
Psalms

Authors

The book of Psalms contains 150 poems, songs, and prayer journal entries from various authors. Many psalms have superscriptions denoting their topic, authorship, or melody.

King David, the “sweet psalmist of Israel” (**2Sam 23:1**), is listed as the author of 73 of the psalms.

Prayer Journal Entries

Psalms contains the prayer journal entries of those who walked with God at all times – from crushing trials to joyous victories.

Poetic Device

Psalms often employ a poetic device known as “Hebrew parallelism” that compares or contrasts two parallel statements.

The Jewish people originally sang psalms but the melodies have been lost to history.

Read **1Chronicles 16:1-9**. Notice how God is often the audience of psalms. In addition, many psalms documented God’s perfect character and mighty works which encouraged others to praise God.

Pause: Selah

Many people believe “Selah,” which appears 73 times in Psalms, was a musical notation for “rest.” Experiment with pausing when you read “Selah” to ponder the verse you just read.

Prophecy of Christ’s Crucifixion

Psalm 22 is one of the greatest prophecies about Christ’s crucifixion. Christ quoted verse 1 when He was on the cross (**Mark 15:34**). His crucifixion fulfilled many other verses including verse 2 (**Mark 15:33**), verse 15 (**John 19:28**), and verses 16 and 18 (**Mark 15:24**). Can you find others?

Five Sub-books

The Bible organizes the 150 psalms into five sub-books, each ending with a doxology (expression of praise) of “Amen and Amen” or “Praise the Lord.” Many scholars believe the five sub-books correspond to the five books of the Pentateuch (Genesis-Deuteronomy).

Note the doxologies at the end of each book:

Book 1	Psalms 1-Psalm 41
Book 2	Psalms 42-Psalm 72
Book 3	Psalms 73-Psalm 89
Book 4	Psalms 90-Psalm 106
Book 5	Psalms 107-Psalm 150

Personal Reflection and Application

You are either in a trial right now, getting ready to enter a trial, or just coming out of a trial. Experiment with praying a psalm back to God, verse by verse, using it as a prayer guide.

Pick a psalm that gives a prayer of someone experiencing a trial, for instance [Psalm 13](#).

As David did, ask God how long He will leave you in your current difficult circumstance. There is no sin in asking “how long?” if you also realize that God is greater than your feelings ([1John 3:20](#)). As David did, lay out your troubles to God.

After David laid out his troubles, he told God that, in spite of his trials, he claimed God’s promises and trusted Him. Follow David’s example.

“God’s people don’t live on explanations; they live on God’s promises...” (Warren Wiersbe).

Small Group Conversation Guide

Many of us carry guilt from not meeting other people’s or our own expectations of ourselves. We place ourselves in bondage to these expectations.

We forget that when we accepted Christ as Savior, we agreed to submit to His transformation of us. At the same time, we still have our physical nature, our flesh, which tries to drag us down.

Rom 7:22-25 (NKJV) “For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man. But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? I thank God—through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin.”

Until the transformation process is complete, we will sin.

1John 1:8-9 (NKJV) “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

As a group, find and list the synonyms for sin in [Psalm 51](#).

Discuss what David asks God to do about sin?

Leadership Principles from Psalms

Supreme Authority

Reflect on these words from the resolution that Abraham Lincoln signed during the Civil War.

Whereas, the Senate of the United States, devoutly recognizing the Supreme Authority and just Government of Almighty God, in all the affairs of men and of nations, has, by a resolution, requested the President to designate and set apart a day for National prayer and humiliation. And whereas it is the duty of nations as well as of men, to own their dependence upon the overruling power of God, to confess their sins and transgressions in humble sorrow, yet with assured hope that genuine repentance will lead to mercy and pardon; and to recognize the sublime truth, announced in the Holy Scriptures and proven by all history that those nations only are blessed whose God is the Lord.

Now read [Psalm 33:12-22](#) and [James 4:6](#). Pray that God helps you be a humble leader fully aware of the authority in your life.

Your Strength

Intellectually, you may know that any strength you have comes from God. Have you developed this knowledge into understanding? Do you behave as if your strength comes from God ([Psa 68:28](#))? Is your desire, like David's, to have God finish His good work in you? If it is, you have no cause to fear and you have no cause to boast. You simply have cause to praise the Lord!

Your Tombstone

If God was writing something to put on your tombstone, what do you wish He would say?

Each of us has a limited time here on earth. We live in a society that tends to deny death. It doesn't help to become obsessed with thoughts of death; however, pretending you will live forever is foolish. Looking at the limits of your life from God's perspective, is the wise choice. [Psalm 90](#) can help you do that.

What are the key things that you want others to notice in your life? Make a list of the key character qualities you would like to reflect in the remainder of your life.

Search Me, O God

Listen to your heart's yearning for God. Your flesh tries to rule you. Fight against it. Realize how its pleasures last only a short time. Break the bondage by continuing to think of the eternal.

Listen to God's Spirit. Give Him an opportunity to speak to you through: your prayer time, your Bible reading, your serving, and your praise. Yield control to the Spirit.

[Psalm 139:23-24](#) is David's honest prayer to God. He humbly says, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me, and know my anxieties; And see if there is any wicked in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." The God-first leader is the one who prays this kind of prayer. Ask God to search your heart and motives. Ask your Heavenly Father to examine you and reveal the areas where you are lacking. Do what He says. That's true leadership!

Something to Find in Each Chapter

As you read through the book, it may help to have something to find in each chapter.
Try these:

Book 1 (Psalm 1-Psalm 41)

01.What a blessed person delights in and meditates on	03.Why a person can rest when opposed and surrounded
04.How a person can rest when opposed and surrounded	06.How broken, transparent, and determined the psalmist is
08.The prophecies of Christ's future reign (Heb 2:6-8)	10.What the wicked think of God's justice and judgment
12.How the psalmist describes the Word of God	13.How the psalmist follows deep questioning with faith
14.What the fool thinks about God	15.What type of person abides with God
16.The prophecies of Christ's resurrection (Acts 2:29-32)	17.When the psalmist will be truly satisfied
18.How the psalmist praises God for His protection	19.Two major sources of God's revelation to this world
22.How Christ's crucifixion is prophesied	23.How God describes a believer's relationship to Him
24.What God owns	25-28.How a person of God responds to difficulty
29.How powerful the voice/Word of God is	30.How God hopes we respond when He delivers us
31.When the tone changed from crying out to praising	32.What the psalmist said is a blessing from God
33.How God's plans and human-based plans are different	34.What the psalmist found after seeking God in prayer
36.How a wicked person views God	37.What God does for a good man's steps
38.How the psalmist was affected by his sins	39.How the psalmist dealt with his anger
40-41.What the psalmist said was a blessing	

Book 2 (Psalm 42-Psalm 72)

42.What the psalmist was thirsting for and feeding on	43.How the psalmist questioned why he was depressed
44.How the psalmist did not trust his own human ability	45.How much God, the King, loves His people
46.Why people can have confidence in God	47.What God promises to do in the earth
48.What important role God gives to every generation	49.How wealth can affect a person negatively
50.How God desires us to repay Him for being delivered	51.How broken, transparent, and repentant David was
52.How trusting in your own strength and riches is risky	53.How many people seek God without God's intervention
54.How David responds to persecution	55.Where David desired to go during persecution
56.What David's enemies did with his words	57.What happened to the people who dug a pit for David
58.What men will eventually say about righteous people	59.What the psalmist said he did to deserve persecution
60.How the psalmist considered human help limited	61.When the psalmist said he would cry out to God
62.How the psalmist said he would wait upon God	63.When the psalmist claimed he would seek God
64.What the wicked do not realize about their secrets	65.What God offers those overcome by sin
66.What the psalmist wanted to tell people	67.Who should praise the Lord
68.How God cares for orphans, widows, and the isolated	69.How we should respond to those speaking evil of us
70.How David was different from his enemies	71.How the psalmist desired to continually rely on God
72.How King Solomon's reign pictured Christ's reign	

Book 3 (Psalm 73-Psalm 89)

73.How Asaph came to terms with apparent injustice	74.How Asaph struggled with delays from God
75.How Asaph counseled the arrogant and wicked	76.What Asaph said God did to demonstrate His power
77.How Asaph remembered God's works for comfort	78.What every generation should pass on to the next
79.What Asaph was concerned the nations would say	80.How many times Asaph cried out for God's help
81.How God responded when Israel rejected His counsel	82.How Israel was to support the poor and afflicted
83.What the earth should know	84.What is better than a thousand days
85.What type of person God said was near salvation	86.What characteristics the psalmist ascribed to God
87.What location the psalmist said God loves	88.What the psalmist asked God
89.What God promised David and his descendants	

Book 4 (Psalm 90 - Psalm 106)

90.What a thousand years on earth are to God	91.How God protects those who make Him their refuge
92.What the psalmist said to praise God and His works	93.How the psalmist described God's omnipotence
94.What the wicked said about God	95.How God viewed the generation wandering 40 years
96.What type of song to sing to God	97.What those who love God are supposed to hate
98.What instrument and sounds were used for praise	99.What the King loved
100.What people were supposed to know about God	101.What the psalmist wanted to avoid seeing
102.What object was compared to the heavens	103.How far Israel's sins were removed from them
104.What the psalmist said clothed God	105.Who God promised His covenant
106.How God showed mercy to Israel over many years.	

Book 5 (Psalm 107 - Psalm 150)

This section of Psalms is rich in prophecies about Jesus, including His rejection and glorification. For examples, see [Psalm 109:8 \(Acts 1:20\)](#) and [Psalm 118:22 \(Acts 4:11\)](#). [Psalms 111-113](#) are “Hallelujah Psalms,” each of which begin with the phrase “Praise the Lord.” In Hebrew, “Hallelu” is the word for “praise” and “Jah” is the covenant name for God.

107.The verse repeated four times	108.How David contrasted people’s help and God’s help
109.What David did when accused after offering love	110.How the psalm pointed to Jesus’ deity (Mat 22:44)
111.How people were to respond to God’s works	112.How delighting in God’s commands benefited people
113.How the psalmist described God	114.How God’s power has been manifested in nature
115.What false idols and their followers had in common	116.What reason the psalmist gave for loving God
117.How long God’s truth/faithfulness will endure	118.What trusting in the Lord was better than
119.How 173 of the 176 verses refer to God’s Word	

The fifteen psalms from [Psalms 120-134](#) are entitled “A Song of Degrees/Ascents.” Interpretations range from the “ascent” required to reach the Jewish Temple, to Hezekiah seeing the shadow moving back several degrees.

120.How the psalmist responded to distress	121.Why God can continually watch over people
122.What location needed prayer for peace	123.What the author compares to looking for help
124.What would have happened if the Lord did not help	125.What the author compares to God surrounding His people
126.What was the result of sowing/planting in tears	127.What the author compares to children leaving home
128.Who the psalmist says God will bless	129.How Israel’s persecutors did not prevail
130.What the author compares to waiting on the Lord in faith	131.How the psalmist cultivated an attitude of humility
132.How God promised the throne to the line of David	133.How unity was vital to priestly worship and service
134.What was a physical manifestation of blessing God	

135.How many ways the Lord is worthy of praise	136.What phrase was repeated 26 times in praise
137.How praise was difficult while in captivity	138.How God responds to the lowly/humble vs. proud
139.How God is omniscient / omnipotent / omnipresent	140.How the writer needed protection from evil people
141.What the author compared to prayers lifted to God	142.How David felt cut-off from all support in the cave
143.Who is truly innocent or righteous before God	144.What type of person the writer concluded was joyful

Psalms 145-150 are the final group of “Hallelujah Psalms.”

145.What each generation is responsible to do	146.Why it is unwise to place your trust in people
147.What about people pleases/does not please God	148.Why people should praise the Lord
149.What God’s people had in their mouth and hand	150.How God created a variety of ways to praise Him