32:47 — “It is not a vain thing for you; because it is your life.”

The Song That Outlasts the Strange Land

REVELATION 15:2–4

The saints standing on the sea of glass are the ones who sang through every strange land — and discovered the song was never about the land. It was always about the Lamb.



PRE-RECORDED THIS WEEK — Series finale. Grow Lab tonight at 6:30pm. Pause when you need to. Rewind when something hits.



THE LAND THEY WERE IN

Patmos, near the end of the 1st century. John is exiled, the church is being persecuted, and Caesar is demanding to be called Lord. In the middle of this, God shows John a vision — not of what’s coming next, but of who’s waiting on the other side.

He sees a sea of glass, and standing on it are the saints who refused the mark of the beast, who couldn’t buy or sell, who lost everything and stayed faithful anyway. **These are the people who walked through every strange land — and they’re not just alive. They’re singing.**



THE SONG IN THE TEXT

Open your Bible to **Revelation 15:2–4**. Three short verses — the closing word on every strange land we’ve walked through this summer.



THREE MOVEMENTS

v. 2 • The Other Side of Every Strange Land

A sea that stopped fighting: John sees a “sea of glass mingled with fire” — and standing on it are the saints. The Red Sea once drowned Egypt’s army. Now the saints are standing on the same kind of water, on the other side of every battle.

Who is standing there: Those who “had gotten the victory over the beast.” Not the famous. Not the powerful. The faithful. The ones who refused to bow when bowing would have been easier.

What’s in their hands: Harps. Of God. They didn’t put the music down through all of it. The song that started in their grief became the song they’re playing in their glory.

Key word: _____



Note for you — *The sea of glass isn’t a calm sea — it’s a battlefield that stopped fighting. What tried to kill you is what you’re standing on now.*

v. 3 • Two Songs, One Voice

The song of Moses: The song first sung at the Red Sea after God delivered Israel from Pharaoh (Exodus 15). The oldest deliverance song in the Bible. The song Moses put in the people’s mouths last week is the same song being sung in heaven this week.

And the song of the Lamb: The new song — the song of Jesus, who delivered us from a deeper Pharaoh. His cross was the new exodus. The blood on the doorpost became the blood on the cross. The same God, the same rescue, in a new key.


They harmonize, not compete: The saints don’t pick one or the other. Both songs come out of the same mouth. The Bible is one song in two voices — and the people who made it through learned to sing both.


Key word: _____




Note for you — *You don’t have to choose between the old song and the new. Moses and the Lamb sing together. The Bible has one voice, and it’s worth your whole life learning to hear both parts.*


v. 4 • Every Nation Joins the Chorus

 **The song reaches further than the strange land:** “All nations shall come and worship before thee.” The song doesn’t stay small. What the saints sing on the sea of glass becomes what the whole world eventually sings.

 **They praise His works AND His ways:** Notice — no complaint about the suffering. They don’t ask why God allowed the strange land. They’ve come far enough now to praise both what He did and how He did it.

 **The King of the ages:** “Thou King of saints” can also be read “King of the ages.” He was sovereign through every age you walked through. He’ll be sovereign in every age you haven’t reached yet.

 Key word: _____

 **Note for you** — *Every strange land you walked through becomes part of the song. Nothing is wasted. The God who got you through the verses is writing you into the chorus.*

SING IT TOGETHER

These questions work alone, around your table, or on a phone call with someone you trust.

1. Looking back at this whole series — which strange land hit closest to home for you?
2. What in your life used to be the sea trying to drown you that you’re now standing on?
3. Where are you still tempted to choose between the old song and the new? What would it look like to sing both?
4. What would it mean to praise God for both His works AND His ways — including the hard ones?

YOUR OWN SONG

Take 5 minutes. Write, don’t think.

Write your own closing verse for the series. Name what you’ve walked through, and what you’re still singing:

“Great and marvelous are thy works, Lord God — for You _____.”

CARRY IT WITH YOU

Beyond this Wednesday — for the rest of the year:

- Pick one of the nine songs we studied and commit it to memory before the year ends.
- Tell one person what God has carried you through this summer — and thank Him out loud for it.
- Keep singing. The sea of glass is real. The Lamb is on the throne. The song is not done yet.

BEFORE YOU GO · A BENEDICTION FOR THE SERIES

You sat by the river and wept. You sang under Caesar. You preached to your own soul. You refused to be renamed. You named your “yet.” You stood on the Rock when family shook the ground. You handed the song down. And you kept singing. The sea of glass is waiting. The Lamb is on the throne. Keep singing.

END OF SERIES · THANK YOU FOR SINGING WITH US THIS SUMMER

Revelation 15:3 — “Great and marvelous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints.”

JOHN WESLEY CHURCH · Songs in a Strange Land
WHEN THE SERIES ENDS · THE SONG GOES ON

You walked through nine strange lands this summer. You weren't just studying ancient songs — you were learning to sing your own. Now the series ends, but the song doesn't. Carry these truths with you into whatever land is next.

 **THE NINE SONGS**

1. **Sitting by the River** · Psalm 137 — grief is the first honest note of faith
2. **When the Government Feels Strange** · Luke 1:46–55 — magnify the Lord, not the situation
3. **When You Feel Strange to Yourself** · Psalm 42 — preach to your own soul before you drown
4. **When the Culture Feels Strange** · Daniel 2:20–23 — empires have a lease, not a deed
5. **When the Economy Feels Strange** · Habakkuk 3:17–19 — your “yet” is not naïve — it’s defiant
6. **When Our Families Feel Strange** · 1 Samuel 2:1–10 — the Rock is steady when the household isn’t
7. **Teaching the Children the Song** · Psalm 78:1–8 — don’t let the song die with you
8. **The World Our Children Are Inheriting** · Deuteronomy 32 — it is not a vain thing — it is your life
9. **The Song That Outlasts the Strange Land** · Revelation 15:2–4 — what tried to kill you is what you’re standing on

 **THINGS TO REMEMBER**

- *Grief is not the opposite of faith — it’s faith refusing to lie about what hurts.*
- *Whatever you magnify gets bigger in your sight. Magnify the Lord.*
- *Faith isn’t the absence of trembling — it’s what you do while you’re trembling.*
- *God doesn’t always change the circumstances. Sometimes He changes us to meet them.*
- *Some songs reach further than the singers do. Keep singing anyway.*

 **KEEP SINGING**

- Commit one of the nine songs to memory before the year ends.
- Tell one person what God carried you through this summer.
- Hand the song down — speak Scripture over someone younger than you.
- When the next strange land comes — and it will — open this book again.

The sea of glass is waiting. The Lamb is on the throne.

Keep singing.