

# Intro to Psalms

Lesson for Sunday, September 1, 2019

## INTRODUCTION:

- OPEN DISCUSSION: What is your favorite book of the Bible and why? For many, Psalms is a favorite. Why do you think that is?
  - Tremper Longman, *“The Psalms appeal to the whole person: they inform our intellect, arouse our emotions, direct our wills, and stimulate our imaginations. When we read the Psalms with faith, we come away changed.”*
- In the Psalms we see both who we are and Who God is. In each psalm, we encounter God.

## GAME: Psalms Trivia

How much do you know about this Book? Divide the class into teams and have some fun asking the following questions. Give points for the right answers and a little reward for the winners.

- Psalms is the longest book in the Bible. How many verses does it contain? *Closest to the correct number wins. Answer: 2461.*
- Psalms contains the longest chapter in the Bible. Which chapter is it? *119*. How many verses does it contain? *176*.
- Psalms also has the shortest chapter in the Bible. Which is it? *117*. How many verses? *2*.
- Psalms has more authors than any other book of the Bible. How many? *Trick question! We don't know how many! David is credited with 73, Asaph with 12, Moses – Heman - Ethan with 1, and 62 that are anonymous!*
- Psalms took longer to write than any other book of the Bible. How long? *Estimates are between 900-1000 years.*
- Psalms is the OT book most quoted in the NT. How many times? *112*.

## OVERVIEW:

1. THE SUBJECT OF PSALMS: Psalm 29:2 (read it)
  - a. This is the key verse to the entire book of Psalms. This verse refers to the Lord's ultimate supremacy over all.
  - b. This gives us a key to understanding Psalms. The theme is living real life in the real world.
  - c. Psalms reminds us that there are two realities operating simultaneously:
    - i. A horizontal, temporal reality. This is where we live.
    - ii. A vertical, transcendent reality. This is where God rules and reigns.
  - d. As believers living in this world, we don't deny the pain of this life, but we are to live joyfully and dependently on the Person and promises standing behind the heavenly/eternal dimension.
  - e. The Psalms remind us that all cycles of human troubles and triumphs provide occasions for expressing human complaints, confidence, prayers, or praise to our Heavenly Father.
2. THE STYLE OF PSALMS: Poetry

- a. The Psalms are Hebrew poetry.
  - b. The Hebrew title for the book is “Praise,” or the “Book of Praises.”
  - c. The Psalms is the national hymnbook of the Israel. It contains 150 poems to be set to music for worship.
  - d. It is important to remember that Hebrew poetry is quite different from standard English forms of poetry that are based on rhyme and meter.
  - e. Hebrew poetry is based on rhythm and parallelism. The first line states an idea, and the second line reinforces that idea somehow.
  - f. The Psalms contain a variety of styles: wisdom, lament, royal psalms, psalms of thanksgiving, psalms of remembrance, psalms of confidence in God.
3. THE SUPERSCRPTIONS OF PSALMS
- a. 116 of the psalms have titles, headings, or notations at the beginning.
  - b. These serve to identify the author, to establish the historical circumstances or context, or explain how the psalm should be sung or played on a variety of musical instruments.
  - c. The superscriptions are considered to be a part of the author’s original composition that assisted the worship leader and congregation to sing the psalms knowledgably.
  - d. There is one other key superscription you will find throughout: *Selah*.
    - i. It is found 71 times.
    - ii. It is typically understood as a call to pause and reflect on the truth that was just stated.

APPLICATION: How do we encounter God in the Psalms?

- 1. MEDITATE: This is the action of thinking or mulling over the truth of a text.
  - a. It begins by reading the text. Take time to read a psalm each day.
  - b. Write down your observations and see how God reveals Himself in the passage.
  - c. Focus on God’s revealed character.
  - d. Memorize verses that speak to you and your circumstance.
  - e. *Take a psalm in class and practice this...*
- 2. PRAY: Let the book of Psalms be your prayer guide.
  - a. Reading the psalms should stir us to praise God.
  - b. In our recent series on prayer we saw how the Lord’s Model Prayer began and ended in times of praise.
  - c. Use the psalms for one of those designated times of praise. Read it slowly and pray the Scripture back to the Lord.
  - d. *Take a psalm in class and practice this...*

APPLY: Next week we will be diving into Psalm 1. Take the time this week to study, pray through, and memorize this short psalm.