



Getting started with Psalms

The Bible book of Psalms is a book of poetry and songs and therefore we must read them as such. The Psalms are broken up into 5 books. Book 1 – Psalms 1-41, Book 2 – Psalm 42-72, Book 3 – Psalms 73-89, Book 4 – Psalms 90-106, Book 5 – Psalms 107-150

The mood of the songs are varied. Some are full of praise and thanksgiving to God, some are full of wisdom about life and God's character, and some are expressing guilt and shame about sin. There are songs of confession and songs of pleading with God for His help in different circumstances of life. Lots of the Psalms are a mix up of different moods all in one song.

Some Psalms are private and personal prayers. These give us a window into the life of faith. They even give us words to pray in all the varied moods of life. They help us rejoice and they can help us when we are depressed or struggling with sin. They can also be used to give voice to our trust in God when life is full of difficult things (e.g. Psalm 46).

Some Psalms are clearly designed for together worship. The book of Psalms was used for temple worship, like an old hymn book, and were meant to be said/sung together as the people of God. There are together songs for praise of God, there are together songs for confession of sin, and there are together songs for seeking the help of God when things in life are hard.

Lots of different people wrote the Psalms. The biggest contributor was King David. But there are also Psalms from Moses, Solomon, Asaph and more. Some of the Psalms even link to stories that we can read about in other books of the Bible like 1 and 2 Samuel, or 1 and 2 Kings.

So how are we to use the Psalms as followers of Jesus?

Like the rest of the Bible it is first of ***all about Jesus***. This is something Jesus tells us in Luke 24:44. As you read the Psalms there are many ways to enjoy Jesus.

Here are a few to help get you started...

Jesus is the greater King. David is often either the king who sings the song, or the song itself is about him as king. For example Psalm 2 speaks about a king that God will bring to power before whom the nations must bow. Or Psalm 45 describes a most excellent king. These are Psalms that lead us to Jesus as the greater King who God gives to lead His people.

Jesus is the Man who perfectly kept God's laws and whose ways are blameless. In Psalm 1 we meet a blessed person who loves God's law and keeps it. This man is Jesus.



Jesus is the One who suffers at the hand of his enemies and at the hand of God. Many of the Psalms contain phrases of suffering that make us think about what Jesus endured at the cross. For example Psalm 22 is a psalm that Jesus himself quotes from as he hangs on the cross.

Jesus as the Man of Faith. Lots of the Psalms are an expression of faith in God. This is a faith we see perfectly lived out in the life of Jesus.

As you read the Psalms let them lead you to Jesus. Let them help you understand what he experienced at the cross, let them lead you to Him as the Saviour we need because of our sin.

A helpful question as you read a Psalm is:

- Could I imagine Jesus singing this Psalm? When would he sing it?
- Is Jesus the person this Psalm is describing?

Sometimes the answer may be 'yes' to both!

As well as leading us to Jesus the Psalms also give us *words to say / pray / and sing as we journey through life with Jesus.*

In the book of Psalms God gives us words that we can use to talk to Him. These are words to help us express our emotions and call out to God in a variety of life experiences. They also lead us to faith in times of trouble.

Very often the Psalms are a gift that take us on a journey. They start in the pit but move us to praise. They help us to move us towards faith when we feel like our faith is failing. The Psalms also remind us of loads of great truths about God. For example Psalm 33:4 "For the word of the LORD is right and true; He is faithful in all He does"

Enemies, enemies, enemies....

As you read the Psalms you will notice that the word enemy is mentioned over 90 times. Sometimes the requests for God to destroy the enemies might leaving you feeling uncomfortable. Two things to remember as we read. First God is full of mercy to His enemies. The gospel story is one of God's love to his enemies. In Romans 5:8 we are described as God's enemies before trusting in Jesus. Second the Psalms help us to see God as a powerful and righteous judge who will one day bring enemies of his chosen King to justice. God's justice is celebrated in the Psalms because it signals the end of evil and rebellion against God. At the cross Jesus defeated our great enemy the devil, destroying his work. Whilst we still face the enemies of Jesus today, we are secure in Him, and are confident that one day Jesus' enemies of sin, the devil and death, will be removed.

The Psalms are a precious gift from the Risen Lord Jesus to help us love Him and pray to Him as we journey with Him through life.