

An overview of Psalms for today

How to be a growing disciple of Jesus 24/7 no matter how crazy your world is

Your Notes

Psalms obviously go along with the life of David

- And yet there is so much more to them.
- They are arguably one of the favorite books in the Bible for many people.
- When we think of Psalms we often think of David and though he did write more of them than anyone else, there is much more to them than the simple songs of a shepherd boy including:
- Great variety of authors, a long time span of composition, and large variety of content.
- In the Bible805 through the Bible reading plan I have you read one every other day, not scattered primarily throughout the time of David as many plans do, for many reasons, discussed elsewhere, but more importantly because in reading them this way, you'll see the value of Psalms for specific areas of our Christian life.

In this lesson, we'll look at what Psalms teach us about Discipleship

- First, we need an expanded definition of discipleship.
- Though keeping Jesus' commands is a good start, but it is a limited one because, for many, keeping his commands means--
- Make a decision to trust Jesus as Savior (mostly so you won't go to hell).
- Go to church once a week.
- Bible reading of short passages in devotionals or limited to what you hear at church.
- Tithe and don't do anything illegal.
- There is nothing wrong with doing any of those things. These actions are the expected foundation of behavior for any believer in Jesus
- But to be a disciple of Jesus involves more—

An expanded view of discipleship—

- Insights from Dallas Willard:
- We need to clear in our heads about what discipleship is. My definition: ***A disciple is a person who has decided that the most important thing in their life is to learn how to do what Jesus said to do. A disciple is not a person who has things under control, or knows a lot of things. Disciples simply are people who are constantly revising their affairs to carry through on their decision to follow Jesus.***

<http://www.dwillard.org/articles/individual/rethinking-evangelism>

- My comment: **constantly revising their affairs to carry through on their decision to follow Jesus.—that is discipleship 24/7—Psalms will help us see what that means and how to put it into practice.**
- Another related comment from Willard:
- **The final and complete blessing and ultimate good, the *summum bonum* of humankind, comes to those with lives absorbed in the Way of Christ—life in the presence of God. From: *Hearing God* by Dallas Willard**

This all-pervasive definition of discipleship, of life constantly revised to serve Jesus and consciously living in the presence of God

- Is what both OT and NT summarize in

- Deut. 6:4-5
Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. (NIV)
Love God, your God, with your whole heart: love him with all that's in you, love him with all you've got! (MSG)
- Matthew 22:35-40
Jesus replied: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' (NIV)
"'Love the Lord your God with all your passion and prayer and intelligence.'" (MSG)
- No matter how it's worded—we are to love God with every part of us and Psalms will give us a picture of what that means and help us do that.

Here is how we will do that in this lesson

- First, we'll talk about the Psalms themselves, the details of their structure, history, who wrote what when, etc.
- Then we'll tie them into discipleship as we look at how the Psalms are a continuous dialog with God in every part of life—
- Anger, joy, confusion, fear, lament—all of life is brought before God in the Psalms, because....

If we truly love someone & feel loved by them

- We don't hide part of our lives from them.
- True love allows us to be totally WHO we are, the good, the bad, the faithful and cowardly.
- And we are not only free to be who we are in a relationship of true love, but we KNOW we are completely accepted and loved in that.
- That's what we see in the Psalms—that is the raw interaction between the Psalmist and God.
- And that is my prayer for us all as we look at them, that we learn to truly love and allow ourselves to be loved by Jesus.
- That's what being a disciple is really all about—now into the Psalms, to learn how to do it—

Psalm structure and overview

- What are the Psalms?
- Originally, they were poems set to music.
- Some think that poetry and music can be a hurdle in understanding and there may be challenges....
- Language can be a barrier—Ps 119 is not an acrostic in any language other than Hebrew.
- Much American poetry uses rhyme, but that does not define something as a poem—Hebrew poetry uses parallels.
- Music is very different for different ages and cultures.
- But because the ultimate poet is God—**they work**—I don't think anyone reading a Psalm in any language misses out because they don't know the original melody and as poetry, they work ultimately on a level of our heart and emotions that goes beyond rational thought.

Time span and authors

- David wrote the most (73), Moses 1, 1 or 2 by Solomon, 1 by Heman, 1 by Ethan, 12 by Asaph, 10 by descendants of Korah

- Time span, the earliest from Moses (Ps.90) d. 1405 BC, just before Israel enters the Promised Land.
- ¹ *Lord, you have been our dwelling place throughout all generations.*
- ² *Before the mountains were born or you brought forth the whole world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God.....ends with*
- ¹⁷ *May the favor of the Lord our God rest on us; establish the work of our hands for us— yes, establish the work of our hands.*
- **Application thought—How extraordinarily God answered His prayer and as we give our work to Him, we have no idea how He will ultimately use ours.**

How did the Psalms come together?

- Most likely an early collection was put together by David.
- We see in Chronicles especially that the later part of David's life was spent in making detailed preparations for the temple and a large part of that were assignments and detailed instructions on the music, the singers and instruments.
- Compiling Psalms would have been part of that.
- Note: his sin with Bathsheba happened when he was late 40's early 50s; He died at age 70. Confessed sin; he was forgiven and suffered for his sin.
- But then did some of the most important work of his life in the remaining 20+ years—let's look at this in a little more detail.

On David's work on the Psalms

- David obviously initially composed many of the Psalms when he was quite young, he fled from Saul throughout most of his 20's.
- We know this from the content that was obviously written during this time as he again and again refers to specific actions that the historical books tell us took place at that time.
- However, we also know from the notes he adds at the start of many of the Psalms (to the director of music, a certain melody to play, etc.) and from the content in Chronicles that he did later work on them, compiling, editing, putting them in a form to share.
- These are part of the original Hebrew texts, not later additions.

Some examples

- Psalm 22 For the director of music. To the tune of "The Doe of the Morning." A psalm of David.
- Psalm 57 For the director of music. To the tune of "Do Not Destroy." (tune used 3x) Of David. A *miktam*. When he had fled from Saul into the cave.
- Psalm 60 For the director of music. To the tune of "The Lily of the Covenant." A *miktam* of David. For teaching. When he fought Aram Naharaim and Aram Zobah, and when Joab returned and struck down twelve thousand Edomites in the Valley of Salt.

IMPORTANT APPLICATION

- Many of you have sermons, journal, materials you've written in the past.
- They tell about great adventures, lessons learned, insights gained on how God worked in your life.

- If you are winding down in the more active ministry phase of your life, I challenge you strongly to be a David!
- Get to work organizing, editing, putting your learned lessons and messages to share in a form that the world can benefit from.
- YOU can do it—today anyone can create blogs, videos, podcasts, books, any and every form of materials to share—and we need to flood the internet with good and godly material. More on that will be coming from Bible805, but regardless of that—just do it!

After David

- David wrote the most (73) and Moses 1
- Other authors include 1 or 2 by Solomon, 1 by Heman, 1 by Ethan, 12 by Asaph, 10 by descendants of Korah
- “The descendants of Korah” an interesting note as Korah was one of the Israelites who rebelled against the leadership of Moses and who was swallowed up when the earth opened up as judgment against his sin.
- A good reminder that no matter what your past, you can serve God gloriously today.
- Finally on the dating of the Psalm’s composition, most likely one of the last Psalms written was...
- *Ps. 137 By the rivers of Babylon we sat and wept when we remembered Zion. NIV*
- Referring to the Babylonian captivity.

How we got the form we have today

- Some compilations may have been made after David’s initial organization as more were written.
- In the intervening years compilations were most likely made by Hezekiah or Josiah during their times of revival.
- Most likely the complete collection and order we have today was compiled by Ezra and associates after the return from the exile in Babylon.
- This was the same time when Chronicles was written and Jewish scriptures solidified.

There are many ways to divide and read them

- Overall, they are prayers and hymns addressed to God and have been used as corporate worship in the past and are still used in Jewish and some Christian groups today.
- Many ways to divide them, we will do it topically.
- We will focus on Psalms of Praise, Lament, Salvation History, and Imprecatory Psalms.
- Give an example and THEN application suggestions--what we can learn from that Psalm for our walk with God

SUPER IMPOTANT when READING & APPLYING Psalms

- YOU MUST READ THE WHOLE THING
- Many of the Psalms are a progression either of praise or of an emotion from abject pain or questioning or fear to a confident or quiet trust in God
- Like the book of Job if you don’t read the whole thing, you can easily misinterpret the verse either in disappointment or unrealistic expectations.

Psalms of Praise & Worship

- **Psalm 100, MSG** ¹⁻² On your feet now—applaud God!
Bring a gift of laughter,

- sing yourselves into his presence.
- ³ Know this: God is God, and God, God.
He made us; we didn't make him.
We're his people, his well-tended sheep.
- ⁴ Enter with the password: "Thank you!"
Make yourselves at home, talking praise.
Thank him. Worship him.
- ⁵ For God is sheer beauty,
all-generous in love,
loyal always and ever.

Praise application ideas—for your walk with God

- When you don't feel like praising God or know how to praise, read a Psalm.
- Read it out loud.
- You can even sing it—just between you and God.
- **Write your own Psalm—simply let your emotions flow.**
- Be specific about what God HAS done.
- If you don't feel thankful or like praising consider writing a Psalm of praise simply as a discipline, intentionally look at what to praise God for, write your thanks for it, and you may find the emotion of praise growing in you.
- And if it doesn't—there is a whole group of Psalms for the dark times.....

Psalms of Lament, personal and corporate

- **Psalm 43, NLB:** *O God, defend me from the charges of these merciless, deceitful men. ² For you are God, my only place of refuge. Why have you tossed me aside? Why must I mourn at the oppression of my enemies?*
- ³ *Oh, send out your light and your truth—let them lead me. Let them lead me to your Temple on your holy mountain, Zion. ⁴ There I will go to the altar of God, my exceeding joy, and praise him with my harp. O God—my God! ⁵ O my soul, why be so gloomy and discouraged?* Pattern: honest discouragement, questions, progressing to renewed trust in God.
- Application: do the same—lay it all out before God; ask your questions, voice your fears.
- God is not shocked, won't be upset with you, either your actions or bad attitudes—he already knows—but if there was ever a need to "get it out" this is it.
- And then, ask God for renewed hope, comfort, peace—He does not want you to wallow in sadness, as the Psalmist says, (no matter how bad things look) ***"Trust in God! I shall again praise him for his wondrous help; he will make me smile again, for he is my God!"***

Psalms of Salvation History

- Retelling all or in part the history of Israel and lessons from it
- Ps. 107—story of how Israel sinned and God delivered—back and forth—
-Let the redeemed of the Lord tell their story—
those he redeemed from the hand of the foe,
³ those he gathered from the lands,
from east and west, from north and south.^[a]
- ⁴ Some wandered in desert wastelands,
finding no way to a city where they could settle.
- ⁵ They were hungry and thirsty,
and their lives ebbed away.

⁶Then they cried out to the Lord in their trouble,
and he delivered them from their distress. . . .

- Some became fools through their rebellious ways
and suffered affliction because of their iniquities. . . .
- Then their numbers decreased, and they were humbled
by oppression, calamity and sorrow;
- ⁴⁰he who pours contempt on nobles
made them wander in a trackless waste.
- ⁴¹But he lifted the needy out of their affliction
and increased their families like flocks.
- ⁴²The upright see and rejoice,
but all the wicked shut their mouths.
- ⁴³Let the one who is wise heed these things
and ponder the loving deeds of the Lord.
- APPLICATION: look at your history; Some good, some maybe not so; all of
our have both.
- Take time to evaluate your life, family, etc. God can always help you change
if you want, ask, and are obedient.
- Remember the “sons of Korah” from a heritage of shame to writers of
Psalms—God can always do exciting things in your life.

Imprecatory Psalms

- The entire range of human emotions in Psalms and these are some of the
most difficult to understand—but hang in there with me as we discuss—
- In addition to sadness and joy we have “Imprecatory Psalms” which
means— *to invoke or call down (evil or curses), as upon a person or peoples.*
- Example:
- *Psalm 137:7 – 9: 7 Remember, LORD, what the Edomites did on the day
Jerusalem fell. “Tear it down,” they cried,
“tear it down to its foundations!” 8 Daughter Babylon, doomed to
destruction, happy is the one who repays you according to what you have
done to us. 9 Happy is the one who seizes your infants and dashes them
against the rocks.*

Good commentary from

- From Fee, Gordon D. and Stuart, Douglas, *How to Read the Bible for All Its
Worth: Fourth Edition* (pp. 228-229). Zondervan. Kindle Edition.
- *Through the imprecatory psalms, God invites us “in your anger, do not sin”
(Ps 4:4, as cited in Eph. 4:26). We must fulfill the New Testament teaching,
“Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the
devil a foothold” (Eph 4:26 – 27), by expressing our anger directly to and
through God rather than by seeking to return evil to those who have done
evil to us. Imprecatory psalms harness our anger and help us express it (to
God) by using the same sorts of obvious, purposeful exaggeration known to
us from other types of psalms.*
- *.....We may honestly express our anger to God, no matter how bitterly and
hatefully we feel it, and let God take care of justice against those who
misuse us. ...The proper function of these psalms, then, is to help us not to be
“overcome by evil” but to free us from our anger, that we might “overcome
evil with good” (Rom 12:21).*
- **Application: Take your hate and anger to God—ask him to deal with**

people—you stay out of it. You won't be effective in most cases, and you may say and do things you regret. Much wisdom needed here—but we can be assured no one gets away with anything.

- Remember “Let God take care of justice against those who misuse us” and He will.
- Sometimes it is a great test to wait for God to act.
- But these Psalms show us that nothing is off limits to God.
- One more important thought—ALSO the TIMING is in God's hands.

Overall applications

- For every emotion in life—good, bad, and in between the Psalms teach us—everything is part of our life lived before God, part of growing as his disciple.
- When we become a Christian, we enter into a new kind of life where God wants to touch, influence and be a part of every corner of it, from our greatest joys and deepest sorrows and resentment.
- Some more examples from David—

You see this with the life of David—he constantly wrote Psalms

- **As a young man, Ps. 23** is traditionally linked to this time, when he says, The Lord is my The Lord *is* my shepherd; I shall not want.
²He maketh me to lie down in green pastures:
he leadeth me beside the still waters.
³He restoreth my soul:
he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.
⁴Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil: for thou *art* with me;
thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.
⁵Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies:
thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.
⁶Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life:
and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.
- **And so is Ps. 8** where some commentators have said it could have been the thoughts of a young shepherd out under the stars where he says,
O Lord our Lord, how excellent *is* thy name in all the earth!
who hast set thy glory above the heavens:
³When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers,
the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained;
⁴what is man, that thou art mindful of him?
and the son of man, that thou visitest him?
⁵For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels,
and hast crowned him with glory and honour.

In the difficult years running from Saul

- He did not allow himself to be consumed with bitterness or anger as Saul did.
- He did not ignore the horrid things happening, but his take on them and response so different, numerous of these,
- **Psalm 52 To the chief Musician, Maschil, A Psalm of David, when Doeg the Edomite came and told Saul, and said unto him, David is come to the house of Ahimelech.**
- ^{Psalm 52: 1} Why boastest thou thyself in mischief, O mighty man?

the goodness of God *endureth* continually.

- ²Thy tongue deviseth mischiefs;
like a sharp razor, working deceitfully.
³Thou lovest evil more than good;
and lying rather than to speak righteousness. Selah.
⁴Thou lovest all devouring words, O *thou* deceitful tongue.
⁵God shall likewise destroy thee for ever,
he shall take thee away, and pluck thee out of *thy* dwelling place,
and root thee out of the land of the living. Selah.
- ⁶The righteous also shall see, and fear,
and shall laugh at him:
⁷Lo, *this is* the man *that* made not God his strength;
but trusted in the abundance of his riches,
and strengthened himself in his wickedness.

When he sinned

- Psalm 51
- Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness:
according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my
transgressions.
²Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity,
and cleanse me from my sin.
³For I acknowledge my transgressions:
and my sin *is* ever before me.
- ⁴Against thee, thee only, have I sinned,
and done *this* evil in thy sight:
that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest,
and be clear when thou judgest. . . . Create in me a clean heart, O God;
and renew a right spirit within me.
¹¹Cast me not away from thy presence;
and take not thy holy spirit from me.
¹²Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation;
and uphold me *with thy* free spirit.
¹³*Then* will I teach transgressors thy ways;
and sinners shall be converted unto thee.
- **Note also that he asked for forgiveness not only for himself, but that he
might ministry to others.**

Later Psalms he organized for the Temple worship

- He did not allow himself to be consumed with bitterness or anger as
Saul—he turned all to praise.
- **Psalm 103**
- **A Psalm of David.**
- ¹Bless the Lord, O my soul:
and all that is within me, *bless* his holy name.
²Bless the Lord, O my soul,
and **forget not all his benefits:**
³who forgiveth all thine iniquities;
who healeth all thy diseases;
⁴who redeemeth thy life from destruction;
who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies;

⁵ who satisfieth thy mouth with good *things*;
so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's.

Finally, Psalms, David, and discipleship

- David is not only the author of many of the Psalms, but as he was described, “a man after God’s own heart.”
- In the Psalms we see what this means—one who in constant interaction, conversation with God, develops the heart of God in his life.
- And in that, inviting God to be part of your life, every part of life—goes back to Dallas Willard’s description of a disciple as one who,
- . . . ***is a person who has decided that the most important thing in their life is to learn how to do what Jesus said to do. A disciple is not a person who has things under control, or knows a lot of things. Disciples simply are people who are constantly revising their affairs to carry through on their decision to follow Jesus.***
- May our constant reading and meditation on the Psalms help us do that.

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