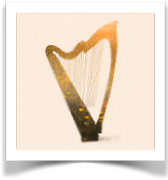


Study Guide for *Dangerous Songs: The Psalms and a Gloriously Disrupted Life*



Into It (An Intro)

Pages 1-10

First Words

- Do you have an intense relationship with a particular book, film, painting, story, or song? How does it effect you?
- Besides the book of Psalms, what other kinds of art do you find in the Bible?
- What we call scripture can still us up, inspire us, and bother us. Do you find the Bible grounding or disruptive in your life right now?

Deconstruction or Whatever

- Faith is meant to evolve across our lifetimes. Describe a time when your faith changed.
- What was happening to precipitate this evolution?
- What language and practices did you grow out of? What loss was there, and what renewal?
- Name the support you have had for growth.

The Ancient Psalmists Got You

- How do you feel about the psalms of the Hebrew Bible being affirmations of your current life? What other perspectives do you hear about what the Bible is for?

Musical Scripture

- “The psalms invite you to hear your life as a song in progress.” What might this mean for you?
- What aspects of what you’ve read about the Psalms so far make them seem “dangerous” or risky?

The Psalms Are For Twenty-First Century Faith

- The author gives three reasons why he loves the Psalms— they're old but relevant, model an integrated spirituality, and they are passionate. Which one do you relate to most and why?
- What reservations do you have about engaging the passion of the Psalms?

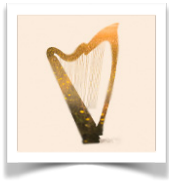
The Three Deep Dimensions of Human Life

- Name something in your life for each of the three dimensions— thriving, desolation, and unknowing.
- Which of the three dimensions are you most drawn to right now? Which do you feel resistance to?

How to Use This Book

- Are you more like a scientist or an artist these days? What approach feels most exciting for you?
- *Dangerous Songs* is inviting you to be a theologian, borrowing or inventing language for your experience of God and reflecting on what that means. Consider the authority you have in your own life by practicing your expertise that no one can argue with: What is your favorite color, food, day of the week, person, artist, and piece of clothing? Share in your circle. However you answer, you are absolutely correct!
- "The ancient psalms are here as an eager, reverent witness to your complicated life." Reflect.

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Groundedness

Chapter 1

Pages 13-30

First Words of Groundedness

- When is a time you felt rooted in reality, solid in safety, with your basic needs met? Have there been times of the opposite?
- Listen to **Like a Tree** (Psalm 1). What do you notice?

On Being Gardened

- In the seedling story, what personal names for God would you remove or add to the author's list?

Anchored in Good Soil

- What expectations have you had of living in the Christian faith? Have your expectations changed over time? Share and listen carefully to one another.

By Water

- Share something about the significance of water in your life.

Grounded in the Source

- How do you think your faith is the same or different from the people in the Bible?

A Dynamic Stability

- Listen to **Where Can I Go** (Psalm 139). Discuss.
- Listen to **I Love the Keeper of Life** (Psalm 116). Reflect.
- Listen to **How Strong** (Psalm 103). What do you notice?
- Listen to **God is Holding Your Life** (Psalm 121). Sing along.
- What does trust feel like? What does it mean to trust another person, gravity, or God?

The Story We're Woven Into

- What elements of your culture are counter to faith/trust?
- "Our sense of success has to do with being able to (the first bias) to do it (we value *doing* over being) all by ourselves (the message being *I am primarily alone in the world*). Of these ideas, what rings true to your personal experience?

Stability in Community

- In what ways is your faith community *intentionally subversive* to the culture surrounding it?
- Listen to **Sharing the Road** (Psalm 133).
- Listen to **Leaning On Love** (Psalm 21).
- What humans, animals, and natural systems are you interconnected with?

The Other Side

- If life comes in seasons, what would you name the season you are in right now? How long has it been going on, and what are the markers of this era? What might the next change look like?

Grounded by Elders and Kiddos

- Who are the elders and children in your life? How is their perspective on the world a gift to you?
- Listen to **You Were My Midwife** (Psalm 71).
- Listen to **Imagine Happy Face** (Psalm 128).

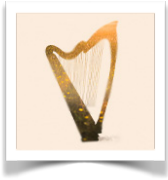
Grounded in Belonging

- Listen to the chant **Our Roots Are In You** (Psalm 87).
- Listen to the upbeat **You Belong to the Holy One** (Psalm 87).
- Describe your relationship to your home planet and its inhabitants.
- If you wish, turn to page 39 and sing "Open Now Our Hearts to Wisdom" (Psalm 90) to the hymn tune BEACH SPRING. What lines are meaningful?

Ever Mindful of Holy Presence

- In Howard Thurman's language, what activities and relationships help you "center down?"
- Listen to **I Am Ever Mindful** (Psalm 6).

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Joy

Chapter 2

Pages 31-48

First Words of Joy

- Listen to **Creation's Hallelujah** (Psalm 148). Sing along with the chorus if you wish.
- In the first paragraph, the author proposes a metaphorical recipe for joy. What's your version?
- Some of us may have complicated feelings about joy. Discuss your relationship with joy.

Taste and See

- Listen to **Taste Deeply** (Psalm 34). Reflect.

Losing It

- What is your favorite joke?
- What place, person, thing, or activity enacts joy in you?

Joy in Community

- If you're interested, look up Psalms 136 and 89 as the author's examples of communal songs.

We Are All Connected

- Listen to **The Blessing of Life Forevermore** (Psalm 133) and reflect.
- Listen to **There is a River** (Psalm 46). Reading the psalm text, what possibilities do you imagine for the best musical accompaniment?

Joy in Our Shared Laments

- What is the lowest common denominator for what human beings share? That is, what basic things do we have in common?

- Listen to **We Will Sing** (Psalm 89). Discuss which words or phrases are significant to you.

All Creation Sings of Joy

- Psalm 148 imagines all creation as God's singing congregation. Look out of your window and imagine each element of life emanating joy. This seems to be part of the psalmists' imagination.
- Listen to **Everyone Come** (Psalm 36), reflecting on the generous invitation. Read Psalm 36 and see if the song rings true to the text.

Hallelujah Breakthroughs

- What do you think of the author's expression for God— *The Covenant God of Israel with the Unspeakably Holy Name*?
- Listen to Leonard Cohen's song, "Hallelujah." Notice that his Jewish perspective expresses *Hallelujah* not only in joy, but also confusion and heartbreak.

All That God Is

- Listen to **Let Us Shout For Joy** (Psalm 95) and **Bless Your Unspeakable Name** (Psalm 145). What are the most important blessings the psalmists attribute to God's presence and action?

The Slow

- Listen to **You Are Slow** (Psalm 86). Reflect on this song for the Lenten season.
- Listen to **The Earth is Full** (Psalm 33). How does the psalmist's imagination for creation compare with Genesis 1-2?

Awe-ful Joy

- Listen to **Rivers in the Desert** (Psalm 126). Read Psalm 126. How would you paraphrase this psalm in your own words?
- Rudolf Otto's phrase for encountering the holy is *mysterium tremendum et fascinans*: mysterious, overwhelming, and fascinating. Which word speaks to you today?

The Joy of Justice

- This section discusses the psalmic themes of justice and *shalom* being rich with joy. How does the idea of joyful politics strike you?
- Listen to **When We Share God's Dream** (Psalm 126), and contemplate what it's like to participate in God's agenda for creation.
- Listen to **Shout For Joy** (Psalm 98) and ***Joy to the World***. How would the experience of Christmas be if your church celebrated with themes of justice and *shalom*?

When Joy Comes to Church

- At Sunday morning worship, how do you think the most vulnerable people in the room are experiencing the service? If your community wanted to enact deep welcome and hospitality, what changes might you make?

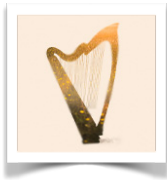
Keeping It Real

- How do you personally savor joy?

When the Church Spoils Joy

- This section suggests that fully embracing and sharing joy might have challenges. Do you relate to any of the author's five reasons?
- Listen to **Unfailing Love** (Psalm 32). Summarize each verse of the song in your own words. Bonus points if you can identify the New Testament story in verse 3.

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Gratitude

Chapter 3

Pages 49-66

First Words of Gratitude

- What's your relationship to gratitude? If you've ever felt bad for not feeling thankful enough, where does that idea come from?
- What do you think of the author's idea that gratitude is a natural response, not a performance we must enact? Agree or disagree?

Three Movements of Gratitude

- Listen to **Open Hand**, a song about Kevin of Glendalough.
- Of the three movements of gratitude— noticing the gift, engaging an other, and accepting with trust— which one is most interesting to you today, and why?

Noticing Holy Presence

- Listen to **At Night on the Holy Mountain** (Psalm 134). What do you notice?

All That God Does

- Listen to **Who is Like Our God Hallelujah** (Psalm 113). What catches your attention?

Tuning In To Reality

- Listen to **The God of Jacob Hallelujah** (Psalm 146). Drawing from your own experience, what else is deserving of some *Hallelujah* right now?
- Who is someone in your life you can share your gratitude-noticing with?

The Strange Case of Ripening Memory

- Listen to **Ever-Present Love** (Psalm 107). What important memories of goodness are touchstones for you that help you feel grounded?

Because You Had Our Back

- Listen to **Baruch Elohim** (Psalm 66). Do you ever relate to the psalmists' sense that God can be challenging as well as grace-full?

Beauty

- Name three beautiful things. How does their existence effect you?
- Listen to **The Earth Has Yielded its Harvest** (Psalm 67). What elements of the natural world fascinate you, or even bring you to awe?

An Elegant Order

- Listen to **If We All Belong to God** (Psalm 8). How does the expanse of the night sky make you think about or feel?
- Listen to **Yachal** (Psalm 147). What part of the natural order of creation do you find most beautiful?
- Listen to **It's a New Day** (Psalm 104). Is there some part of life you are particularly grateful for today?

A Mom Hiking

- Listen to **I Am a Mother** (Psalm 131), Just for fun, imagine the sound of the woman's voice. Pretend you know her name and character. What conversation would you like to have with her over tea?

Grateful For Uniqueness

- *"Your uniqueness is why the people who love you, love you."* What aspects of your one-of-a-kind-ness do you enjoy right now? Which ones are harder to accept?

The Allowing Life

- What is your relationship with time? Are you a chronically early bird, a late-y or a right-on-time person?
- From the psalms, we know life comes in seasons. What does this have to do with faith and trust? Listen to **In My Crying Out To You** (Psalm 30) that stirs some Ecclesiastes 3 into the same song.

Living in the Flow

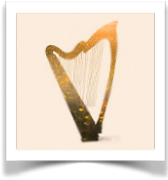
- What activities find you "in flow?"

- What friendships invite a natural sense of gratitude for your life?
- From page 65: *"To live in gratitude is to trust, finally, that nothing can separate us from love, and that the Holy One to whom we belong is always, inexplicably, for us."* When have you been most in touch with this truth?

Everything With Breath

- Listen to **Hallelujah** (Psalm 150), and sing along if you like.

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Sadness

Chapter 4

Pages 71-90

First Words of Sadness

- Describe your relationship to melancholy, sadness, or depression. Maybe these experiences are part of daily life, maybe they are completely foreign to you.

Sing the Blues, Church!

- Listen to **Desert Blues** (Psalm 63). What does it mean to you that faithful suffering is explicit in the Bible?

In the Shadow of Pain

- When is a time you were disappointed with God? Sometimes such moments are when one's theology changes. How has your understanding of God changed?
- Listen to **Hear My Cry, O God** (Psalm 61). Which of the three lines is close to your heart today?
- It takes deep faith to pray a lament. What artists of music, film, theatre, poetry, or storytelling help you name and process life?

Car Crashes, Cancer, and Other Crises

- Listen to **Heal This Misery** (Psalm 6). It's natural to cope with crises in any number of ways. Is there any troublesome part of your life that is hard to tell the truth about— to others or to yourself?

After Another Shooting

- Listen to **Justice is On its Way** (Psalm 94). If you're part of a faith community, what have you sung or spoken together after tragedies?
- Listen to **I Love the Keeper of Life** (Psalm 116). It's not easy to live with the paradox of a world in crisis that is also in God's care.

The Depths of Depression

- Depression can be a delicate topic to explore. If you feel supported and safe, proceed gently. If not, come back to this section a different time.
- Listen to this song of longing and confusion: **Oh My Soul** (Psalms 42-43). Perhaps you have known pain like the psalm writers describe. If the Psalms were songs that Jesus and his first students prayed, may they be a comfort and courage to you today across the millennia.

Searching For Reasons

- The author suggests the Psalms are counter to a culture of denial, affirming truth-telling and the possibility of healing. Name places and people in your world in need of truth and healing.

Loneliness and Trauma

- Listen to **Lonely Bird Blues** (Psalm 102). How would it feel for your church to pray with such raw honesty about troubles?

Deconstruction Despondence

- Your sense of faith has probably evolved over your lifetime, and will probably continue to. Tell a personal story about a time your ideas about God changed. If you're with a group, affirm one another.
- Listen to **Let Us Go** (Psalm 39), a song of deep disappointment with God. Reflect.

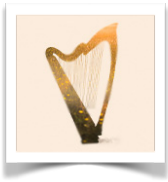
Breaking Up With God

- Like a relationship with a person, there are ups and downs as you grow and change; Israel and *Adonai* certainly were passionate this way. Describe the texture and terms of your faith these days. Consider creating a kind of faith autobiography to narrate your spiritual journey.

When We're Overwhelmed

- From page 89: *"Lament psalms model for us an open-hearted, fearless faith. Transparency is such a relief. So much better than pretending we're OK or keeping secrets."* Discuss.
- From the bottom of page 89: *"The psalms show us that a rich life includes, and even requires, the presence of sorrow and grief."* To what extent does this ring true for you?

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Outrage

Chapter 5

Pages 91-108

First Words of Outrage

- What comes to mind when you think “protest.”
- Have you ever experienced what the author calls “denial theology?” In that perspective, what is emphasized and what is left out?

A Theology of Lament

- A theology of lament opens the deepest part of our humanity to be honest. Discuss. Is there room for lament in your community’s worship life?
- From page 92: *“Far from simple, the theology of the Psalms is more mosaic than systematic— one-hundred-fifty windows of experience from a people faithfully wrestling with the Source of Life.”* Do you find this frustrating or liberating? Why?

The Language of Grief

- The lament formula includes addressing God, a description of trouble, a big ask, declaring trust, and, finally, praise. The author says this is a trajectory of hope. In what ways is this helpful for people in the 21st century?

Despair Over Systematic Injustice

- Listen to **Mama, Oh Mama** (Psalm 34). What do you notice?

Political Outrage

- Listen to **Justice is On its Way** (Psalm 94). If you’re part of a faith community, what have you sung or spoken together after tragedies?
- Listen to **I Love the Keeper of Life** (Psalm 116). It’s not easy to live with the paradox of a world in crisis that is also in God’s care. Discuss.
- In your community of faith, what place does anger and outrage have?

Who Needs Protection?

- What groups of people in your society are most vulnerable, and in what ways are they open to harm?
- Listen to **Pay Attention** (Psalm 140) is all its lamentiness.

Numb Dismay

- What experiences of numbness have you heard about? Have you experienced this kind of grief?
- Listen to **Raise Your Heads** (Psalm 110). There's lots of room for interpretation for this psalm. What does it mean to you?

Disgust For Evil

- Of the many metaphors for the renewed life found in Psalm 51, which is the most meaningful and which ones rub you the wrong way?
- Give an example of abuse of power.

Countless Areas of Concern

- The author describes the violent images in Psalm 58. How do you feel about this aggressive tone?
- Listen to **Deliver Us** (Psalm 58) and discuss the petition of the Lord's Prayer, "Deliver us from evil."
- The author suggests that a psalm like this helps us in the 21st century name that which is need of healing. What needs healing right now?

Personal Abuse

- Like Psalm 58 above, Psalm 109 is a venting rant full of curses. Have you ever had intense emotions you needed to vent so no damage was done? What are cathartic outlets for you? (e.g.: music, exercise, movies, being with friends, games)
- Listen to **A Curse Assurance Non-Violence** (Psalm 109). Discuss.
- When is a time your ideas about God changed? Was that moment related to a particular experience?

Terrorism

- Outrage is an emotional response of profound fury, disgust, shock, resentment and/or indignation to a violation of decency. How do people respond to other people's outrage? When is a time you felt furious?

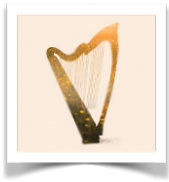
Songs of Resistance

- Listen to **Restore Us** (Psalm 80). What is an area of your life that is ready for renewal, rehab, repair, or restoration?

The Cringe Mirror

- Politics is relationship on a large scale— the organization of power to connect parts of a society. What political realities were the psalmists 3000 years ago dealing with? How are today's realities the same or different?

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Dread

Chapter 6

Pages 109-125

First Words of Dread

- The initial words from Psalm 69 are dramatic and intense. Whom do you know that might be feeling this way?

Fear in the Bible

- What is your relationship to fear?
- Have you ever felt “disqualified” from faith because of fear, doubt, or anger? What would the ancient psalmists say to you about that?

Reframing Anxiety with 119

- Listen to **Keep Our Steps Steady** (Psalm 119:129-136). Is there part of it that rings true to your experience?

The Worst With 88

- What do you think of the micro-prayers “O my God” or “Lord, have mercy” as ways to remember God’s presence?
- Listen to **O My God** (Psalm 88). Have you made prayers accusing God of giving you pain, like the psalmist does in Psalm 88? Why or why not?

Laments as a Holy Witness to Pain

- When is a time that a sad song or movie felt like good company for your mood? Make a list of songs and films that convey sadness, loneliness, or dread.
- Engaging your empathy, consider making a poem, song, letter, or picture on behalf of someone you know is suffering.

Moaning, Crying, and Yelling

- Do you have a character in the Bible you admire? In what way is your faith like theirs?

Alarm for a Toxic Future

- If you're a churchgoer, does your community do corporate confession? Does it lean more systemic or individualistic? What do you think about the opposite emphasis?
- Listen to **All Day Long (And Every Day)** (Psalm 44). Discuss the state of mind you hear here.

Reckoning with Trauma

- From the bottom of page 120: *"With trauma, if we're not careful, we may judge ourselves improperly as being weak and irrational. As American psychiatrist Dr. Bruce Perry says, we may wonder, 'What is wrong with me?' instead of asking the more helpful query, 'What happened to me?'"* What part of your life needs this grace?
- In the society to which you belong, what emotions are considered difficult? Why do you think that is?
- Read the description of Psalm 137, Parts 1-4, which includes the psalm text itself. What do you notice?
- Listen to **137** (Psalm 137) and reflect on the lyrical and musical interpretation. What style and texture of music for the four sections would you have done differently?
- Is there a loss in your life you'd like to talk about? If you're doing this study in a circle of people, consider taking turns to share around the circle. (This probably isn't for everyone, so decide as a group). As one person shares for three minutes, the rest are quiet, giving their full attention to that person's experience. No interrupting. No advice-giving. Only witnessing in love.

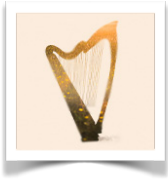
Where *Were* You?

- The author describes the psalmists' model of God as one very different than most Christians' today. What does this mean for you and how you read the Bible?
- Listen to **No Trace** (Psalm 77). Discuss what you notice in the tone and content of the song. Have you ever experienced the absence of Life?
- Page 124 may contain one of the deepest challenges of the book: Is our 21st-century model of God so far from that of our ancestors in faith that we need to examine the differences? How might this change what we expect of God? How might it change how we encounter scripture?

Embedding Hope with 23

- The author suggests that the expectation that faithful people shouldn't be scared may be "an obsolete idea of God if you want to live the abundant life." Do you agree or disagree?

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Awe

Chapter 7

Pages 129-144

First Words of Awe

- “...most of our society values solid facts, efficiency, and smarts— things of no use in our experience of wonder and awe.” How does one live in awe? Is it possible to sustain it all the time?
- The author has suggested that both joy and awe may be connected to the experience of discovering one’s life by losing track of self-consciousness (Matthew 10:39). What do you think of that? When are moments you consistently do not think about your needs, your appearance, or your unique, personal quirks?

The Awe of Holy Presence

- Read Psalm 23. Then read this section. Then read Psalm 23 again. What does it mean to you today that the spotlight center is “You are with me?”

Holy Overwhelm

- Listen to **I Am Ever Mindful** (Psalm 16). Sing along as you desire.
- The words across page 131 could be adapted to use as a group meditation. Here’s one way to do it: Learn the chant from the song. Each person in your circle takes a turn sharing a time or place they desire to know God’s presence. The group responds by singing the chant.

Calling For Ceasefire

- What current movement in politics or war could be engaged in prayer using Psalm 46?

Enthralled with Creation

- What is your relationship to the sky? Are you more a “microscope” person or “telescope” person? That is, do you tend to see the forest or the trees?
- Listen to **If We All Belong to God** (Psalm 8). Discuss what you notice.

- As part of creation, are you most attracted to earth, sky, or sea right now? What gift does it bring you?

A Different Way of Moving Through the World

- Listen to **The Earth is Full** (Psalm 33) or **watch the lyric video**. What words or phrases are important to you?

Living in a State of Awe

- Listen to **The Earth Has Yielded its Harvest** (Psalm 67). Reflect and discuss.
- Describe your relationship to food. Everyone on earth needs it to live, so there's potential for food issues to bring us together.

The Beauty of Universal Order

- What is your favorite flavor— either food or beverage?
- Listen to **It's a New Day** (Psalm 104). How would life feel if we understood that everything good emanates from God "from whom all blessings flow?"
- Listen to **Yachal** (Psalm 147) or **watch the lyric video**. Discuss the specific images in the verses.

Fear and Submission in the Psalms

- Have you ever felt afraid of God? Where did that fear come from? What theology is behind the idea of a frightening God?
- Listen to **Glory to You in the Storm** (Psalm 29). In the psalm, the psalmists imagine God as a powerful king of the world with the power to destroy. How is this a helpful or not helpful model of God for the 21st century?

Drawn to Mystery and The Delight of the Chase

- What are you curious about these days? What fascinates you about human nature right now?
- Listen to **Let Our Hearts Rejoice** (Psalm 105). When is a time you felt lost and worried about your faith? (It could be right now!) Searching God out and experiencing God as hidden is all over the Psalms and all over Jesus' parables, so you're in holy company.

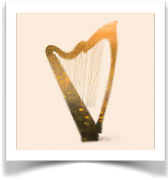
Compelling Curiosity

- What intangible part of your own life are you curious about right now? Try a sentence that begins, "I am curious why I..." or "I wonder how my mind..."

The Existential Shrug

- The Psalms can disrupt our illusion of control. Try the exercise at the bottom of page 142, taking a picture of yourself shrugging, "I don't know and I don't have to know". Maybe take a group picture with all of you shrugging for when you need company in uncertainty.
- Surrender is part of every great religious tradition. Listen to **Into Your Hands** (Psalm 31) and relax as you imagine yourself letting go of worry over being in charge of everything.
- If you're a person of faith, how do you define and describe faith at this moment in your life?
- Listen to **You Remember** (Psalm 106) and discuss the lyrics and music.

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Newness

Chapter 8

Pages 145-163

First Words of Newness

- New things can be exciting and/or scary. Name some examples of Newness that was both yearned for and resisted.

Change and Changes

- How do you feel about change?
- What is your process for making decisions? Do you make a list of pros and cons, ask advice from trusted friends, roll dice?
- Listen to **Like Jerusalem Surrounded By Hills** (Psalm 125). People have different radars for signs of God's love. Do you notice evidence of God's presence surrounding you?

Labyrinth Season

- If you have experienced a labyrinth walk, share your experience.
- Listen to **Teach Me Your Way** (Psalm 86). When things ripen toward change, a prayer like, "Show me, help me, lead me, guide me" is a good one for some of us. Is this true for you?

Do We Really Want to Sing a New Song?

- What is your relationship to new music, fashion, foods, games, art, etc.?
- Listen to **God Has Brought Us to Life** (Psalm 66). It's a kind of story-turned-icon about the history of the people. Do you have a story you tell yourself about your family or your lifetime?

What Should I Do?

- Describe your personal decision-making process that is brilliantly unique to you.

The Right Path

- Listen to the song **To You** (Psalm 25) or the chant **I Lay Open** (Psalm 25). How does the translation of the Hebrew term *nephesh* from *soul* to *whole life* change the meaning of this verse?
- When it comes to designing our lives, some of us are built for patient wonder, others for decisive clarity. How are you with the unknown?

God as Midwife

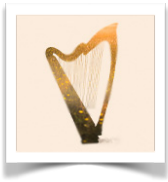
- From halfway down page 157: *"Deep trust and mature faith prompt the psalmist to identify God as the one who not only brought them into the world, but who is still the midwife of every transition in their life."* Discuss the gifts and challenges to imagining God as midwife.
- Listen to **You Were My Midwife** (Psalm 71). Reflect together on how you see God involved in your life and the life of all creation.
- Listen to **A Life of Trust** (Psalm 40). We notice our own trust when we are secure and steady and also when we're scared and shaken. Are you in a season of one or the other right now in your trust of God, or somewhere in the middle?
- How does faith (or trust) in God evolve over time?
- From page 160: *"Newness can feel like exhilaration because in the embrace of newness, we experience ourselves as a different person, one who has made it through the wilderness of the unknown and come out with a gift. That hard-won gift is maturity, a leveling up of trust."* Discuss.
- When we're confused, faith feels different than when you're clear. Listen to **Steady, Steady Love** (Psalm 143) or **watch the lyric video**. When you're in a time of bewilderment, what support do you need?
- After reading the "Allowing the New Thing," section, go to the **Psalm 4 page** and listen to *I Will Lie Down and Sleep in Peace* (Psalm 4) or *Rest In Shalom* (Psalm 4).

Creators of the New

- The author calls you an artist. Last paragraph on page 163: *"As a maker of your own life, both the confidence and the trepidation about the New Thing are honest experiences of a rich, complicated life."* If you were ever told that doubt was bad or

that confusion is a sign of weakness, we are here to assure you that you're doing just fine.

Study Guide for *Dangerous Songs: The Psalms and a Gloriously Disrupted Life*



Deep Change

Chapter 9

Pages 165-183

Born Again

- How does the metaphor of natural change as being born and born again sit with you? Listen to **Quicken Me** (Psalm 119:153-160). What do you notice?

In the Eye of the Hurricane

- Try putting language to a recent time you noticed yourself changing. How did it begin? What pushed and pulled you? Was there resolution or is it ongoing?

For the Facing of This Hour

- The author writes that humans tend to both long for change and fear it. What changes are afoot in the world that feel that way to you?

Changing on a Dime with 27

- The three musical movements within Psalm 27 go from swagger to terror to groundedness. Here's a fun, creative invitation: write your own psalm with the same movements. Write seven lines— two lines for each of the three movements and a final one to wrap it up. It can be a story true to life, a plot from a movie, or something you invent. Be sure to use Very Dramatic Language to make it passionate! Share around the circle and affirm one another.
- If you desire, listen to one of Richard's **Psalm 27 songs**.

Search Me

- Going around the circle, take turns reading the parts of Psalm 139. Which section hits home for you today?
- Listen to one of Richard's **Psalm 139 songs**. Chat about whether or not the musicality fits the psalm text for you.

Ready or Not

- Sarah Bessey writes that if we were taught that spiritual life is simple and certain, we'll be disappointed and disturbed when we run into normal challenges we might have otherwise thought God should spare us from. Give examples from real life.
- Listen to **What** (Psalm 78), which sings of manna, questions, and wonder. Reflect.

Transformation

- Who are elders you admire? What gifts do they offer you and your community?
- Listen to **Our Breath is Incense** (Psalm 141). Describe the tone of this psalmsong.

Tell Me a Story

- Psalm 107 is a smattering of tiny stories about people surviving, attributing their rescue to God. A success story can help us know what's possible in our own lives. Listen to **Ever-Present Love** (Psalm 107).

Upheaval and Hope

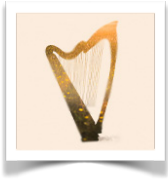
- Read Psalm 130, noticing the arc of development for the singer.
- At the bottom of page 178, the author critiques the image we are sometimes given of the perfect Christian— sweet, kind, patient, selfless, successful. Describe the Christians you know and appreciate.
- *Israel* means having wrestled successfully with God. What name would you claim for yourself today? There are suggestions in the middle of page 179.
- Listen to either the contemplative **We Wait Full of Hope** (Psalm 130) or the upbeat **We Wait in Hope for Your Word** (Psalm 130).

Living with Contradictions

- This section follows Psalm 23. Move through it carefully and notice your responses as you go. The author says it's about identity, rest, trust, justice, community, generosity, and belonging.
- Visit **Psalm23Immersion.com** to hear songs for different aspects of Psalm 23, as well as an in-depth study.

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Outro

Pages 185-188

First Words of Outro

- Share answers to the initial questions in the first paragraph.

It's All Been Done

- Of the list of themes in the Psalms, which are most important to you at the moment?
- Having studied the psalms with *Dangerous Songs*, how would you answer the author's question, "What would happen to us if we were continually immersed in the Psalms?" Critique the author's ideas and add your own.
- At this point in your relationship with the Psalms, what do they mean to you? Do have any desire to continue with them?

Closing Prayer

- Join in praying the Closing Prayer together.