



Learn how to express the emotions that fill your heart—whether it's praise or despair, misery or triumph, vengeance or a cry for help. The 150 daily readings, paired with questions for reflection and application, will fill your heart with the wisdom, beauty, and life found in the Psalms.

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BOOK 1

PSALMS 1 – 41

PSALM 1

Delight in God's Word

The LORD watches over the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked leads to destruction.

PSALM 1:6

What comes to mind when you think of “the good life”? Many of us might picture a life filled with family and friends, healthy bodies, and financial security. Or we might look to achievements like leading a profitable business or being recognized for service in the community.

Psalm 1 opens with the word “blessed,” which can also be translated as “happy” (v. 1). The psalmist paints a picture of someone living the “good life.” What does true happiness look like? It is not what you might think. This psalm does not celebrate financial prosperity or outstanding achievements. Rather, the blessed person is someone who delights in and meditates on God’s law (v. 2).

The word “meditate” might make us think of time spent in silent reflection. But the word is most often used in the Bible to refer to low animal sounds—the cooing of a pigeon or the growl of a lion (Isa. 31:4; 38:14). To meditate is to ruminate on or constantly talk about God’s Word. Dwelling on God’s Word is this person’s singular passion.

This person is beautifully described as a tree planted by streams of water (v. 3). This secure position means the tree is fruitful and endures, even in times of drought. A fruitful tree provides shelter and food for many. In a similar way, the person who delights in God's law will be a blessing to others. By contrast, the wicked are like chaff; unfruitful, useless, and transient. Instead of listening to and delighting in God's Word, they mock and scoff at others (v. 1). Their way of life leads to death (v. 5).

"Having it all," according to the Bible, means being joyfully dependent upon God and spending regular time in His Word (v. 2). This good life was modeled for us by the Lord Jesus, who brought healing and refreshment to all who sought Him in faith and whose message was vindicated by His resurrection from the dead.

Go Deeper

What do you look to for happiness? How does reading God's Word contribute to a true sense of blessing or happiness?

Pray with Us

God, as we open the Psalms to learn from Your Word, we ask that You meet us here. Turn our hearts toward You above all else. Help us realize that true joy and happiness is found only in You. Amen.

PSALM 2

Delight in God's King

I will proclaim the LORD's decree: He said to me, "You are my son; today I have become your father."

PSALM 2:7

At the entrance to Solomon's Temple stood two twenty-eight-and-a-half-foot tall bronze pillars. These pillars were elaborately decorated with capitals in the shape of lilies (1 Kings 7:15–22). Each pillar was given a name: Jachin and Boaz. They served as a grand gateway into the temple where the presence of the Lord dwelled.

In a similar way, Psalms 1 and 2 serve as a sort of gateway. These psalms welcome readers into a special temple of praise, the Psalter. They begin and end with a blessing (1:1; 2:12) and share several keywords. They also introduce the two most prominent themes in the Psalter: God's law and God's Messiah.

In Psalm 1, we saw the importance of delighting in God's Word. In Psalm 2, the focus shifts to God's King. The psalm opens with a vivid picture of nations and kings plotting and scheming against God and his anointed King (vv. 1–2). Instead of delighting in God's rule and in His Word, their deepest desire is to break free from them (v. 3). They view them as chains and shackles instead of life-giving, precious gifts. They want to live by their own standards and answer to no one higher than themselves.

While we might be afraid of what human rulers and nations can do, God is not intimidated: “The One enthroned in heaven laughs; the Lord scoffs at them” (v. 4). God declares that He has given over these nations to His Son and Messiah as an inheritance (vv. 6–8). The Lord warns these hostile nations that their best course of action is to “serve the LORD with fear and celebrate his rule with trembling” (v. 11). True wisdom would be to submit to the rule of God and His Messiah while they have the chance . . . or face judgment (v. 12).

The psalm closes with a word of blessing upon those who take refuge in the Lord’s Messiah (v. 12). The truly blessed life is found in delighting in God’s Word and trusting in His Messiah, the Lord Jesus to whom one day every knee will bow and tongue confess that He is Lord (Phil. 2:10–11).

Go Deeper

What would it look like for you to take refuge in Jesus? Why do you think taking refuge in Him is the way to the blessed life? What other things are you tempted to turn to as a source of safety and security?

Pray with Us

We thank You, Almighty God, that You are our refuge. You are our strength. In You alone do we find true comfort and peace. When times of trouble come, remind us to turn first to You. Amen.

PSALM 3

The Lies of the Enemy

I call out to the LORD, and he answers me from his holy mountain.

PSALM 3:4

In the garden of Eden, the serpent did not get Adam and Eve to disobey God’s command by overpowering them with brute force. Instead, he used one of his most powerful weapons—words: “Did God really say . . . ?” (Gen. 3:1); “You will not certainly die” (Gen. 3:4). These lies sowed doubt about God’s goodness and truthfulness and had devastating consequences. The evil one still uses lies today.

In Psalm 3, King David is surrounded by enemies. “LORD, how many are my foes! How many rise up against me!” (v. 1). These enemies had a message to convey: “Many are saying of me, ‘God will not deliver him’” (v. 2). David’s enemies wanted to convince David that God had abandoned him. It certainly may have looked that way. The preface to the psalm informs us that it was written when David’s son Absalom had usurped the throne and driven David out of Jerusalem. How jarring it must have been for David to see most of the nation turn on him and follow his rebellious son. He found himself back on the run in the wilderness as he had been in the days of Saul. How easy it would be to believe the taunts of the crowd that God was not with him.

But David turned his eyes away from his enemies and onto the Lord. “But you, LORD, are a shield around me, my glory, the One who lifts my head high” (v. 3). He was able to sleep in peace because he knew his life was in God’s hands (vv. 5–6). In faith, he asked God to defeat his enemies and “break the teeth of the wicked” (v. 7). David ended by affirming that “from the LORD comes deliverance” (v. 8). This psalm teaches that our identity is not found in the acclaim or ridicule of the crowd, but in our relationship with God. David refused to be defined by his enemies and was quick to contradict them.

Go Deeper

Do you find yourself believing the words of people who are trying to harm you? Today, find your identity and hope in the Lord who promises to deliver us.

Pray with Us

Loving God, You know the situations we are facing right now. And we can trust that You are more powerful than any enemy or any situation we may face. Help us trust in You even when the way before us seems dark. We believe in You! Amen.

PSALM 4

Turn Your Eyes upon Yahweh

*In peace I will lie down and sleep, for you alone, LORD, make me
dwell in safety.*

PSALM 4:8

My father-in-law was a farmer. My wife remembers how, at lunchtime, her dad would turn on the radio to hear the current price of grain along with the weather report. While farmers work hard and use a storehouse of wisdom and skill to grow their crops, they also depend on forces outside their control like weather patterns and market prices.

In Psalm 4, David was in a difficult spot. He begged God to “have mercy on me and hear my prayer” (v. 1). The situation seems to be that there was a threat of a bad harvest. In this situation, many in ancient Israel were tempted to worship other gods. The Canaanites believed that Baal, the storm god, was the one to look to for help with crops. Many in Israel were tempted to go along with them.

David laments, “How long will you love delusions and seek false gods?” (v. 2). False gods may promise a lot, but they cannot deliver. David affirms that Yahweh, the God of Israel, will hear when His children cry out to Him (v. 3). Instead of looking to other gods, the

people should turn their eyes to the Lord (vv. 4–5). God’s presence among His people is even more important than abundant crops (v. 6). Even if the crops of idolators seem to flourish, David proclaims to God, “You have put more joy in my heart than they have when their grain and wine abound” (v. 7 ESV).

When life seems precarious, it can be tempting to take our eyes off the Lord and look for other sources of safety and security. We may not worship Baal like Israel was tempted to do, but we have our own gods. David reminds us that the true source of peace is found in the Lord alone (v. 8). As Jesus reminded us, “But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well” (Matt. 6:33).

Go Deeper

Do you find yourself tempted to take your eyes off the Lord when confronted by the needs around you? How does David try to turn Israel back to God in this psalm? How can that be a model for us?

Pray with Us

Lord Jesus, help us never take our eyes off You. Like Peter walking on water, we tend to be distracted by the waves. But when we turn our eyes to You, Jesus, we find comfort and hope and peace. Keep us focused on You alone. Amen.

PSALM 5

Waiting on God

*In the morning, LORD, you hear my voice; in the morning I lay my requests
before you and wait expectantly.*

PSALM 5:3

Passengers at a Houston airport were complaining about how long they had to wait at the baggage claim. So, airport executives hired more baggage handlers and cut the wait time to eight minutes. However, the complaints did not stop. Airport executives then tried a different approach. They moved the baggage claim so it was a seven-minute walk from the arrival gates. The complaints stopped.

Waiting for an answer to our prayers can be difficult and painful. In Psalm 5, David cried out to the Lord, laid his requests before Him, and then waited expectantly (v. 3). David's particular problem was his enemies. Men were making false accusations against him (v. 9). These men were arrogant, bloodthirsty, and rebellious against God (vv. 5, 6, 10). It was so difficult that it caused David to lament (v. 1). The word translated *lament* literally means "groan" or "sigh," a kind of confused muttering that comes from the depths of an anguished soul.

Amid suffering, David held on to hope. He knew God and trusted in His character. God was not "pleased with wickedness" (v. 4). He could not stand the arrogant and wrongdoer (v. 5). He detested

the bloodthirsty and deceitful (v. 6). He had also made a covenant commitment to David (v. 7). David asked God to be true to His character. That He would denounce the guilty and protect the faithful (vv. 10–11). But it was just that—a request. God would be the one to act in his defense.

We have all experienced times when life feels desperate. In those times, we can do what David modeled in this psalm. We can be honest with God about our plight. We can pray according to God's attributes. And we can wait for God to act. Our hope is grounded in the character of God. There is no surer foundation than that.

Go Deeper

Why is it so difficult for us to wait for answers to our prayers? How does Psalm 5 encourage us in the waiting?

Pray with Us

Dear Lord, we find it so hard to wait! Impatience creeps into so many areas of our lives, from the ordinary delays of waiting in line to the significant waits involving broken relationships or answers to health concerns. Be with us in the waiting, Lord, and remind us to turn to You in prayer. Amen.

PSALM 6

Not Too Proud to Beg

*The LORD has heard my cry for mercy; the LORD
accepts my prayer.*

PSALM 6:9

Navy SEALs undergo a rigorous physical and mental trial appropriately named “Hell Week.” The new recruits are constantly in motion. They run, swim, do sit-ups and push-ups, endure cold water, and accomplish difficult tasks, all on minimal sleep! Some can endure this experience only because they know the end is in sight.

David is at his breaking point in this psalm. He does not see an end in sight. “How long, LORD, how long?” he asks (v. 3). He seems to have been suffering a sickness of some sort. He laments that he is “faint” and that his “bones are in agony” (v. 2). He understands this affliction is the result of God’s punishment for his sin. He begged God not to discipline or rebuke him in His anger, not because he is innocent, but out of mercy (v. 2).

David gives two reasons for God to have compassion. He asks, “Among the dead no one proclaims your name. Who praises you from the grave?” (v. 5). He reasons that God should spare his life so he can praise God. This may seem like an odd reason. However, it reveals a deep theological truth. For David, life consisted of praising the Lord. Not to praise God is in a sense not to be fully alive.

David asks God to restore his health so he could return to this important calling.

Second, David paints a vivid picture of his suffering in order to arouse God's compassion. "All night long I flood my bed with weeping and drench my couch with tears" (v. 6). David believes that God cares about his suffering. He ends his lament with a note of faith: "The LORD has heard my cry for mercy; the LORD accepts my prayer" (v. 9).

Go Deeper

Do you relate to David, feeling worn out by your sorrow? How does this psalm help you express your pain and plea to God?

Pray with Us

Lord, like the psalmist, we are worn out. Our bed is flooded with tears. When we are at our breaking point, consumed by worry, turn our hearts and minds to You. Give us Your peace that passes all understanding (Phil. 4:7). You are our refuge and strength (Ps. 46:1). Amen.

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