

- 6 *Ezekiel 46*
All the detailed descriptions of the temple now give way to issues of crowd control. The building was expected to be actively used by people in the community for prayer and worship. It's not meant to be a museum!
Is there a danger that sometimes we lose sight of this today?
- 7 *Ezekiel 47*
As you meditate on Ezekiel's vision of the river of life flowing from God's presence at the heart of the temple, how do you apply it to the life of your own church?
- 8 *Psalms 149*
How do you manage to sustain a desire to praise God, to sing to him a new song (v.1), when you're going through the tough times in life, especially if non-believing friends might suggest that, if there *is* a God, then he must have abandoned you?
- 9 *Malachi 1*
Do you tend to view God as worthy of your *best* in terms of worship, service, obedience and offerings (vv.6-9)?
How does this play out for you practically?
- 10 *Malachi 4*
Waiting. The Israelites had to wait a very long time for God to act. How do you keep trusting in his promises when their fulfillment seems so far away? Share with the group any personal examples of this you may have.

Closing

Light a candle, reflect on the things you've shared, and pray for God's help in addressing any specific issues or challenges that have arisen for you personally. Close by saying the Lord's Prayer.

SACRED

Group Resources

Month 39

Opening Prayer

O God, you are the unsearchable abyss of peace,
the ineffable sea of love,
and the fountain of blessings.
Water us with plenteous streams from the riches of your grace;
and from the most sweet springs of your kindness,
make us children of quietness, and heirs of peace.
Amen.

(from the Syrian liturgy of Clement of Alexandria, c.150-215)

General Questions

- 1 One month to go! What are you thinking or feeling about almost completing your epic journey through the Bible? Have you thought how you will continue to engage with the scriptures after next month?
- 2 And this month. Has God spoken to you in any special way through this latest collection of chapters?

Activity

If you have access to a DVD player, watch the scene from *The Shawshank Redemption* mentioned in the notes to *Psalm 150*. (on the DVD menu the scene is entitled ‘two weeks in the hole’, and runs from the 1 hour 3 minute mark to 1 hour 10 minutes) Be warned, some of the deputy warden’s language is a bit tasty!

Re-read the application in the last paragraph of day 25’s notes.
Does the scene have anything to say to you about faith and worship?

Can you describe a time when *you* have felt truly free in worship?

Further Ideas

As usual, just discuss a few of these questions as the group sees fit.

- 1 *Ezekiel 30*
“Then they will know that I am the Lord” (e.g. v.19).
In what ways have *you* grown to know God better through the 39 months of Sacred so far?
- 2 *Ezekiel 36*
“I will give you a new heart and a put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you heart of flesh” (v.26).
What might this mean for you personally?
What might it mean for the life of your church?
- 3 *Ezekiel 37*
The Valley of Dry Bones. Do you find it difficult to believe in physical resurrection?
- 4 *Ezekiel 42*
Special rooms for priests were built into the blueprint of the temple design – in Old Testament times theirs was an essential role in the running of worship and sacrifices. How about today? Do churches need ‘professional’ full-time priests (or trained ministers more generally)?

And what about everybody else? Is it important that everyone has an active role in running the local church? What is your role?
- 5 *Ezekiel 44*
Verses 17-20 set out regulations governing the expected attire of the priests.
Do ‘dress-sense’ and general appearance still matter for those leading church services?