

Psalms, Teacher's Guide

Week 4: Resurrection Hope and Confidence in God

Psalm 16

Teaching Aim (Teacher Orientation)

This is the major doctrinal week of the study, and the stakes are high. Psalm 16 is the text Peter used at Pentecost (Acts 2:25–31) to prove the bodily resurrection of Jesus. Everything hangs here: the empty tomb as historical fact, the resurrection hope of the believer, and the present reign of Christ at the Father's right hand. Verse 10, "you will not abandon my soul to Sheol, or let your holy one see corruption," could not be finally true of David, who died and whose body decayed; Peter argues that David spoke as a prophet of his greater Son, whom death could not hold. Teach this clearly and confidently. The resurrection is not a doctrine we hold at arm's length; it is the ground we stand on.

This is also the natural place to teach plainly that the kingdom is present and Christ reigns now. Peter does not say Jesus was raised to wait for a future earthly throne; he says Jesus was "exalted at the right hand of God" and made "both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:33–36). The reign began at the resurrection and ascension. Scripture presents the kingdom as established when the church began (Daniel 2:44; Mark 9:1; Colossians 1:13), with Christ ruling now until every enemy is subdued (1 Corinthians 15:25). Help students see that we do not look forward to a thousand-year political reign on earth; we look up to a King already on His throne and forward to His return and the resurrection of all.

Yet Psalm 16 is also deeply formational, and you must not let the doctrine crowd out the heart. Before it speaks of resurrection, the psalm is a song of contentment: God Himself is David's portion, his cup, his inheritance. The believer who has truly made God his portion can face anything, even death, unshaken. So aim at both: send students home certain that Jesus is risen and reigning, and longing to make the Lord their chosen portion so that their own hearts can rest secure in life and in death.

Question 1

Student Question:

David prays, "Preserve me, O God, for in you I take refuge. I say to the Lord, 'You are my Lord; I have no good apart from you'" (vv. 1–2). What does it mean to take refuge in God and to say we have no good apart from Him, and how is this different from merely believing God exists or adding Him to a life that is already full of other securities?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Begin with the posture of verse 1: “in you I take refuge.” To take refuge is to run to God as one’s shelter and safety, the act of a person who has nowhere else finally to hide. It is the language of dependence, not of self-sufficiency.

Then weigh the staggering claim of verse 2: “I have no good apart from you.” This is not saying that nothing else in life is enjoyable; it is saying that every good thing is good only because it comes from God and points back to Him, and that God Himself is the one indispensable good. Strip away everything else and the believer still has all he needs if he has God.

Distinguish this from mere belief in God’s existence. Many people believe God exists and even attend worship while their real refuge is their bank account, their health, or their relationships. Psalm 16 describes something far more radical: God as the actual foundation a life rests on, not an addition to a life resting on other things.

Apply it honestly. The test of whether God is truly our refuge is what happens when other securities are removed. The person whose good is in God can lose much and still stand; the person who has merely added God to other refuges collapses when those refuges fail.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Taking refuge in God as the posture of dependence, not self-sufficiency.
- God Himself as the one indispensable good behind every other good.
- The difference between believing God exists and resting on Him as foundation.
- Other securities (wealth, health, relationships) as functional rivals to God.
- Trials as the test of where our refuge truly lies.

Discussion Prompts

- What is the difference between adding God to your life and resting your life on God?
- How do you know whether God is really your refuge?
- What other ‘refuges’ are you most tempted to run to first?

Question 2

Student Question:

David delights in “the saints in the land... the excellent ones, in whom is all my delight” (v. 3), and turns away from those who run after other gods (v. 4). Who are the people most shaping your loves and choices right now? Are they drawing you toward God as your portion or away from Him?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This self-focused question takes up verses 3–4, where David names his delight in “the saints” and his turn away from those who chase other gods. Our companions shape our loves, and David has chosen his company deliberately.

Help students take an honest inventory of influence. We become like those we admire and spend time with. Ask them to consider whether their closest influences are drawing them toward God as their portion or quietly normalizing other pursuits.

Affirm the positive side: David finds “all my delight” in the people of God. The fellowship of the church is not merely a duty but a means of grace, a community whose shared love for God strengthens our own. Encourage students to invest in those friendships.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The shaping power of our chosen companions.
- The fellowship of the saints as a means of grace, not mere obligation.
- Deliberately turning from influences that pull us toward other ‘gods.’
- Becoming like those we most admire.

Discussion Prompts

- Who most shapes your loves and choices right now?
- Are your closest influences drawing you toward God or away?
- How can the fellowship of the church strengthen your love for God?

Question 3

Student Question:

David sings, “The Lord is my chosen portion and my cup; you hold my lot. The lines have fallen for me in pleasant places” (vv. 5–6). The language comes from the way Israel divided up the promised land, yet the Levites were given no land because “the Lord is their inheritance.” What does it mean that God Himself, rather than His gifts, is the believer’s true inheritance, and how does that reshape what we count as a good life?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Verses 5–6 use the language of inheritance: “portion,” “cup,” “lot,” “the lines have fallen.” The imagery comes from the dividing of the promised land among the tribes. Explain the striking background: the tribe of Levi received no land, because the Lord Himself was their inheritance (Numbers 18:20; Deuteronomy 10:9). David applies that priestly privilege to himself, and through Christ it becomes true of every believer.

Press the radical idea: God is not merely the giver of good things; He is Himself the good thing, the inheritance. Most of us instinctively want God's gifts more than God. This psalm reorders our desires so that the Giver, not the gifts, is the treasure.

Note David's contentment: "the lines have fallen for me in pleasant places." A person who has God as their portion can be content with their lot in life because their deepest wealth does not depend on their circumstances. This guards against both envy and the endless restlessness of always wanting more.

Connect to the New Covenant. In Christ we have received "every spiritual blessing" (Ephesians 1:3) and an inheritance "imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven" (1 Peter 1:4). The believer's true wealth is Christ Himself and all we have in Him, not earthly possessions.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- God Himself, not His gifts, as the believer's inheritance and portion.
- The Levites' inheritance (the Lord) extended to all believers in Christ.
- Contentment rooted in having God rather than in circumstances.
- The reordering of desire from the gifts to the Giver.
- Our inheritance in Christ, kept in heaven (Ephesians 1:3; 1 Peter 1:4).

Discussion Prompts

- What is the difference between wanting God's gifts and wanting God?
- How does having God as your portion produce contentment?
- What would change if you treated God Himself as your inheritance?

Question 4

Student Question:

David says the Lord "gives me counsel; in the night also my heart instructs me" (v. 7), letting God shape even his private thoughts. What voices are actually counseling you in the night, when you lie awake? What would it look like to let God's word, rather than your fears, do the instructing?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This self-focused question takes up verse 7, where God counsels David even in the night. The night is when our defenses are down and our truest fears surface. Ask students what actually counsels them in those hours.

Help them see that something always instructs us in the night, replayed anxieties, imagined catastrophes, old wounds. The question is whether we let those voices have the final word or deliberately bring God's word to bear.

Offer a concrete practice: filling the mind with Scripture so that, when the night comes, there is truth already stored to instruct the heart. A memorized psalm or promise can become the counsel God uses at two in the morning.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- God's word as counsel for the heart, even in the night.
- The night as the hour our deepest fears speak loudest.
- Storing Scripture so truth is available when fear rises.
- Choosing what instructs us rather than being ruled by anxiety.

Discussion Prompts

- What voices counsel you when you lie awake at night?
- How could God's word instruct you in those hours instead of your fears?
- What is one passage worth storing up for the next sleepless night?

Question 5

Student Question:

David declares, "I have set the Lord always before me; because he is at my right hand, I shall not be shaken" (v. 8). What is the practice of setting the Lord always before us, and why does a life ordered around the constant awareness of God's presence become stable in a way that other lives are not?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Verse 8 gives the secret of David's stability: "I have set the Lord always before me." This is an active, repeated discipline, a deliberate keeping of God in view through the ordinary hours, not an occasional religious thought.

Explain the result: "because he is at my right hand, I shall not be shaken." The right hand was the place of the helper and defender. To live in the constant awareness that God is near, ready to help, is to live with a stability the world cannot manufacture.

Contrast this with the unsettled life. When God drifts out of view, every threat looms larger and every loss feels final. Setting the Lord before us shrinks our fears to their true size by keeping the greatness of God always in the frame.

Make it practical. Setting the Lord before us is built through habits: prayer woven through the day, Scripture carried into ordinary moments, worship that re-centers us weekly, the quiet practice of remembering God is present in the room. Stability is the fruit of these small, repeated turnings toward God.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Setting the Lord before us as an active, repeated discipline.
- God at our right hand as helper and defender.
- Stability as the fruit of constant awareness of God's presence.
- How losing sight of God magnifies our fears.
- Practical habits that keep the Lord before us.

Discussion Prompts

- What does it look like, practically, to set the Lord before you all day?
- Why does keeping God in view make us less easily shaken?
- Which habit could help you live more aware of God's presence?

Question 6

Student Question:

David says, "Therefore my heart is glad, and my whole being rejoices; my flesh also dwells secure" (v. 9), a settled joy that reaches all the way down. Where in your life are you living shaken, anxious, and insecure, rather than secure in God? What is one fear you most need to bring under the truth that the Lord is at your right hand?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This self-examining question takes the gladness and security of verse 9 and asks where the student is instead living shaken. The psalm describes joy that reaches the whole being; many believers live with a low, persistent insecurity instead.

Help students name a specific fear rather than a general anxiety. Vague dread cannot be brought under truth, but a named fear can be set beside the promise that the Lord is at our right hand.

Point them to the remedy in the psalm itself: security is the fruit of verse 8 (setting the Lord before us), not of getting our circumstances under control. We do not conquer fear by eliminating every threat but by keeping the present God in view above the threat.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Joy and security that reach the whole person.
- Naming specific fears so they can be brought under God's truth.
- Security as the fruit of God's presence, not of controlled circumstances.
- The Lord at our right hand as the answer to anxiety.

Discussion Prompts

- Where are you living shaken rather than secure?
- What is one specific fear you need to bring under the truth of verse 8?

- How does God's nearness, rather than control, calm fear?

Question 7

Student Question:

David sings, "For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol, or let your holy one see corruption" (v. 10). Yet David did die and his body did decay. In what sense could David sing these words in hope, and why does the New Testament insist that they find their true and full meaning in someone greater than David?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Verse 10 is the heart of the psalm's forward reach: "you will not abandon my soul to Sheol, or let your holy one see corruption." In its first sense, David expresses confident hope that God will not abandon him to death's power, that his fellowship with God will not finally be severed by the grave.

But press the problem the New Testament presses: David did die, and his body did decay. So the words could not be exhaustively true of David himself. Either the hope failed, or it pointed beyond David to someone whose body would not see corruption. Scripture takes the second path.

Explain prophetic hope. David spoke better than he knew. As a prophet (Acts 2:30), his Spirit-inspired words reached beyond his own experience to describe his greater Son. This is not a denial of David's real hope; it is the fulfillment of it in the One who alone could make verse 10 literally true.

Set up next question. The full meaning of verse 10 waited for an empty tomb. Hold the suspense here; the explicit resurrection teaching comes in Question 9, where Peter's sermon makes the connection plain.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- David's real hope that death would not sever his fellowship with God.
- The problem: David died and decayed, so verse 10 points beyond him.
- David as a prophet speaking of his greater Son (Acts 2:30).
- Spirit-inspired words reaching beyond the writer's own experience.
- The full meaning of verse 10 awaiting the resurrection of Christ.

Discussion Prompts

- In what sense could David sing verse 10 in hope?
- Why can verse 10 not be finally true of David himself?
- What does it mean that David 'spoke better than he knew'?

Question 8

Student Question:

David faces the future, even death, without panic, because his confidence rests in God. How does the way you think about your own death, or the deaths of those you love, reveal what you are really resting in? How might the resurrection of Jesus begin to change the way you face it?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This self-focused question takes up the psalm's fearlessness before death and turns it on the student. How we think about death exposes what we are really resting in. Invite honest reflection without morbidity.

Help students see that the fear of death often hides behind other anxieties, the frantic grasping for control, health, and time. The gospel does not ask us to pretend death is nothing; it gives us a Conqueror who has been through it and come out the other side.

Point ahead to the resurrection. Because Jesus rose, death for the believer is not annihilation but a doorway. Encourage students to let the empty tomb begin to reshape how they face their own mortality and grieve those they love (1 Thessalonians 4:13–14).

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- How our view of death reveals what we truly rest in.
- The fear of death hiding behind other anxieties.
- The resurrection transforming death into a doorway for the believer.
- Grieving with hope because Christ is risen (1 Thessalonians 4:13–14).

Discussion Prompts

- What does the way you think about death reveal about your hope?
- How does the resurrection of Jesus change the way you face death?
- How might it reshape the way you grieve those you love?

Question 9

Student Question:

At Pentecost Peter quoted verse 10 and declared that David “foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption. This Jesus God raised up... Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God” (Acts 2:31–33). How does Psalm 16 ground the bodily resurrection of Jesus, and what does it mean that the risen Christ is reigning now at the Father’s right hand rather than waiting to begin His reign in the future?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This is the doctrinal high point of the entire study, so give it room. At Pentecost Peter quoted Psalm 16:8–11 and argued from it that David, being a prophet, “foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ” (Acts 2:31). David’s tomb was a known landmark in Jerusalem; everyone could see that David had not escaped corruption. Therefore the psalm must speak of another, the Holy One whom God did not abandon to the grave.

Establish the resurrection as historical fact, not symbol. Peter preaches to eyewitnesses: “This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses” (Acts 2:32). The empty tomb and the appearances of the risen Christ are the bedrock of the Christian faith (1 Corinthians 15:3–8). Without the resurrection there is no gospel; with it, everything else stands.

Now teach the present reign plainly, because this psalm and Peter’s sermon make it unavoidable. Peter says Jesus was raised and “exalted at the right hand of God” (Acts 2:33) and concludes that “God has made him both Lord and Christ” (Acts 2:36). The reign did not begin at some future date; it began at the resurrection and ascension. Christ is King now. Paul says plainly, “He must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet” (1 Corinthians 15:25), present tense, already underway.

Address the doctrinal boundary directly and kindly. Some teach that Christ’s reign is postponed to a future thousand-year earthly kingdom. Scripture says otherwise. The kingdom was promised to arrive in the lifetime of Jesus’ hearers (Mark 9:1), announced as ‘at hand’ in His ministry (Mark 1:14–15), and the church was transferred into it (Colossians 1:13). Daniel foretold a kingdom God would set up “in the days of those kings” that would never be destroyed (Daniel 2:44). The risen Christ reigns now from the Father’s right hand; we do not wait for the throne to be occupied, we serve the King who already sits on it, and we await His return and the resurrection of all.

Bring it home to hope. Because Christ is risen and reigning, the believer’s resurrection is sure. He is “the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep” (1 Corinthians 15:20); the firstfruits guarantee the harvest. Verse 11’s “path of life” and “pleasures forevermore” are not wishful poetry but the settled future of everyone united to the risen Christ.

Finally, connect to how we enter this risen life. We are united to the death and resurrection of Christ in baptism, buried with Him and raised to walk in newness of life (Romans 6:3–4; Colossians 2:12). The resurrection is not only something we believe happened to Jesus; it is something we are joined to, and then live out faithfully until He comes.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Psalm 16 as Peter’s proof text for the bodily resurrection of Christ (Acts 2:25–32).
- The resurrection as historical fact attested by eyewitnesses (1 Corinthians 15:3–8).
- Christ exalted and reigning now at the Father’s right hand (Acts 2:33–36).

- The kingdom present and established with the church, not a future earthly reign (Daniel 2:44; Mark 9:1; Colossians 1:13).
- Christ as firstfruits guaranteeing the believer's resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:20).
- Union with Christ's death and resurrection in baptism (Romans 6:3–4; Colossians 2:12).
- Hope grounded in an accomplished victory, not a postponed one.

Discussion Prompts

- How does Psalm 16 prove the resurrection in Peter's Pentecost sermon?
- What does it mean that Christ is reigning now, not waiting to reign later?
- How are we joined to the risen Christ, and how should that shape daily life?

Question 10

Student Question:

The psalm ends, "You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore" (v. 11). Look back across the whole psalm. Name one specific way you sense Jesus, the risen and reigning One, forming you through it. What is the single truth from Psalm 16 that you most need to carry into this week?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This capstone draws on verse 11, the path of life and fullness of joy, and asks students to name one way the risen, reigning Christ is forming them. Give them quiet to reflect before sharing.

Press for something that joins doctrine to life. The truth that Christ is risen and reigning is meant to produce a particular kind of person: unshaken, content in God as their portion, unafraid of death, joyful. Help each student name where that truth most needs to land in their week.

Close by lifting their eyes to the King on His throne. The whole psalm has moved from contentment in God to confidence beyond the grave to joy at God's right hand. Send students home secure, because their King is alive and reigning, and their future is as sure as His empty tomb.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The risen, reigning Christ as the forming center of the believer's life.
- Resurrection hope producing unshaken security and joy.
- God as our portion now and our 'pleasures forevermore' in the future.
- Living as servants of a King already enthroned.

Discussion Prompts

- How does the risen Christ change the way you will face this week?
- What single truth from Psalm 16 will you carry forward?

- Where do you most need the security of a reigning King right now?