

RESPONDING with PRAISE

A study of some of the Psalms in Section II

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These study guides have been designed to assist you in the "Three R's of your own Bible study – reading, receiving, and responding. You are welcome to print out the whole series. If you wish to print out only one lesson at a time, choose that option from your printer. Each lesson is one page in length on regular notebook paper - 8 1/2 x 11.

Please feel free to use these materials for your own personal use or with a small group, remembering to give credit where credit is due.

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RESPONDING with PRAISE

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Lesson 1

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**Why are you cast down, O my soul? And why are you disquieted with in me?
HOPE IN GOD;
for I shall yet praise Him, the help of my countenance and my God.**

Psalm 42:5 & 11 and Psalm 43: 5

Is there any one who has not experienced a time when God seemed far away? When darkness seemed to surround your soul and mind? When the enemy seemed to have the final word day after day? This is a Psalm for times like that. Psalm 42 and 43 were no doubt one Psalm originally, split into two parts for the worship in the temple. Korah was a rebellious priest who led a rebellion against Moses and Aaron (Numbers 16) and was judged harshly by God because of it. In spite of this, his sons were a musical family in Israel for hundreds of years and wrote many contemplative Psalms - often ones of lament and trust. What had they experienced that continued to give them confidence in their God?

READ - Psalms 42 and 43 - Read these Psalms several times - out loud and in various translations. Choose a verse or more to memorize.

REFLECT -

The Circumstances - What are some of the emotions that the Psalmist is feeling? Find as many adjectives which express them as you can. Why might the writer be feeling this way?

The Psalms - What do these sections describe?

Psalm 42: 1 - 4

Psalm 42: 5 - 11

Psalm 43: 1 - 2

Psalm 43: 3 - 4

Psalm 43: 5

The Content -

1. For the Israelites there was only one place where the true worship of the Lord was possible and that was at the temple in Jerusalem where the community could worship together. Why does the Psalmist long for this kind of worship?
2. What are some of the repeated themes in these 2 Psalms?
3. Where does the writer of this song find comfort and strength in his time of need?
4. What do you think it means to "hope in God"? Is it possible when you are feeling discouraged?

The Principles of Faith Proclaimed -

1. Though "cast down" and oppressed, what does the writer know about His God.
2. What does the Psalmist understand about himself and worship and praise?

RESPOND

1. Take some time to re-write this Psalm in a personal way, with your own life experiences in mind.
2. Is there something that God wants to impress on you? Take some time to listen to Him.

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Lesson 2

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**God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.
Therefore we will not fear . . .** Psalm 45: 1 - 2

The great Reformation hymn, A Mighty Fortress is Our God, written by Martin Luther, was based upon Psalm 46. These 3 Psalms form a trilogy which focuses on God's special love for Jerusalem and His kingship. They joyfully celebrated their great King, as Creator, Savior and coming King. Someday His reign would mean the end of warfare, inequity and trouble. For all believers throughout the centuries, these songs have been a comfort and strength. What a day that will be when Jesus does return and His followers will live with him forever in the "new Jerusalem"! (Rev. 21)

READ - Psalms 46, 47 and 48

Read these 3 Psalms as a unit, complementary to each other and then try to focus on each one individually.

REFLECT -

The Circumstances - These poems, written for the temple musicians, are a response to God which comes out of their real life experiences and needs. What would some of these be?

The Psalms - Give a title and summarize each section of these Psalms.

Psalm 46 - a Psalm of trust	Psalm 47 - a royal Psalm	Psalm 48 - Praise
1 - 3	1 - 4	1 - 3
4 - 7	5 - 7	4 - 11
8 - 11	8 - 9	12 - 14

The Content -

1. Make a list of the names used for God and a list of His attributes given in these Psalms.
2. What do you learn about praise and worship from these songs?
3. These Psalms are looking forward to the day when the great King will reign on Mount Zion. In fact these 3 Psalms are called the "Songs of Zion". What are some of the things that they are anticipating? What New Testament passages do you know that expand on these ideas?
4. What other phrases or ideas catch your attention in these Psalms? Why?

The Principles of Faith Proclaimed - Based on these 3 Psalms, finish the following sentences.

1. I can trust God even when . . .
2. I will praise God because He . . .
3. And someday all the nations will . .

RESPOND - Take some time to write your own response to God, your own Psalm. You may want to incorporate some of the verses from these Psalms. Write thoughts, perhaps parallel thoughts, but you don't even need to think about rhyme or rhythm - only about responding to God.

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Lesson 3

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**Create in me a pure heart, O God,
and renew a steadfast spirit within me.**

Psalm 51:10

Confession - "An act of acknowledging, avowal, admission. A formal declaration of guilt." When David was confronted by the prophet Nathan about his sin with Bathsheba, David was immediately contrite and honest before God. (II Samuel 11 & 12: 1 - 15) Sometime later, David wrote this penitential Psalm. What would have happened if David had been defensive, made excuses, or continued on in his own way? Fear often keeps us from being this honest about our own attitudes and actions, but David understood his God and so he came to God with humility, sincerity and honesty.

READ - Psalm 51

As you read and re-read this Psalm, try to put yourself into David's place. Why did he give this Psalm to the chief musician?

REFLECT -

The Circumstances - Read them for yourself in II Samuel 11 and 12: 1 - 15.
What happened? How did David get into this predicament?

The Psalm - It's good to see what is really in this poem, so think about each section and title it -

1 - 2	14 - 15
3 - 4	16- 17
5 - 6	18 - 19
7 - 13	

The Content -

1. What are the synonyms for "sin" used in this Psalm?
How do they help you understand what the meaning of "sin" really is?
2. Make a list of the requests that David makes to God. Is there a sequence to them?
What impresses you as you contemplate this list?
3. David makes some promises to the Lord as he responds to God's mercy and lovingkindness.
What are some of them and what do they indicate?

The Principles of Faith Proclaimed -

As you review this song, what does it tell you about -
Who God is -
Sin -
Sacrifices -
Forgiveness -

RESPOND - Which part of this Psalm do you need this week? Facing the truth about yourself is a painful process, but it is the only door to cleansing and joy from the Lord. Are you willing to admit/confess whatever it is that the Lord is showing to you as sin? I John 1: 5 - 10

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Lesson 4

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**My heart is steadfast, O God, my heart is steadfast.
I will sing and give praise.** Psalm 57: 7

When is the last time you had to hide in a cave in order to be safe from your enemy? David's situation when he wrote this poem was very different from any of our life experiences. Wasn't it? However, in other ways, we have the same kinds of needs. Where can we find safety when the attacks of Satan are very real? Where can we find purpose and security when the circumstances of life feel disastrous? To whom can we turn when we are afraid or discouraged? This Psalm of trust would be a great one to memorize and to share together in concert when those times come to us, wouldn't it?

READ - Psalm 57 - Try reading it in several different versions and then write it out by hand in some creative, colorful way.

REFLECT -

The Circumstances - Read I Samuel 24 to learn about David's experience in the cave.

The Psalm - As you study this Psalm, try to give it a title. What is in each section?

- 1 - 3
- 4 - 6
- 7 - 11

The Content -

1. Find all of the praise and worship sections and write them down.
2. What does David have to say about his circumstances and what requests does he make of God?
3. How does David describe his enemies? What will be their eventual destiny?
4. There are several word pictures in this Psalm. Find some of them and explain them with words or illustrate them with pictures.

The Principles of Faith Proclaimed -

What does David know about his God and himself that enables him to find refuge in Jehovah?

RESPOND

1. Are you the same person you were five years ago, one year ago? (Psalm 57: 2)
Or can you see some ways in which God is at work in you to fulfill His purposes for your life?
Read Philippians 1: 6 and thank the Lord for what He is doing and wants to do.
2. Steadfast - verse 7 - What does it mean? Does God want you to respond to His desire for you to have "a steadfast heart"? What would that mean for you?

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Lesson 5

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**My soul finds rest in God alone. My salvation comes from Him.
He alone is my rock and my salvation. He is my fortress. I will never be shaken.**

Psalm 62: 1 - 2

Is there anything that we need in these days more than rest? Not only sleep, but release from the pace, the pressures and the worries of life. Apparently not much has changed since the time of David, for he wrote eloquently about this very thing in Psalm 62. He faced his external opponents (verses 3 & 4) and he described his internal struggles (verses 9 & 10). But, no matter what the source of the pressure or temptation, David remembered where he could go for his salvation, his protection and his strength. He also knew that this strong and loving God would some day reward him for the choices that he made.

READ - Psalm 62 Another great Psalm to read in a variety of translations and to write out for yourself.

REFLECT -

The Circumstances - When would David write this kind of poem?

The Psalm - Take a look at each section and jot down some of your impressions.

1 - 2

3 - 4

5 - 8

9 - 10

11 - 12

The Content -

1. Find all the words which David used to describe the character of God and define them. Compare verses 1 - 2 and 5 - 8.
2. What were the attacks that came from David's opponents - verses 3 - 4?
3. What were the internal temptations he described in verses 9 - 10?
4. What is the significance of verse 12?

Read: Matthew 5: 11 - 12

Matthew 6: 1 - 4

Matthew 16: 27

I Corinthians 3: 11 - 14

Colossians 3: 23 - 24

Ephesians 2: 8 - 9

The Principles of Faith Proclaimed - What is David's view of God?

Write it out in your own words.

RESPOND - God would like to give you rest today. To give you hope. To be your salvation, your rock, your fortress, and your refuge. Why not "pour out your heart to Him"? You can know that He is strong and that He loves you.

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Lesson 6

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**O God, You are my God, earnestly I seek You;
my soul thirsts for You, my body longs for You,
in a dry and weary land where there is no water.**

Psalm 63:1

As early as the third century this Psalm was named "The Morning Hymn" and was the first song that the believers sang every Lord's Day as they gathered together. Others have said that this Psalm should be sung by all believers daily, as is practiced in some Orthodox churches as they gather for morning prayers each day. David had fled to the desert of Judah and there in this hot and arid place he is inspired to write so descriptively of his relationship to God and the longings of his heart. He understood that this intense and desperate thirst could only be satisfied by God. Why is it that we so often turn to other resources?

READ - Psalm 63 - Could you read this Psalm every morning and night this week?

REFLECT -

The Circumstances - David has gone to the desert of Judah. We know that he escaped from Saul by going there, but later on as king he also went there because of the uprising of Absalom, his son. You can read this story starting in II Samuel 15: 13. It must have been a very intense time.

The Psalm - Take a look at each of these sections and title it or divide it into your own outline.

- 1 - 2
- 3 - 5
- 6 - 8
- 9 - 10
- 11

The Content -

1. What happens when you are really, really thirsty and the hot air sucks the moisture from your not only your mouth but your skin? What is David poetically communicating about himself?
2. Make a list of the things David says that he wants to do. Ex. - "I seek you."
What impression does that make on you?
3. David is sure that his enemies will be destroyed. What do you think he is referring to?
4. There are wonderful phrases in this Psalm that we find in other Psalms, as well.
Think about them and then express in your own words what they might mean.
I will lift up my hands - Psalm 28: 2, 119: 48, 134: 2, 141: 1 - 2
In the shadow of your wings - Psalm 17 8, 36: 7, 61: 4, 91: 4
Your right hand upholds me - Psalm 16: 8 & 11, 18: 35, 20: 6, 48: 10, 60: 15,
118: 15 - 16

The Principles of Faith Proclaimed -

What does David believe with certainty about God, about himself, and the destiny of his enemy?

RESPOND

Simply re-read this Psalm now, slowly and thoughtfully and tell God what you are thinking and feeling - the longings of your heart and your frustrations. Writing this Psalm for yourself will help you express concretely and clearly some of these thoughts. Try it. Then date it and keep it.

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Lesson 7

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**“May God be gracious to us and bless us and make His face shine upon us.
May Your ways be known on earth, Your salvation among all nations.”**

Psalm 67:1 - 2

Want to praise the Lord? These songs, which were probably written after God had delivered His people from oppression and/or bondage, express so well not only what God had done for His people, but who God really is. John Bunyan used Psalm 66:16 in the introduction to his book, Pilgrim's Progress. Some ancient writers called Psalm 67 the “Lord’s Prayer of the Old Testament”. It seems that some of our newer praise music express the thoughts of these Psalms so well- “Our God is an Awesome God. He reigns from heaven above with wisdom, power and might. Our God is an Awesome God.”

READ - Psalms 66 and 67 - Write out these Psalms and read them daily.

REFLECT -

The Circumstances - We do not know for sure who wrote these 2 poems for the music director.

What do you think was the response of the musicians and people when they got these songs?

The Psalms - Take a look at both of these poems and outline them.

Psalm 66: 1- 4

5 - 7

8 - 12

13 - 15

16 - 19

20

Psalm 67: 1 - 2

3 - 4

5 - 7

The Content -

Psalm 66 -

1. Make a list of adjectives describing the God of this song. Who is He? What is He like?
2. In verse 13 the poet changes from focusing on God to his personal response. What are your observations? Notice each “promise” that he makes to God and his conclusion.

Psalm 67 -

1. The first 2 verses remind us of the Aaronic benediction in Numbers 6: 24 - 26. Perhaps references in the Old Testament to “God’s face” are prophetically referring to the Messiah, who will come and reveal God in person to “all people”.
2. When the Psalmist invokes God’s mercy and blessing, what do you think he really wants from God?
3. Both of these Psalms have several references to “all nations” or “all the earth”. Find them. Clearly it was God’s plan from the beginning that the His blessing was to be for all people - Genesis 12:3. This theme is carried out in the New Testament – Matthew 28: 28 - 20, Acts 1: 8, II Peter 3: 9. Do these Psalms motivate you in any way?

The Principles of Faith Proclaimed - What prayers will you use from Psalm 66 and 67?

RESPOND - It would be a good time for you to write your own poem of praise. Who is God to you? What has He done for you, for us? How will you respond in worship and thanksgiving and on the behalf of others?

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Lesson 8

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**Even when I am old and gray, do not forsake me, O God,
till I declare Your power to the next generation,
Your might to all who are to come.**

Psalms 71: 18

There are two types of older people - the ones who attract and the ones who repel. You know. There are some who grow "sweeter as the years go by" and there are many whose negative personality traits seem to flourish in their later years. We do not know anything about the poet who wrote Psalm 71, but we do know that his heart's desire was to reflect God's presence and power all the days of his life. Life hadn't been easy for him, but he had known God's greatness and his deliverance. Now he grieves over the possibility that his God might forsake him in his frailty and old age and so he cries out to the Lord in alternating praise and petition.

READ - Psalm 71 - Read this Psalm many times and in many translations. What is your favorite verse or section?

REFLECT -

The Circumstances - What can you learn about this unknown poet from the content of the poem?

The Psalm - How would you outline this Psalm, noting how it alternates between praise and petition?

The Content -

1. Make a list of the requests that are made to God and then give them some definition.
Ex . "Let me never be put to shame" - I want to trust You and not be embarrassed by my choices.
2. Rewrite the poet's "testimony" (life story) from what he expresses in this poem.
3. There are several different ways to praise the Lord mentioned - what are some of them?
4. Even in his final years his "enemies" are very real and challenging. Do you think this is true for the believer today? Why or why not? Try to think of Scriptural reasons, if you can.

The Principles of Faith Proclaimed - What are the attributes of God that he can count upon?

RESPOND -

1. Is your life story like the Psalmist or very different? When did you begin to trust the Lord and recognize that He was teaching you? Do you identify with some of his fears?
2. Choose a section of this Psalm and make it your personal prayer to the Lord. Put it in your own words and spend some quiet time with the One Who will always be faithful to you.