

Praise, Petitions, and Promises

Experiencing God through the Psalms - Section 1

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STUDY TIME SUGGESTIONS FOR THIS SERIES -

This time of reading and reflection is an appointment with God, so find a quiet place and invite Him to meet with you, to teach you, to help you to listen well and to be honest with Him. He loves you. He takes delight in those who will come to Him.

Read - Spend some time reading the Psalm(s) in 2 or 3 translations. As you read the verses, jot down some of your impressions and your observations. What are these verses telling you? Which ones seem to be of particular interest to you? Why? Perhaps you will want to start your own system of notations with symbols - like stars, question marks, exclamation points, so that you can go back to the ones that caught your attention.

Receive - God has promised to reveal His truth to all those who will receive it, so as you read these Psalms, take your time and listen to the Holy Spirit's ideas. Let Him guide your thoughts and give you new insights and ideas. There is a heading to some of these poems, but often you can simply use your imagination to help you describe the setting. The questions are designed to help you think about certain verses or themes. This is not a school assignment, so use them when they are helpful and then focus on verses or content that grabs your attention personally. Ask yourself some questions. Why do YOU think this Psalm was chosen to be included in this collection of songs?

Reflect - As you come to this time of reflection, this may be the most important part of the lesson because it gives you an opportunity to find new and meaningful ways to give praise to the Lord, to express your concerns and invite God to intervene in situations that are troublesome to you, and to discover more about the God who will always keep His promises. What did the writer of this poem/song know about God that can strengthen your faith?

Respond - Using these Psalms as a basis for your own prayer life will enrich your relationship with Jesus in amazing ways. Insert your own name or a personal pronoun as appropriate. Take the ideas and translate them into your own words. Every other book of the Bible is God revealing Himself to man. This collection of poems/songs gives us a way to talk to God, to verbally come to Him with all honesty and yet to put our hope entirely in Him.

An Introduction to the Psalms - Praise, Petitions, and Promises

Experiencing God through the Psalms - Section 1

The Psalms were the songbook for the people of God, the Israelites. It is in the public use of these Psalms that we continue to most fully experience them. These poems were written in powerful, poetic language as a response to God. The emotions of the heart and the cry of the individual are clearly and honestly expressed to the Lord.

The Psalms were written over an expanse of 1,000 years - 10 centuries - from the time of Moses (Psalm 90 - 1490 B.C.) in the 15th century B.C. to the time of Ezra when the people returned to Jerusalem (about 440 B.C.) in the 5th century. It was in Ezra's time, under the Holy Spirit, that men compiled this collection into the format as we know it today and the small descriptive phrases at the beginning were put into place.

Hebrew Poetry -

It is not focused on rhythm or rhyme, but on the development, the repetition & recapitulation of an idea.

It was the balance of thought, not sound, that was important.

The artistry of the poet was found in the reinforcement of an idea.

It was meant to be read and felt through the artistry. It was to be experienced more than analyzed.

Parallelism as Used in Hebrew Poetry -

Repetition and recapitulation, one line followed by another that gives a variation of the same idea.

1. Synonymous parallelism - Repetition of the same idea to sharpen or heighten meaning - Ps. 1:2
2. Antithetical parallelism - usually contains the word "but" (Ps. 1:6)
3. Synthetic parallelism - Second line (maybe 3rd & 4th) develops theme of first (Ps. 1:1)
4. Climatic parallelism - Second line partially repeats and then completes the thought (Ps. 96:7)
5. Emblematic parallelism - First line contains figure of speech & following lines explain it by expansion or explanation (Ps. 1:3 - explains "like a tree")

Types of Psalms -

1. Praise - expressing worship, admiration, esteem for the person of God
2. Historical - reciting to God His work among His people
3. Relational - talking to God about His relationship to believers and to mankind
4. Imprecatory - a call to God to overthrow the wicked, to overcome evil
5. Lament - the response to suffering from Godly people, honestly pouring out their pain & desires
6. Penitential - an expression of sorrow over failures
7. Wisdom - insight and instruction to the believer
8. Messianic - the Savior will come from David's line - as has been promised

The Book of Psalms -

Psalm 1 - 41 - Genesis - the whole Bible in a nutshell, focused on humanity, the story of men, foundation of God's revelation

Psalm 42 - 72 - Exodus - sufferings of God's people, redemption by Jehovah

Psalm 73 - 89 - Leviticus - holiness of the Lord, seeking God's face in the midst of suffering

Psalm 90 - 106 - Numbers - Pointing to the promised land and rest

Psalm 107 - 150 - Deuteronomy - God is honored in obedience and worthy of praise - review of history and prediction of future

At the end of each of these sections there is a Doxology - an expression of jubilant praise and affirmation

Section 1 & 2 - mostly Davidic Section 3 - also Asaph & one of Korah Section 4 & 5 - mixture of writers

Selah - a word that means "to lift up". It is most likely a musical notation that indicated an interlude or pause in the music.

Take time to think!

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Lesson 1

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THE PATH OF THE GODLY

**The LORD watches over the path of the Godly,
but the path of the wicked leads to destruction.** Psalm 1: 6 (NLT)

The introduction to a book usually sets the stage for the entire content or story of the book. So it is with chapters 1 and 2 of this "Book of Praises" – the Psalms. Originally these 2 chapters might have been one Psalm with 2 themes. The first one, a wisdom Psalm, clearly emphasizes the importance of knowing God through His Word and the second one, a royal or Messianic Psalm, points to knowing God through His Son, Jesus. Both of them point out the blessings that come to those "who put their trust in Him"!

READ - PSALMS 1 & 2

Read each of these Psalms over slowly. Try to read them in several different translations.

Copy each of them in your own handwriting. Use words, pictures, highlighting, underlining – whatever helps you to absorb the thoughts and the images as they are described. Don't hurry to get to the study time - this may be the best part of the lesson!

RECEIVE -

The Circumstances - When the Psalmist wrote these Psalms, how do you think he was feeling? What was on his mind? What would cause him to write these 2 songs for the people to sing? (Acts 4: 24 – 26 tells us that David is the author.)

The Content –

1. These Psalms begin (1:1) and end (2: 12) with a description of someone who will be blessed by God. Who are they and what does this mean for them?
2. How does the writer describe someone who is "ungodly"? How are they contrasted to the righteous?
3. Why did Peter and John quote Psalm 2: 1 -2 in their circumstances – Acts 2: 1 -31?
4. How would these Psalms have helped or encouraged the Israelites as they came together and sang?

REFLECT -

Declaring His Praise and Gratefulness - What are the important truths about God that He describes?

Expressing His Petitions and Concerns - Are there any requests that David makes of the Lord in these songs?

Discovering God's Promises to us – What does David declare about the LORD and the coming Messiah, God's Son? Other Messianic Psalms include Psalm 16, 22, 45, and 110.

RESPOND – Using these psalms as a basis, write out your own prayer for yourself and for others for whom you are pray.

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Lesson 2

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THE LORD WILL BLESS THE RIGHTEOUS

"I will both lie down in peace, and sleep; For You alone, O LORD, make me dwell in safety." Psalm 4:8

"For You, O Lord, will bless the righteous; with favor You will surround him as with a shield." Psalm 5:12

David often wrote songs of lament, sometimes called "imprecatory" Psalm. In these songs he expressed his grief for the wickedness and evil that was around him. He often called down judgment upon those who tormented him, his enemies. Imagine yourself singing or chanting these Psalms with the people of God - bringing to Him their concerns and frustrations, while at the same time reminding themselves of their God and His faithfulness.

READ - Psalms 4 - An Evening Prayer and **Psalms 5** - A Morning Prayer

Read them and read them again. Savor the words. Absorb them.

Try reading them out loud and copy them by hand or computer. You may want to concentrate on Psalm 4 first and then concentrate on Psalm 5. Take your time - this may be the best part of the lesson!

RECEIVE

The Circumstances - When David wrote these Psalms, how do you think he was feeling. What was on his mind? Both of these songs are prefaced with instrumental instructions. How would that impact the people as they sang?

The Content –

1. What does David believe about prayer?
2. How are the ungodly, his enemies, described?
3. As you think about the people and the things in your own life that distract you from godly living, from your confident faith in God, from loving God with all your heart, who or what would you say they are?

REFLECT –

Declaring His Praise and Gratefulness - Make a list of the things that made David feel deep gratitude and gave him real joy.

Expressing His Petitions and Concerns - What are the requests that David makes of his God in this song?

Discovering God's Promises to us – What did David know about God that gave him peace and hope?

RESPOND – Using this prayer as a model, write out your own statements of faith and your heart's desires.

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Lesson 3

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HOW MAJESTIC IS HIS NAME

O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! Psalm 8: 1 & 9

In the book of Psalms praise is always directed to God. The "Praise Psalms" may be sub-grouped under the titles *Descriptive Praise* - focusing on who God is or *Declarative Praise* - focusing on what God does. Have you ever thought about the difference between praise and thanksgiving? Praise is an O.T. term that means *speaking well of, to extol the virtues of, to magnify*, and it is always vocal and public. Thanksgiving is a N.T. term and can be silent and private. Both must be intense and genuine. To praise God for His name is to publicly praise Him for His being, His character and for His attributes. Are you amazed that you and I can do this?

Information from And I Will Praise Him by Ronald B. Allen

READ - Psalms 8 and 9 - Psalms of Praise

Read them and then read them again. Savor the words. Absorb them. Try to enjoy the poetry and the thoughts leisurely. Reading these songs out loud and then writing them down will help to impress the ideas in your mind and heart.

RECEIVE

The Circumstances - When David wrote this Psalm, how do you think he was feeling. What was on his mind?

The Content –

1. Why do we praise "the name of the Lord"? What significance does His name have to mankind? To you?
2. What are some of the specific prophecies that are yet to be fulfilled in Psalm 9? See Matthew 25: 31 – 46.
3. How could this Psalm help you as you pray for the world in which we live today?

REFLECT –

Declaring His Praise and Gratefulness - What is David particularly drawing attention to in this song?

Expressing His Petitions and Concerns - Are there any requests that David makes of the Lord in this song

Discovering God's Promises to us –How does David describe God's attributes and actions in this Psalm?

RESPOND – Using this prayer as a model, take time to write out your own psalm of praise.

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Lesson 4

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FINDING WISDOM

"Who may dwell in Your sanctuary, LORD? Who may enter Your presence on Your holy hill?"

Psalm 15: 1 NLT

Psalms 14 and 15 are known as wisdom Psalms. In them David gave poetic expression to the theme of the foolishness of living as if God did not exist and the proper approach to the worship of God. Isn't it amazing that these songs written so many years ago are still so true today? We worship a God who is utterly consistent, without change, and He is continuing to carry out His purposes for all creation.

READ - Psalms 14 & 15

Take some time to read these 2 Psalms - every day if you can.

Make a copy of them where you will see them during the week. See what impact this makes on you.

RECEIVE -

The Circumstances - When David wrote these Psalms, how do you think he was feeling. What was on his mind?

The Content -

1. Psalm 14 is almost the same as Psalm 53. You might want to compare the slight variations and final verse. How would this wisdom be helpful to the Israelites? Is it instructive to you?

2. What does a righteous person look like according to Psalm 15? The sacrificial system has always provided a way for forgiveness, hasn't it? God knew that man could never be righteous on his own efforts - Romans 3: 23. Aren't you deeply grateful that in Christ, you and I can be declared righteous because the penalty of our sin was taken by the Lord Jesus Christ - Romans 5: 6 - 11 and 6: 12 - 14. Knowing this, you can read Psalm 15 as a prayer and claim God's promise as your own.

3. How would singing these "wisdom songs" have enriched the lives of the people?

REFLECT -

Declaring His Praise and Gratefulness - What made David pause to reflect and worship his God? How did these wisdom songs draw the Israelites into praise and adoration of God?

Expressing His Petitions and Concerns - What were his underlying requests in these 2 songs?

Discovering God's Promises "to the righteous" - What are they?

RESPOND - Using these prayers as a model, re-write these Psalms in your own words, making them a prayer from your own heart.

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Lesson 5

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I LOVE YOU, O LORD

**"I love you, O LORD, my strength. The LORD is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer;
my God is my rock in whom I take refuge."**

Psalm 18: 1 - 2

This Psalm is a great hymn of celebration to the grace and mercy of God. It is called a Psalm of trust. It was first written in II Samuel 22: 1 - 51. There are only a few minor changes that were most likely made in order to have it be useful to the church. We find David expressing very vividly how God had protected and vindicated him throughout the days of his life, protecting him from his enemies and from King Saul (I Samuel 23 and 24). David was a master of using metaphors as He prayed to God. He was able to take the unseen world of faith, guilt, sin, protection, judgment and make it real or visible through the use of word pictures. As David summed up his life in this Psalm, he used nature in very poetic ways to illustrate who God is and what He can do for those who worship Him.

READ - Psalm 18

This is a great Psalm to read out loud. Read it with expression and emphasis.
Try to put yourself in David's place as you read and re-read this song.

RECEIVE -

The Circumstances - When David wrote this Psalm, how do you think he was feeling? What was on his mind?

The Content -

1. Could this Psalm be considered a "Royal" or "Messianic Psalm" - a picture of the coming of Jesus?
2. What does David mean in verses 20 - 24? Is he really "blameless"?
3. Who or what are your "enemies"? People, habits, false guilt, lethargy, doubts? Can God deliver you?

REFLECT -

Declaring His Praise and Gratefulness - Make a list of the things for which David feels heartfelt thanksgiving.

Expressing His Petitions and Concerns - Are there any requests that David makes of the Lord in this song?

Discovering God's Promises to us - While this is David's personal song of trust, it is also a song for the Israelites to sing together. How would it encourage and strengthen them?

RESPOND - Using this prayer as a model, write your own expression of trust and gratefulness to the LORD.

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Lesson 6

HIS WORKS and HIS WORDS

**"May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart
be pleasing in your sight, O LORD, my Rock and my Redeemer."**

Psalm 19: 14

Psalm 19 is a wisdom psalm that celebrates both creation and the Word of God. Focusing on God in the majesty of His creation and then in the revelation of Himself through His Word, helps us to put ourselves in perspective. As we stand in awe of the world around us and in how God reveals Himself through Scripture, we can only humbly bow down in His presence.

READ - Psalm 19

Savor the ideas. Absorb them. Write them down. Try memorizing some of them or all of them!

Don't hurry to get to your own study and thoughts - this may be the best part of the lesson.

RECEIVE -

The Circumstances - When David wrote this Psalm, how do you think he was feeling? What was on his mind?

The Content –

1. What do you find in God's creation as truly amazing, utterly creative, and worthy of celebration?
2. When David wrote this song, he had only the Torah, the books of the law written by Moses. Today we have the rest of the Old Testament, plus the fulfillment of its prophecies in the New Testament. Could you sing this tribute to God's Word with all your heart? Why or why not?
3. "Hidden or secrets faults" and "deliberate or presumptuous sins"? Try to explain the difference and what this means – verses 12 and 13.

REFLECT -

Declaring His Praise and Gratefulness – What makes David stand in awe of the LORD?

Expressing His Petitions and Concerns – What are his requests as he looks at the Lord and His Word?

Discovering God's Promises to us – How does God use creation and His Word to meet our human needs?

RESPOND – Using this prayer as a model, write your own psalm. What are the desires of your heart as God reveals Himself to you as Creator and Sustainer of this world and as Lord of your life?

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Lesson 7

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SHOW ME, TEACH ME, LEAD ME

**"Show me Your ways, O LORD; Teach me Your paths.
Lead me in Your truth and teach me, for You are the God of my salvation.**

Psalm 25: 4 – 5

While Psalm 25 is considered a Psalm of lament, David included praise and petition, wisdom and penitence. The psalm is also an acrostic, with one poetic line for each successive letter of the Hebrew alphabet. Very likely parents used the 9 acrostic psalms in training their children to remember them. Isn't it amazing that his requests are still so relevant today?

READ - Psalm 25 -

Read and re-read this Psalm this week, just for the joy of reading it. What translation do you like best? Enter into it. As you read it, put a little check by the words or phrases that catch your attention.

RECEIVE -

The Circumstances - When David wrote this song, how do you think he was feeling? What was on his mind?

The Content –

1. Why do you think that this song begins and ends with the phrases, "Let me not be ashamed, for I put my trust in You"? Is this ever a temptation for you?
2. David asks the question in verse 12 - "Who is the person that fears the Lord?" What does this mean?
3. When people are distressed and in pain, they often feel very alone. How might the words of this song encourage them as they sing it together?

REFLECT –

Declaring His Praise and Gratefulness – Make a list of the things for which David feels heartfelt thanksgiving.

Expressing His Petitions and Concerns – There are numerous requests that David brings before the Lord in this song. Make a list of them in your own words.

Discovering God's Promises to us – How does David remind Himself of God's character and His promises?

RESPOND – Using this prayer as a model. Try making an alphabetical list of God's attributes. You can keep adding to it!

Example: A – almighty, active, all-knowing B – benevolent,

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Lesson 8

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THE LORD IS MY LIGHT

“Wait for the LORD. Be strong and take heart and wait for the LORD.” Psalm 27:14

Why is it often so hard to “wait on the Lord”? David did not have an easy life, did he? Yes, he knew God’s promises and had seen God answer his prayers on many occasions, but still he had to remind himself of the truths that he knew about his God. Psalm 27 is another one of his psalms of Trust. David reminds himself, as he talks to God, what he knows to be true about the Lord and why He is totally trustworthy.

READ - Psalm 27 -

What a great Psalm to read many times this week. Take your time and read it out loud, too. Copy it down and post some of your favorite quotes on your refrigerator or bathroom mirror.

RECEIVE -

The Circumstances - When David wrote this Psalm, how do you think he was feeling? What was on his mind?

The Content –

1. David says in verse 4 that there is one thing that he desires of the Lord – “to dwell in His house all the days of his life.” What do you think that he means by this?

2. What are the 6 themes that are presented in this song?

Vs. 1 – 3 –

7 – 10 –

4 – 5 –

11 – 13 –

6 -

14 -

3. The Hebrew word for *wait* may also be translated *hope*. Read Psalm 40: 1 and Isaiah 40: 31. Why is this so important for anyone who has put their faith in the Lord?

REFLECT –

Declaring His Praise and Gratefulness – What makes David full of joy and praise for his God?

Expressing His Petitions and Concerns – What are his requests? The deep desires of his heart?

Discovering God’s Promises to us – For what does he trust the Lord, his God?

RESPOND – Using this prayer as a model, take your time. Can you, will you, put your own name in this psalm, making it your own prayer of trust and hope?

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Lesson 9

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TAKE DELIGHT IN THE LORD

The LORD delights in the way of the man whose steps He has made firm; though he stumble, he will not fall, for the LORD upholds him with His hand.

Psalm 37: 23-24

Do you ever wonder why selfish, evil people often seem to keep on prospering while godly people seem to suffer? Why doesn't God intervene and show Himself? Psalm 37, a acrostic wisdom Psalm, helps us to put life in perspective and to "commit our way" to Him, knowing that He will keep every one of His promises to us and to all generations.

READ - Psalm 37

Read it and read it out loud. Choose some of the phrases to underline, copy or memorize.

RECEIVE -

The Circumstances - When David wrote this Psalm, how do you think he was feeling? What was on his mind?

The Content –

1. Why do you think that the phrase, "*Do not fret*", is repeated three times in the first 9 verses of this Psalm? What makes people *fret* – verses 1, 7 and 8? What is the antidote?
2. What makes someone "wicked"? How should their prosperity be viewed by those who are God's people?
3. There are several references to eternity and to our inheritance in this Psalm – the ultimate reality that gives us hope in the present. Find them and let them fill your heart and mind with anticipation and joy.

REFLECT –

Declaring His Praise and Gratefulness – What does David know about His God that makes him feel joyful?

Expressing His Petitions and Concerns – As the Israelites sang this Psalm, what was the advice that they heard?

Discovering God's Promises to us – Contrast the promises that are given to those who follow God with the destiny of "the wicked".

RESPOND – Using this psalm, paragraph by paragraph, as a model, write your own prayer to the LORD, your God. He is waiting to hear your own expression of praise as well as the desires of your heart.

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Lesson 10

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THE GREATNESS OF MY GOD

**"Many, O LORD my God, are the wonders You have done.
The things You planned for us no one can recount to You. Psalm 40: 5**

One title for this song of declarative praise is "Faith Persevering in Trial". Wouldn't you think it would be appropriate and meaningful in our world today to remind ourselves that "our God really does hear our cry and establish our steps"? It is one of the reasons that we can always depend on Him.

READ - Psalm 40 -

As you read this Psalm imagine yourself singing it together with many other faithful believers.
Psalm 147: 1 - tells us, "It is good to sing praises to our God, for it is pleasant and praise is beautiful."

RECEIVE -

The Circumstances - When David wrote this Psalm, how do you think he was feeling? What was on his mind?

The Content –

1. Do you think that David's deliverance from the "mud and mire of the slimy pit" means that his circumstances changed or that his attitude changed or both? Why?
2. What does this song teach us about what brings honor and glory to God – verses 6 – 8?
3. If you were asked to talk about God's faithfulness and salvation what would you say? If you were going to explain to others what you know about God's love and His truth, what would you talk about? (Verses 9 – 10)
4. Under what circumstances do you think this Psalm would be helpful to you or to others?

REFLECT –

Declaring His Praise and Gratefulness – What does David know about the Lord that makes him hopeful and thankful?

Expressing His Petitions and Concerns - What are the requests that are expressed in this psalm?

Discovering God's Promises to us – What does the Psalmist count on and expect from his God?

RESPOND – Using this prayer as a model, write your own expression of trust and gratefulness to the LORD.