

WNBS: Foundations & Formation

Overview of the Book of Psalms

Participant Outline

The Psalms teach us how to bring our whole lives into the presence of God.

I. Introduction to Psalms

The Book of Psalms is a collection of 150 songs, prayers, poems, and declarations that reflect the full range of human experiences with God. The Hebrew title for Psalms is Tehillim, meaning “Praises.”

- Praise
 - Thanksgiving
 - Joy
 - Grief
 - Fear
 - Repentance
 - Questions
 - Hope
 - Trust
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II. The Structure of Psalms

The Book of Psalms is divided into five major books. This structure may reflect the five books of Moses—the Torah or Pentateuch.

Book	Psalms
Book I	Psalms 1–41
Book II	Psalms 42–72
Book III	Psalms 73–89
Book IV	Psalms 90–106
Book V	Psalms 107–150

The Movement of Psalms: Orientation → Disorientation → New Orientation

Another way to describe the journey: Prayer → Trust → Praise

Psalm 150:6 — “Let every thing that hath breath praise the LORD. Praise ye the LORD.”

III. Who Wrote the Psalms?

The Psalms were written by several individuals over many generations.

David

David is the most prominent writer of Psalms. His writings reflect the experiences of a shepherd, warrior, king, worshiper, sinner, repentant servant, and a man learning to trust God.

Examples: Psalms 23, 27, 51, 63, 103

Asaph

Asaph was associated with Israel's worship ministry. His Psalms often address justice, suffering, God's judgment, the prosperity of the wicked, and God's faithfulness.

Example: Psalm 73

The Sons of Korah

Their Psalms often express a deep desire for God's presence.

Examples: Psalms 42, 44–49, 84–85, 87–88

Worship can change our perspective even before our circumstances change.

Psalm 42:1 — *“As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God.”*

Other Writers

- Solomon — Psalms 72 and 127
 - Moses — Psalm 90
 - Ethan the Ezrahite — Psalm 89
 - Anonymous writers — Several Psalms do not identify an author
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IV. Major Types of Psalms

1. Psalms of Praise

Celebrate the greatness, character, and goodness of God.

Examples: Psalms 8, 19, 29, 100, 150

Praise says: “God, You are worthy.”

2. Psalms of Lament

Express grief, disappointment, fear, pain, or confusion.

Examples: Psalms 13, 22, 42, 88

Faith does not mean we never have questions. Faith brings our questions to God.

3. Psalms of Thanksgiving

Celebrate God's deliverance, provision, and intervention.

Examples: Psalms 30, 34, 40, 116, 118

Thanksgiving says: "God, I remember what You have done."

4. Royal Psalms

Focus on Israel's king and ultimately point toward the Messiah.

Examples: Psalms 2, 45, 72, 110

5. Wisdom Psalms

Teach God's people how to live wisely and faithfully.

Examples: Psalms 1, 37, 49, 73, 112

6. Penitential Psalms

Focus on confession and repentance.

Example: Psalm 51

7. Imprecatory Psalms

Call upon God to confront injustice and evil.

Examples: Psalms 35, 69, 109, 137

The Psalmist places justice in God's hands rather than taking vengeance personally.

Psalm 51:10 — *"Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me."*

V. The Central Message of Psalms

God is worthy of worship and can be trusted in every circumstance of life.

Creator: Psalm 24:1 — “The earth is the LORD’S, and the fulness thereof.”

King: Psalm 47:7 — “For God is the King of all the earth.”

Refuge: Psalm 46:1 — “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.”

Shepherd: Psalm 23:1 — “The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.”

Faithful God: Psalm 136 — “His mercy endureth for ever.”

VI. The Theology of Worship in Psalms

1. Worship Begins with God

Worship does not begin with our preferences, emotions, music, or traditions. Worship begins with who God is.

Psalm 95:3 — “For the LORD is a great God, and a great King above all gods.”

2. Worship Is a Response to Revelation

God reveals His character, power, holiness, mercy, salvation, and faithfulness—and we respond in worship.

Revelation produces response.

3. Worship Involves the Whole Person

- Our Voice — Psalm 34:1
- Our Hands — Psalm 134:2
- Our Body — Psalm 95:6
- Musical Instruments — Psalm 150
- Our Emotions — throughout the Psalms

Biblical worship engages the heart, mind, body, spirit, and emotions.

VII. Worship Is Personal and Corporate

Personal Worship — Psalm 23:1: “The LORD is my shepherd.”

Corporate Worship — Psalm 95:1: “O come, let us sing unto the LORD.”

Biblical worship includes both private devotion and corporate worship.

VIII. Worship Includes Remembrance

The Psalms repeatedly call God's people to remember:

- God's deliverance
- God's provision
- God's promises
- God's victories
- God's faithfulness

Psalm 77:11 — *"I will remember the works of the LORD."*

Sometimes worship begins by remembering what God has already done.

What has God done that you need to remember?

IX. Worship Includes Honesty

The Psalmists sometimes ask: "How long?" "Why?" "Where are You?" "Have You forgotten me?"

God can handle our honesty.

Lament is not the absence of faith. Lament is bringing our pain into the presence of God while continuing to trust Him.

X. Worship Requires Holiness and Obedience

Psalm 24:3–4 — *"Who shall ascend into the hill of the LORD?" "He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart."*

Worship is not simply an event we attend. Worship is a life surrendered to God.

XI. Worship Changes Our Perspective

In Psalm 73, Asaph struggled because it appeared that wicked people were prospering. Then he entered the presence of God.

Psalm 73:17 — *“Until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end.”*

His circumstances did not immediately change. His perspective changed.

Reflection: Has worship ever changed the way you viewed a difficult situation?

XII. The Psalms Point to Jesus

- Psalm 2 — The Anointed King
- Psalm 16 — Resurrection
- Psalm 22 — The suffering Messiah
- Psalm 110 — King and Priest
- Psalm 118 — The rejected stone becomes the cornerstone

The Psalms ultimately point us toward Christ, the King.

XIII. From Psalm 1 to Psalm 150

The Book of Psalms begins with formation and ends with praise.

Psalm 1 — The worshiper delights in the Word of God. “He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water.”

Psalm 150 — Everything that has breath is called to praise the Lord.

The Word shapes the worshiper ➡ The worshiper’s life becomes worship.

XIV. Seven Truths About Worship

1. God is the center of worship.
2. Worship is our response to who God is and what God has done.
3. Worship involves the whole person.
4. Worship includes praise, lament, thanksgiving, repentance, and remembrance.
5. Worship is both personal and corporate.

6. Worship must be connected to obedience and holy living.
7. Worship redirects our attention from our circumstances to our God.

XV. Personal Application

The Psalms teach us that worship is more than something we attend. Worship is something we live.

I worship God when I:

One area of my life that I need to surrender to God is:

One thing God has done that I need to remember is:

XVI. Discussion Questions

1. Why do you think God included Psalms of grief and disappointment along with Psalms of praise?
2. What do the Psalms teach us about bringing our emotions to God?
3. What is the difference between praising God for what He has done and worshiping Him for who He is?
4. Which description of God speaks most strongly to you: Creator, King, Refuge, Shepherd, or Faithful God? Why?
5. How can remembering God's past faithfulness help us during difficult seasons?
6. How has worship ever changed your perspective?
7. What would it look like for worship to become a lifestyle rather than simply a Sunday activity?

XVII. Closing Thought

Worship is bringing everything happening in our lives into the presence of the God who is greater than everything happening in our lives.

God is still God.

God is still faithful.

God is still present.

God is still worthy of worship.

Closing Scripture — Psalm 150:6: *“Let every thing that hath breath praise the LORD. Praise ye the LORD.”*

My Final Takeaway

What is one truth from today’s lesson that you want to remember?
