

Learning Guide

Psalms

Introduction

The Psalms, familiar and beloved, touch the wellsprings of our hearts.

Although originating among the children of Israel, the Psalms also were/are valued by the church and cited in the New Testament:

- “Whenever you come together, each of you has a psalm...” (1 Cor. 14:26).
- “...speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord...” (Eph. 5:19).
- “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord” (Colossians 3:16).
- “Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing psalms” (James 5:13b).
- See also Luke 20:42; 24:44; Acts 1:20; 13:33, 35.

Structure of the Book

- Collection of 150 songs
- Psalm = song, not chapter
- Five historical sections:
 - Book 1 (Psalms 1-41)
 - Book 2 (Psalms 42-72)
 - Book 3 (Psalms 73-89)
 - Book 4 (Psalms 90-106)
 - Book 5 (Psalms 107-150)

Authors

People of God who experienced many, if not all, of the same emotions, flaws, and longings of heart as we do. They included:

- **Moses** (N=1): Ps 90 A well known prophet, leader of Israel; also author of Genesis through Deuteronomy.
- **David** (N=73): See top notes on many of the psalms. David was called “the sweet psalmist of Israel,” 2 Sam. 23:1. For life story of David see 1Sam. 16:7 to 1 Kings 2:12; 1 Chron. 10:13 to 29:30.
- **Asaph** (N=12): Ps 50; 73-83 A Levite, “chief musician,” 1 Chron. 6:39-43; 16:1-7. His descendants included 128 singers, Ezra 2:41.
- **Heman** (N=1): Ps 88 Appointed singer by David, 1 Chron. 6:31-33; 15:19.
- **Ethan** (N=1): Ps 89 Appointed singer by David, 1 Chron. 6:31-33; 15:19.
- **Solomon** (N=2): Ps 72; 127 Wrote 1005 songs, plus 3,000 proverbs, 1 Kings 4:30-32.

- **Sons of Korah** (N=11): Ps 42; 44-49; 84-85; 87 Singers, 1 Chron. 6:31-37; painful family history, Num. 26:9-11; 16:1-35.

- **Unidentified** authors (N=50)

Dates

Determined largely by author and content. Written during a period of at least 1000 years from ca. [about] 1500 BC (Moses) to ca. 475 BC (Ps 137).

Audience

- God, Ps 69; 83; 88; 90
- Children of Israel, Ps 134
- All people of all nations, Ps 117
- All creation, Ps 148
- Really the Psalms are for all people of all time, especially persons who hurt, grieve, are anxious, ponder the meaning of life, stagger under the weight of sin, or seek a closer walk with God.

Authors' Purposes

1. Praise—Ps 8; 29; 33; 104; 111; 113; 148
2. Thanksgiving—Ps 30; 66; 116; 138
3. Individual lament—Ps 6; 13; 31; 39
4. Communal lament—Ps 12; 44; 74; 79
5. Royal Psalms—Ps 2; 18; 20; 35; 40; 45
6. Wisdom Psalms—Ps 1; 32; 37; 49; 119

*“A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver.”
—Proverbs 25:11*

Cultural and Social Conditions

Wide range: from wilderness wandering to kingdom years, temple years to captivity; including oppression, war, fear, peace, jubilation, and captivity.

Major Prophecies in Psalms & Their Fulfillment

Evidence that Jesus truly was/is the Messiah.

Prophecy	Fulfillment
Thou art my son, Ps 2:7	Acts 13:33
Made a little lower than angels, Ps 8:5	Heb. 2:6-10
Not leave soul in Sheol, Ps 16:10	Acts 2:27 Hades
Not see corruption Ps 16:10	Acts 2:27; 13:35-37
Trusted in the Lord, Ps 22:8	Matt. 27:42-43
Delight to do thy will, Ps 40:7-8	Heb. 10:7
Familiar friend lift up heel against, Ps 41:9	John 13:18
Throne last forever, Ps 45:6	Heb. 1:8
Zeal of your house eaten me up, 69:9	John 2:14, 17
His priesthood to be after the order of Melchizedek, Ps 110:4	Heb. 7:17
Stone which the builders rejected, Ps 118:22	Matt. 21:42
Blessed is he that comes in the name of the Lord, Ps 118:26	Matt. 21:9

The psalms can help us find ways to better know/express our deepest thoughts and emotions, leading us to praise God.

Following is **a guide to psalms** for private meditation, prayer, and worship—selections for self or to share with others facing health or personal challenges, including grief (e.g. in hospital, care home). Also, it can be used to find quotes for personalizing cards (e.g., get well, sympathy, birthday, anniversary, or thinking of you).

In times of trouble, feeling pressures in life: Ps 9:9-10; 23:4; 27:5-6; 30:5; 31:6-8; 32:7; 34:4, 19-20; 37:23-24, 39; 39:4-13; 41:1-3; 42:5; 46:1-3; 50:14-15; 55:22; 56:9-13; 59:16; 62:1-12; 73:26; 77:2-10; 94:17-19; 103:13-14; 107; 112:4; 119:50, 52, 54, 92, 143; 138: 3; 7-8; 140:12; 145:14; 147:3-6

When feeling afraid: Ps 27:1; 34:4; 46; 56:3-4, 11; 91:1-12; 94:19

Feeling depressed: Ps 42:5, 11; 43:5; 69:20, 29, 32; 71:20

Contemplating what is really important in life: Ps 1; 15; 37; 39; 49; 117; 119

When feeling like “old age” is creeping up on us: Ps 23; 31:24; 33:18; 71:9, 18; 90:1-17; 116:15

Concerned about having enough resources to live on: Ps 23; 37:23-28; 71:9, 18

Wish for more joy: Ps 51:8, 12; 126:5

Benefits of trusting and serving God: Ps 5:11; 9:10; 18:2; 20:7; 31:19, 24; 36:1-9; 37:3, 5, 7, 39-40; 40-3-4; 49:6-20; 50; 55:22; 62:8; 84; 1-12; 115:9, 11; 118:8-9; 128

Times of grief: Ps 13; 23; 22:1-2; 30:5; 31:9-10, 14-16; 34:18-19; 126:5

Thankfulness: Ps 26:6-12; 50:14-15; 92:1-4; 100; 102:18; 105:1,5,42-45; 106:1-2; 107: 1-2, 15, 22,43; 118:1, 4

Need/want to confess sin: Ps 32:1-11; 38:1-8, 10, 21-22; 40:11-14; 51:1-19; 69:5; 106:6-7; 119:175-176; 130:1-6

Desire more prayerfulness: Ps 5:1-3; 42:8; 109:4; 116:1-2

Need/desire more persistence in prayer: Ps 17:1-3, 6-9; 86:1-7

Prayer for a greater commitment to God: Ps 86:11 Prayers of David: Ps 17; 26; 38; 51; 61; 86

Prepare heart to worship: Ps 24:3-6; 27:4; 29:2; 35:18; 42:4; 55:14; 63:1-2; 66:4; 84:1-4,10; 92:13-14; 95:6; 100:1-4; 103:1-5; 107:6-8,32; 116:12-14, 17; 118:18-19; 149:1

When feeling puffed up:

Ps 18:27; 33:16, 17; 39:1-8;
44:1-8; 101:5; 138:6; 139

Psalms to listen to on the way to worship:

Ps 120 to 136 (sometimes called Psalms of ascent) or any other of your choice (e.g., on CD, tape, MP3, or read by passenger). Some of the Israelites may have sung some of these while walking, ascending the hills up to Jerusalem to worship.

To praise/honor God: Ps 9:1-2; 24; 28:7; 30; 36:5-10; 44:6-8; 54:6-7; 56:12; 59:16-17; 66; 68:19; 86:9-13; 89:1; 100; 104; 116; 117; 136; 138; 145; 146:1-2; 147:1; 148; 150.

*“Praise the LORD, all you Gentiles! Laud Him, all you peoples! For His merciful kindness is great toward us, And the truth of the LORD endures forever. Praise the LORD!”—
Psalm 117:1-2, NKJV*

Credits. Much of the material in this guide was adapted from:

Butler, L.G. (1999). “Psalms.” *Preacher's Study Notes: A Survey of the Old Testament from the Babylonian Exile to the Incarnation*. J. Crouch, Book Editor. P. O. Box 1308, Ozark, Mo 65721, Christian's Expositor Publications. 263-271. www.StudytheBibleYourself.com/Psalms, accessed October 14, 2015.

Nave, O. J. revised by S. Maxwell Coder (1974). *Nave's Topical Bible: A Digest of the Holy Scriptures*. Chicago, Moody Press. (See such topics as: Afflictions, Death, Faith, Fear, Joy, Praise, Prayer, Sin, Worship, among others.) <http://www.studylight.org/concordances/ntb/>, accessed October 14, 2015.

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Lewisville, TX 75067

Worship

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<http://www.dchurchofchrist.com>

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