

The Snare Is Broken

PSALM 124 (WEB) · SMALL-GROUP LESSON · DIGDEEPER.AI

The Big Idea

You survived something that should have swallowed you, and the only reason you're still here is that God stood in the way, so say it out loud instead of pretending you pulled it off alone.

Opening Lines

Think of the closest call you've ever had. Not the story you tell at parties, the real one, the night you honestly don't know how you came out the other side. Psalm 124 is a whole nation standing up and saying that sentence together, out loud, on purpose.

Before You Teach

- Goal: Get the room to name one real disaster that never quite landed on them and to say plainly Who stood in the way. By the end they should feel like a bird that got out of a net it never saw coming.
- If you're short on time, cut: Cut the deep dive on the Exodus/Red Sea cross-reference before you cut the moment where people actually name their own rescue out loud. The naming is the point; the background is support.
- Where the moment lives: It lives in the second half of the psalm, in the word 'escaped' — when someone in your room stops explaining the near-miss and finally says God kept them from going under. Not in your teaching of the images.
- Your prep: Come with your own rescue already named out loud to yourself, so you don't fumble it in front of them. Read verses 7-8 enough times that you can say them without looking down.

Run It In Your Setting

The same lesson, sequenced three ways. Pick the one that fits your group and your clock.

CLASSROOM · ~20 PEOPLE · 45 MINUTES

Use the classroom opening (2 min). Read Psalm 124 aloud, ideally call-and-response with you starting the repeated line and the room finishing it (5 min). Historical context — pilgrim road, the crowd, the fowler's snare (7 min). Teach the word 'escaped' with the cupped-hand image (5 min). Questions 1-2 as a group (10 min). Question 3 in pairs so everyone speaks, then a few volunteers (10 min). Land the Romans 8 move and the big idea, out-loud commitments, prayer (6 min). Transformation happens in the pair-share on question 3. Cut the Red Sea cross-reference detail first.

SMALL GROUP · ~8 PEOPLE · 60 MINUTES

Use the small-group opening naming the 'fine' habit (3 min). Read the psalm slowly, twice, together (6 min). Brief context and the word 'escaped' with the hand image (10 min). Walk questions 1 through 4, giving question 3 and 4 real room — this is a small enough group that everyone can name a rescue out loud (28 min). If question 4 comes alive, let it run and drop question 5. Close on the gospel line, commitments, spontaneous prayer over what they named (13 min). Transformation lives in questions 3-4. Cut the context section to bare minimum first.

COFFEE · 2-3 FRIENDS · 30 MINUTES

Use the coffee opening — lead with your own never-told-it story (5 min). Read verses 7-8 aloud together (2 min). Skip formal context; just mention the snare is a bird-net that snaps shut (3 min). Trade answers to the finish-the-sentence prompt, you go first (12 min). Say the big idea plainly and ask the one Romans 8 question (5 min). Close by naming each other's rescue back in a short prayer (3 min). Transformation is in the mutual naming. Cut nothing — this format IS the exercise; just protect the sentence-finishing.

The Follow-Up Text

Here's a habit for every lesson you'll ever teach — this week we drill it deliberately. The lesson doesn't end when the room empties. Two or three days after you teach, send one person from the room a short, specific text about the exact thing they said out loud. Not a mass message, not 'great to see you' — a real sentence about their actual words: 'Still thinking about the night you described, glad you're still here.' Remember week 4, when we asked people to name a commitment instead of summarizing? This is what turns that commitment into something that outlives the meeting. Level 1 is simple: pick ONE person, send ONE text within 72 hours that quotes something they actually said. That's the whole rep. It tells them their words landed on a real human, and it trains you to listen closely enough during the lesson that you have something true to send.

Why This Passage Matters

Most people carry a near-disaster they've never said out loud. They survived it, they moved on, and somewhere along the way they started telling themselves they handled it — that they were tough, or lucky, or that it wasn't really that bad. Psalm 124 refuses that story. It makes a whole nation stand up and rehearse, together, the calamity that never came, and then it names the one reason it never came: Yahweh was on our side. This is not a private gratitude journal. It's a crowd finishing a sentence they will never have to finish living out. That matters for your room because forgetting your rescue is the fastest road to forgetting your Rescuer. When you can't remember how close the waters came, you start believing you swam. This psalm hands people the honest words for a thing they've felt and never voiced — the drowning that didn't happen, the net that broke. You get to stand in front of real people and give them permission to say it. That's a gift. You get to be the one who says out loud, 'You didn't pull that off alone,' and watch the relief on a face that's been carrying it as a solo achievement for years. Teach this one well and

someone leaves lighter.

Catch the Fire First

Before you say a word about the fowler's snare, do the exercise yourself, alone, this week. Sit down and finish the psalm's sentence in your own life: 'If it had not been the Lord who was on my side, then ____.' Fill in the real one — the diagnosis, the marriage that almost ended, the night you drove too fast and too sad. Say it out loud in an empty room. Notice how strange it feels to actually voice it, and notice the relief on the other side of saying it. That flinch and that relief are exactly what you're about to ask your room to walk through. If you haven't felt them yourself first, you'll rush the silence when it comes — because silence is where the naming happens, and you'll be tempted to fill it. Do your own rep first so you can trust the quiet.

Bring Your Own Story

- A time you told yourself you 'handled' something that, looking back, you barely survived — and Who was actually holding the line.
- A close call so ordinary nobody would call it dramatic (a phone call at the right moment, a plan that fell through and saved you) that you only later recognized as rescue.
- SAMPLE — polished vs. real: Polished: 'God has always been faithful to deliver me in my seasons of trial.' Real: 'I thought I was fine for about three years. Then I said the sentence out loud in the car and had to pull over.'
- Guardrail: bring it 80% healed, not raw and bleeding — this is a lesson, not your processing session.

Three Ways to Open

CLASSROOM: "Think of the closest call you've ever had — not the party version, the real one you don't fully understand surviving. Hold it in your mind for a second. Now watch what a whole nation does with a moment like that: they stand up and sing about it together."

Start with a shared question everyone can silently answer, so no one is spectating.

SMALL GROUP: "We don't usually say the scary stuff out loud in here — we say 'fine.' Tonight the psalm is going to ask us to do the opposite. It literally instructs the crowd, 'let Israel now say.' So let's actually say something true before we're done."

In a small room, name the awkwardness up front so honesty feels permitted.

COFFEE: "Can I tell you about a night I've never really talked about, that I only recently figured out I didn't get through on my own? There's an old song that's basically about exactly that, and I want to read you eight lines of it."

One-on-one, lead with your own honesty to earn theirs.

Teaching the Word

Teach the word 'escaped' — in Hebrew, *malat*. It's not a word for winning. It's the word for slipping out of a grip that had already closed on you, the way a fish twists off a hook or a bird gets loose from a net that had it. Do this physically: cup one hand tight around the fingers of the other, like a snare shut around a bird. Hold it. Let the room see there's no way out from the inside. Then — snap your top hand open. The trap didn't get tired. The bird didn't argue its way free. Something outside the trap broke it. That's *malat*. 'The snare is broken, and we have escaped.' Read that line, then stop talking. Let it sit.

Discussion Questions

1. The psalm says the line twice: 'If it had not been Yahweh who was on our side.' Why repeat it? What does saying it a second time do to you?

Coaching note: Let them notice it's built for a crowd, call-and-response. Don't lecture the history yet — let them feel the repetition before you explain it.

If it stalls: Say the line out loud twice yourself, slowly. Then ask: did it hit different the second time? Yes or no?

2. The psalm never mentions Israel's army, walls, or kings. It only pictures them drowning without God. Why leave out everything they could take credit for?

Coaching note: This is the theological hinge. Steer them toward 'the rescue came from outside them.' Resist the urge to answer it for them.

If it stalls: Ask: when you tell the story of a hard time you got through, who's usually the hero of your version?

3. Finish the sentence for your own life: 'If it had not been the Lord on my side, then ____.' You don't have to share the details, just whether you have one.

Coaching note: This is the exercise. After you ask, count to ten silently and do NOT rescue the quiet. Someone will speak. If you've done your own rep, you'll trust it.

If it stalls: Lower the bar: think of just one small thing this week that kept you afloat — a call, a meal, an hour of sleep. Name that one.

4. Grief and near-disaster can feel exactly like the psalm's 'proud waters' going over your soul. Is there something you survived that you've never actually said out loud to anyone?

Coaching note: This may go deep or crackle unexpectedly. If it's alive, on the text, and the quiet people are leaning in, follow it and cut the rest of your outline without guilt — you can't script the moment that matters most.

If it stalls: Make it a yes/no: is there a hard stretch you tend to skip past when people ask how you're doing?

5. Paul echoes this psalm in Romans 8: 'If God is for us, who can be against us?' If your rescue never rested on you, what changes about how you carry the thing you're afraid of right now?

Coaching note: Land the gospel move here — Israel's trembling backward glance becomes the believer's settled confidence. Don't preach it; let one person say what changes for them.

If it stalls: Ask simply: does it feel different to think you didn't earn your rescue? Better, worse, or

scarier?

Questions You May Hear

"Who wrote this and why does it keep saying 'us' and 'our'?"

The superscription names David, and the 'us' is on purpose — this isn't a private prayer, it's a national confession the whole crowd of pilgrims sang together on the road to Jerusalem, one voice starting and thousands finishing.

"What's the 'fowler's snare' — is that a real thing?"

Yes, it's the net a bird-catcher set, one that snapped shut on a bird that never saw it coming. Every farmer and traveler knew it, so 'the snare is broken' was rescue language a shepherd's child could picture instantly.

"The 'proud waters' — is that pointing back to the Red Sea?"

The image comes straight from Exodus 14, where the same flood that would have drowned God's people instead swallowed their enemies. It's a picture of a rescue that came entirely from God, not from Israel's strength.

"How does an Old Testament song connect to Jesus?"

'The snare is broken, and we have escaped' is what every believer says of the cross — Christ went down into the proud waters himself, was given as prey, and rose with the trap torn open behind him. The same hands that made heaven and earth unbound the snare.

For Experienced Leaders

- The silence after 'if it had not been the Lord, then ____' will feel unbearable to you and completely normal to them. Count to ten. Someone always breaks it, and it's rarely who you'd guess.
- If two people start relitigating whether God 'causes' hard things, name it kindly: 'Let's you and I finish that after — I want to get us back to the bird and the net.' The philosophy tangent will bury the person who was about to say something real.
- Don't explain the grief away when someone brings it. The psalm doesn't. It says the waters would have gone over their soul — it lets the near-drowning stay scary. Your job is to point at Who stood in the way, not to make the water smaller.

Landing the Lesson

Commitments: Before we go, one out-loud sentence each: name one thing God carried you through, and one person you'll tell it to this week. Not a summary of tonight — a commitment.

Close by praying out loud over the specific rescues people just named — the actual disaster someone voiced, the person someone said they'd text. Don't reach for a written prayer; saying their real words back to God is the whole point tonight.

If you run out of time: If the room only gets to question 3 — if someone finally names their rescue and the air changes — stay there. That's not falling short of the lesson; that's the lesson. Let question 3 be the whole night.

Midweek follow-up: Three days from now, send one person a text quoting the exact rescue they named: 'Still thinking about what you said Thursday. Glad you're still here.' That's your week-5 drill rep.

Free at digdeeper.ai/devotionals/psalms/124/lesson

Handout

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During the lesson:

- The closest call you've ever had, in one line (just enough that you'd know what you meant):
- Finish it: 'If it had not been the Lord who was on my side, then _____'
- One small thing this week that kept you afloat — a call, a meal, an hour of sleep:
- The word 'escaped' means slipping free from a grip already closed on you. What's the snare in your life you know you didn't break yourself?
- One person you'll tell your rescue to this week, and how (text, call, in person):

Take-home actions:

- Tonight before bed, say out loud one specific way God kept you from going under this week — even something small. Say it as thanks, to mark that you're still here.
- Text one friend you've both survived something with: 'I was remembering that hard stretch we came through, and I'm grateful you're still here.'
- The next time someone asks how you're doing, tell the truth about one thing God has carried you through instead of just saying 'fine.'

Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth — and that help has not run out.