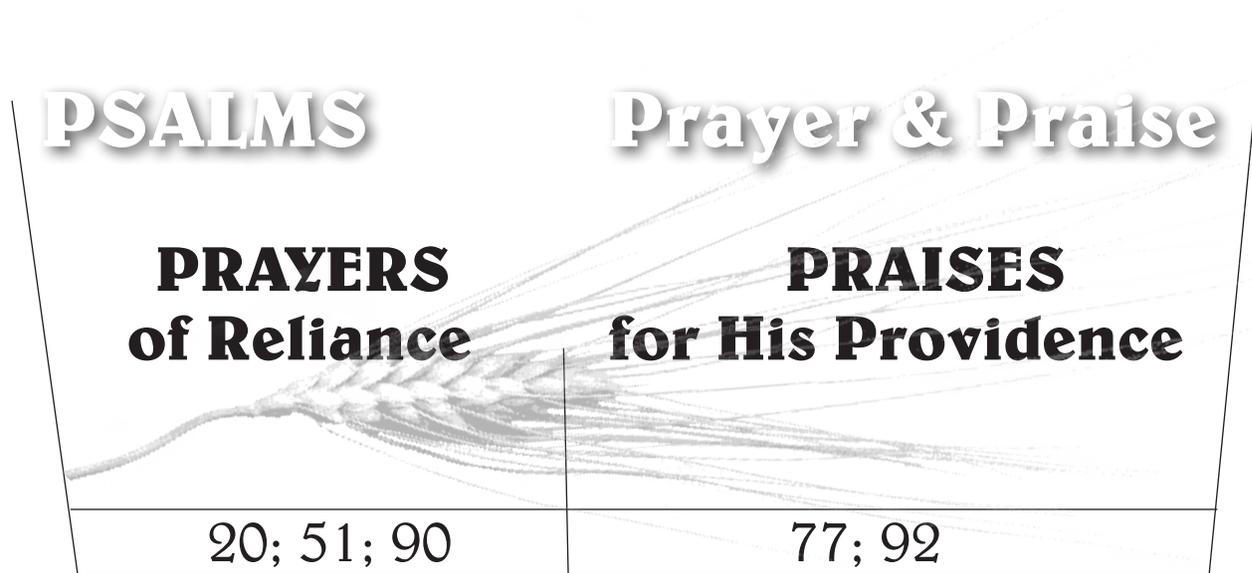


PSALMS

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Enter His gates with thanksgiving and His courts with praise! 100:4

Welcome to the book of Psalms!

To begin your study of the Psalms, meditate on the contents of the book reflected in the overview chart above. Note the two major movements of the book. Prayer and praise are to be the vertical focus of the believer.

Also note the passages listed within the overview chart below. Take this opportunity to refer to and note each one, relating the section titles to the appropriate passages. What have you learned so far about Psalms? Take the time to read the five Psalms from the chart that reflect the Prayer and Praise themes!

An alternate overview:

Book 1	Book 2	Book 3	Book 4	Book 5
Man	Redemption	Worship	Hope	Thanks
1-41	42-72	73-89	90-106	107-150

Open your heart as you read!

We have viewed the NO HEART attitude and life of Saul. We have investigated the WHOLE HEART life of David in the books of 1 & 2 Samuel. Now we focus on the Psalms to search through the actual heart reflections of the Psalmists of Israel.

In what ways is your life a Psalm?
How is Prayer and Praise evidenced in your life?

The Psalms can become a very active and enriching part of our spiritual lives if we have the heart to seek! them.

AUTHORS

At least seven writers contributed to the book: David, Asaph, Solomon, Moses, Ethan, Heman, and the sons of Korah.

DATE

Various time periods depending on the writer.

OTHER BACKGROUND

The Hebrew title of this book is "Praise" or "Book of Praise." The book of Psalms is quoted more times in the New Testament than any other Old Testament book. Psalms is actually five books in one. Book 1, Chapters 1-41; Book 2, Chapters 42-72; Book 3, Chapters 73-89; Book 4, Chapters 90-106; Book 5, Chapters 107-150. Each section or book closes with a ringing song of praise. The 150 psalms which make up this book were often forged in the crucible of human experience; jubilation and judgment, peace time and war. They contain both quiet meditation and thunderous proclamation: which is one reason why these songs of praise are so appealing to so many Christi followers.

Most of us enjoy different types of music, depending on what kind of mood we find ourselves in. We flip the radio dial back and forth/search our phones until we tune in the sound that best matches our particular emotional level. That's something like the variety you will find in the book of Psalms because it contains seven different moods or types of psalms:

Lamentation...	Psalms are praises offered to the Lord when He seems far away.
Praise...	Psalms revolve around the word "praise", and extol God's virtues.
Enthronement...	Psalms praise God's universal rule and lift Him up as our majestic King!
Zion...	Psalms focused on the city of Jerusalem and were usually sung during one of three annual religious feasts, much like Christmas carols that we sing at Christmas time.
Thanksgiving...	Psalms express appreciation for something God has done in the past, or confidence in His promise to act in the future.
Theme...	Psalms focus various subjects covered.

Why study and consider the Psalms?

1. To better learn about living a life of gratefulness in the midst of life's challenges.
2. To learn healthy ways to face conflict and find the peace of a satisfied mind.
3. To encourage, motivate, and strengthen us during the times we face depression, defeat and difficulties.



STEPS TO STUDY A PSALM

Following these steps will prove beneficial as you seek indepth understanding of the Psalms.

ENCOUNTER THE REFERENCE

Take the time... Psalms are short statements that say much about heart feelings. You will want to make it a habit that when you have 5-20 minutes to study (not time for lengthy study) to use the Psalms, dividing them quickly for meditation and application. Think of the short periods of time that are wasted because we do not use them adequately because they are not "lengthy" enough to get "deep"!

Have a plan... Psalms may usually be divided easily, and because of their "theme" nature, can be approached systematically. Remember this plan:

- Effectual Reading
- Entertain Questions
- Expose Details
- Envelope in Outline

If these steps are made a part of your meditating process, you can quickly uncover application principles that really do **"enlighten your heart."**

EXPOSE THE MEANING

Effectual reading... read the passage once or twice and give it a short title (re: Psalm 1... "Wicked & Righteous"). This title should as much as possible be derived from specific words or phrases of the Psalm that truly exemplify the Psalm's main thrust.

Entertain questions (and test your title)...gathering general information for understanding (who, what, when, where, why and how) can be very enlightening as you take time to meditate on a Psalms significance to your life. You may wish to check your title for accuracy at this step!

Expose details... observing grammatical and literary elements for insight.....

- Repeated words and phrases** are key.
- Connectives or linking words** (and, therefore, but)
- Sentence cores** (subject, verb)
- Unknown words** (use dictionary, Bible dictionary)
- Location or place words** (action and movement)
- Figurative expressions** ("vessels prepared for wrath" discover deeper meaning author had in mind)
- Logical sequences** (progression of thoughts, events, places, action/response, etc.)
- Anything unusual or unexpected** (not fitting the context; out of the ordinary)
- Related entities** (parts of books, sections, chapters, and verses that clarify each other by similar words, thoughts, etc.)

By increasing your abilities to meditate and observe these "structure markers" you will train yourself to go past content to indepth interpretation.

ENVELOPE IN OUTLINE... (Example from Psalms 1)

Title Choices: Righteous & Wicked Contrasted (1)
The Tree & The Chaff (2)
The Tree & Me (3)

Outline: (1-2) Specific Contrasts (What are they?)
(3) Righteous Revealed (Why this analogy: tree?)
(4-5) Wicked Revealed (What about them?)
(6) Lord's Viewpoint (What does it reveal?)

(1-2) Walk, Stand, Sit vs. Delight
(3) Trees yield fruit and leaves
(4-5) Chaff, Judgment, Perish
(6) "I know your way"

This approach will work on every Psalm, giving you a helpful framework for your meditation!



A READING GUIDE TO PSALMS 1-10

Here are some examples of titled psalms that have been simply outlined. We have included some examples of the kinds of questions you will want to ask throughout your pursuit of the Psalms.

PSALM 1. CONTRAST: RIGHTEOUS AND WICKED

Contains good instruction and promises as we delight in His Word.

Outline: The Blessed Man (1)
 The Stable Life (2-3)
 The Unstable Life (4-6)

What about me? What does this passage give as the basis for delighting in the Lord? As the results What are the major stabilizing factors in your life? The unstabilizing factors? What one specific step can you take revealed by this principle to be more stable?

PSALM 2. THE NATIONS AND THE LORD

Gives encouragement to the believer because we are at peace with God.

Outline: Nation's Opposition (1-3)
 Lord's Response (4-9)
 Nation's Warning (10-12)

What about me? Who is the Lord's anointed? How does this Psalm describe His attitudes and actions toward the nations? There are five commands in 10-12, what are they? Though these are spoken to the nations, we can benefit by making ourselves the recipients. What do these commands teach you about your relationship with Jesus?

PSALM 3. DAVID FLEES FROM ABSALOM

A good picture of trust in hopeless situations, resulting in prayerful trust and encouragement.

Outline: The Situation (1-2)
 David's Reaction (3-6)
 David's Prayer (7-8)

What about me? David was being chased from Jerusalem by his own son. Though he was persecuted from every side, he still chooses to trust in God. When have you felt like David did in verses 1-2? Notice that even in the midst of his trust David experienced anxiety (vs. 4). It is not so much that we will not go through trials, but it is how we cope with those trials. How did David deal with the situation?

PSALM 4. A LIFE OF TRUST

Good insights on the characteristics of one who trusts in God.

Outline: David's Request (1)
 David's Instruction (2-5)
 David's Prayer (6-8)

What about me? David had confidence (1). He knew that in God's grace He would listen. Do you have this confidence? David saw himself as godly; how do you picture yourself and why? Trust involves five specific actions (4-5). What are they? How do verses 6-8 show David's confidence and peace? What have you learned specifically about trust?

5. THE PROTECTION OF GOD

Here are some helpful insights into taking refuge in God when others are against you.

Outline: A Morning Prayer (1-3)
 A Humble Servant (4-7)
 Rebellious Talkers (8-10)
 A Joyful Shield (11-12)

What about me? What was David's prayer like? (1-3) What specific insights do you receive into your own prayer life? What is worship? How does David worship God (this Psalm)? Because David knew that God was his shield he could be joyful and rest. Do you believe that God is your shield? Rest and be joyful in God's unconditional love for you!

6. MERCY IN TROUBLED TIMES

Here we find a graphic picture of a person's true feelings in the midst of trials.

Outline: David's Feelings (1-3)
 David's Request (4-5)
 David's Condition (6-7)
 David's Trust (8-10)

What about today? How were David's trials affecting him (1-3)? (6-7) Trials come and go. Many times we think "to act spiritual" is to not acknowledge stress. How did David deal with spiritual, physical, and emotional stress? What creative and useful ways does this passage give you insight into dealing with problems?

7. A PRAYER OF DEFENSE AND VINDICATION

Some useful insights into godliness and its opposite: the mischief of man.

Outline: The Pursuers (1-2)
 The Justice (3-5)
 The Judge (6-11)
 Mischief's Plight (12-16)
 David's Trust (17)

What about me?

8. THE MAJESTIC TRANSCENDENCE OF GOD

God's Purpose (1-2)
God's Plan for Man (3-8)
God's Praise (9)

What about me?

9. PRAISE & THANKSGIVING FOR GOD'S JUSTICE

David's Heart Praise (1-2)
David's Testimony (3-6)
God's Justice (7-10)
David's Requests (11-16)
God's Sovereignty (17-20)

10. A PORTRAIT OF THE WICKED

David's Question (1-2)
Wicked Described (5-11)
David's Request (12-17)



Psalms Chapter Chart

A Bread of Life Bible Study Guide.

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Use this as a master for your own study of the Psalms. Outline the content, write out your questions, choose key and favorite verses, and give the Psalm a title with words from the text. Then come to "simple and focused "what about me" conclusions for your life! Happy hunting!

PSALM _____ Favorite Verse(s) _____ Key Verse _____

Outline:

Questions:

Psalm Title _____

What About Me?

THE PURSUIT OF GOD

A QUOTE FROM A. W. TOZER:

"I trust I speak in charity, but the lack in our pulpits is real. Milton's terrible sentence applies to our day as accurately as it did to his: "The hungry sheep look up, and are not fed". It is a solemn thing, and no small scandal in the Kingdom, to see God's children starving while actually seated at the Father's table. The truth of Wesley's words is established before our eyes: "Orthodoxy, or right opinions, is, at best, a very slender part of religion. Though right attitudes cannot subsist without right opinions, yet right opinions may subsist without right attitudes. There may be a right opinion of God without either love or one right attitude toward Him. Satan is a proof of this."

Thanks to our splendid Bible societies and to other effective agencies for the dissemination of the Word, there are today many millions of people who hold "right opinions", probably more than ever before in the history of the Church. Yet, I wonder if there was ever a time when true spiritual worship was at a lower ebb. To great sections of the Church, the art of worship has been lost entirely, and in its place has come that strange and foreign thing call the "program". This word has been borrowed from the state and applied with sad wisdom to the type of public service which now passes for worship among us."

WORSHIP OF GOD DEFINED:

"Reverence paid to a divine being - the act of expression; extravagant respect or admiration for or devotion to an object of esteem."

There are a number of words in the Scriptures that define worship:

Worship before God:

(Exodus 34:14) to depress (prostrate); to pay homage; bow (self) down; crouch, fall down, humbly beseech, to stoop.

Worship of false gods:

(Jeremiah 44:19) to fabricate or fashion (worry, pain, anger) grieve, hurt, make, be sorry, vex, worship.

(Daniel 3:5) Prostrate oneself, fall down.

(Matthew 2:2) to kiss, like a dog licking his master's hand; to fawn or crouch to; prostrate oneself in homage.

(Matthew 19:9) to revere, adore, devout, "religious" worship.

(Acts 7:42) a hired menial; to minister to God - render religious homage; secure, do the service, worship.

(Acts 17:23) to be pious, respect (support), devout, godly.

These stand in stark contrast to one another. Worship appears to be fused into the heart of mankind. We make our own choices as to where our attention is focused.

OUR INTERIOR LIVES

The human body of is fragile. Even in strength and good health it takes very little to turn everything upside down when our physical health is impaired. Our emotional life is similar. We can be high as a kite on life one moment, and then a simple word or change of circumstances can send us plummeting to earth, often to a very rude landing!

The soul is the indestructible part of us. It is where the true battles are fought and it is the arena of our conscience and our spirit as well. You could say it is where the essence of a man or woman exists. This is where our interior life is thought out, forged, and where we are won or lost. The soul is crucial to the measure of our lives. Giving attention to our interior lives is critical to the sum of who we are.

The Psalms are probably the best representations of an interior life that we have in all of human recorded history. The struggle with good and evil, desire and want, and anger and joy are all arrayed before us in the lives of the Psalmists - David, King of Israel owning the lion's share of these helpful snapshots into our interior lives.

To put this into perspective, we must understand that David probably enjoyed one of the most intimate and spiritually favored lives with the Living God of any human who has ever lived. We can look into his writings and find his heart, and in so doing we can find God's heart. The Psalms are a key to unlocking our hearts.

Spiritual transformation into a Kingdom heart is both mystical and practical. It is **mystical** because no matter how zealous or how disciplined we may become, we are still completely reliant upon God's Spirit to connect us with our Creator. It is **practical** in that the choices we make each day drastically impact our spiritual resiliency.

The scriptures are clear. First King (Jesus), then Kingdom (our interior lives), then Church (what we do in our exterior lives). The balance of these three will determine our ultimate satisfaction in life. Whatever devotion or place I find in visible expressions of men and religion, the Kingdom must supersede them all. In fact, our work is measured by our submission to the King and our connectedness to how He is building His Kingdom - in and around our lives! Check out these King and Kingdom references!

Matthew 2:2	Where is He who has been born King of the Jews?
Matthew 2:11	They fell to the ground and worshipped Him
Matthew 4:17	Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand!
Matthew 11:2-6	Are You the Expected One?
Matthew 11:25-30	The Yoke of the True King!
Matthew 13:51,52	Like the Head of a Household...
Matthew 18:4	Whoever humbles himself like a child...
Matthew 25:31-40	Inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world!
Matthew 27:37	King of the Jews!
Revelation 19:11-16	The King Returns