



covenant
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CHURCH

The Psalms

EVERY MOMENT HOLY

*O my people, trust in Him at all times.
Pour out your hearts to Him,
for God is our refuge.*

Psalm 62:8

Sermons

Read and contemplate the psalm before you hear it preached on Sunday

<u>April 12</u>	Psalm 1	Every Moment Holy
<u>April 19</u>	Psalm 63	Longing and Hope
<u>April 26</u>	Psalm 23	Trust
<u>May 3</u>	Psalm 13 and 88	Lament
<u>May 10</u>	Psalm 35 and 137	Rage
<u>May 17</u>	Psalm 19 and 119	Wisdom
<u>May 24</u>	Psalms 146-150	Joy
<u>May 31</u>	Psalm 118	Security in God's Love

Practices

Together

1. All-church prayer time during each worship service based on a Psalm

On Your Own

2. Memorize two Psalms of your choice—one in April, one in May. We suggest memorizing Psalm 23 and Psalm 34
3. Read and pray through one Psalm a day, starting with Psalm 1: read the Psalm once, then pick one or more lines from the Psalm to inspire your prayers and pray for yourself, family, friends, neighbors, colleagues, etc.

Bonus

- Listen to the Psalms sung (try Streetlights, The Corner Room, Sandra McCracken, Urban Doxology, Sons of Korah, Poor Bishop Hooper, or The Verses Project)
- Watch a video on the Psalms from The Bible Project
- Read a book on the Psalms, like *Open and Unashamed* by David Taylor, or *The Songs of Jesus* by Tim Keller

Observations

The Psalms express the full range of human emotion and give us freedom to do so as well. We don't need to clean up our feelings or polish our lives in order to pray. The Psalms show us that we don't need to hold anything back or stuff anything down in our prayers.

This full range of emotion expressed in the Psalms shows us that all of life is holy. There is no secular/sacred divide. God is present and active in all of life, and every aspect of our life can be oriented to God in prayer.

Further, the Psalms shape our awareness of how our lives fit within the work of God. We see this reflected in Jesus as he references the Psalms at various points in His life. We see this with the writers of the New Testament, who often quote the Psalms to describe their new life with Christ. And we see this with people in history who turn to the Psalms to articulate their situation. The more we read and pray the Psalms, the more we realize how our lives are connected to God's work in the world.

The Psalms come to us just like life comes to us, seemingly at random. The Psalms are not listed thematically (although the whole collection of Psalms does have a subtle structure). There are "I'm happy" Psalms next to "I'm raging" Psalms next to "I will always praise You" Psalms. For example, Psalm 22, "*My God my God, why have you forsaken me?*", is followed by Psalm 23: "*The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.*" Our lives go through a rollercoaster of experiences and emotions, and the Psalms reflect this reality.

God's grace is implied in the Psalms. God acts with grace by fully welcoming the psalmist to say such things, feel such things, and long for such things expressed in the Psalms without condemnation. And God acts with grace by shaping our hearts as we pray the Psalms.

The Psalms can inspire our prayers. You can pray along the theme of the Psalms, choose a line or word to guide your prayer, and even personalize the Psalm by including your name and directly addressing God. Instead of "The Lord is my light and salvation," you can pray, "You are my light and salvation." You can also write your own Psalms!

You can pray each Psalm even if it does not resonate with your current life situation. If you are not experiencing the joy of Psalm 96 or the devastation of Psalm 88, you can still pray that Psalm on behalf of someone else whose life does resonate with it.

Quotes

“Most of Scripture speaks to us, the Psalms speak for us.”

Athanasius, 4th century

“The Psalms is the book of all saints, and everyone in whatever situation they may be, find in that situation psalms and words that fit their case... that suit them as if the words were put there just for their sake, so that they could not put it better themselves, or wish for anything better.”

Martin Luther, 15th century

“If we wish to develop in the life of faith, to mature in our humanity, and to glorify God with our entire heart, mind, soul, and strength, the Psalms are necessary. We cannot bypass the Psalms. They are God’s gift to train us in prayer that is comprehensive and honest.”

Eugene Peterson

“The Psalms are the single best guide to the spiritual life currently in print. They will likely still be on the shelf long after everything else in the spirituality section of the bookstore has gone out of print. Anything you could learn from the other books is already there, at least in kernel form, in the Psalter.”

Ellen Davis

“The Psalms give words to prayers I would not think to pray apart from their prompting. I am learning to pray more joyfully and more humanly by reading the psalms and making them my prayers. There are times when I don’t feel inclined to praise God, or even know how to praise Him. Sometimes I’m at a loss for words and don’t even know how to describe what I’m feeling. But I find my spirit lifting and my heart rejoicing when I read and pray the Psalms.”

Dan Britts

“My strength returns to me with my cup of coffee and reading of the Psalms.”

Dorothy Day

“Through the ages, Psalms has been the most urgently, personally present of all the books of the Bible in the lives of many readers. Both Jewish and Christian tradition made it part of the daily and weekly liturgy. Untold numbers have repeatedly turned to Psalms for encouragement and comfort in moments of crisis or despair.”

Robert Alter