

# MANual Lessons from Psalms (Books 1 & 2)

In my last post in this series on lessons from The MANual, I gave you an Introduction to the Psalms. With 150 chapters to cover, I am splitting the lessons on Psalms into two posts: the first two books in this one and the other three in the next. I'm also returning to using the 5 features of the MANual, my New International Version Bible "written by men to men" which is the main resource for this series as described in my initial post encouraging us to Downshift and Refocus this year.

## More about The Psalms

As I explained in the Introduction, there are collections of chapters in Psalms that form five books of songs and prayers which parallel the five books of Moses (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy). Each book concludes with a doxology that signifies the end of the collection. Psalm 150 serves as the final doxology for the entire book.

Another unique characteristic of the Psalms is the use of the word 'Selah' which occurs 71 times. Mostly concentrated in the middle or the end of Psalms 1-89, Selah also occurs occasionally in Psalms 109, 139, and 140. The Greek Septuagint translates 'Selah' as *diapsalma* or 'pause'. Other meanings are to "Play louder" or "to bend down" so the congregation bows or prostrates itself.

In many Psalms, you can almost hear the writer (also called the psalmist) crying out to God. You hear the depths of their desperation or singing their praises in the heights of a celebration. As you read the Psalms, allow it to guide you toward a deep and genuine relationship with God.

## **Book 1: Songs of David**

The first book (Chapters 1-41) opens with the personal praises of David that arise out of his own experiences. Just as Genesis tells how mankind was created, fell into sin, and promised redemption, many of David's psalms discuss how we are blessed, fallen, and redeemed by God.

Psalms 1 explains that life is made up of two roads: the life of a faithful person who extols the joys of obeying God and meditating on His Word. The other is the road of rebellion that comes from following the advice of the wicked and standing around with sinners. The key verse, "For the Lord knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the ungodly shall perish." (Psalm 1:6) summarizes this succinctly.



### **Quiet Time with God**

What would happen if you blow off an important meeting with your boss or an anniversary date with your wife? How would it affect your employment or your relationship at home? Now think about what happens when you miss your time with God? Does it impact your relationship with your Creator?

Psalms 1:2 suggests that we delight when we meditate day and night on the law of The Lord; meaning when we spend time in His Word.

- How much time do you spend studying God's word?
- Do you notice your rebellious side when you frequently miss time in prayer or Bible study?

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Other psalms in Book 1 speak to David's emotions and insecurities. Psalm 3 is about David's fear. He fled Jerusalem

after his son, Absalom usurped the throne (2 Samuel 15:1-30) and needed everyday courage. David probably wrote Psalm 9 after a victory over the Philistines but asks for mercy and prays for God's power to restore Israel. David's desperate words of despair in Psalm 13 remind us to trust God, even when He doesn't answer us as quickly as we want. Psalm 16 is David's prayer of security in which God is our refuge. It calls us to seek His will first whenever danger lurks.

Psalm 18 is David's song of praise after the Lord delivered him from his enemies and the hand of Saul (1 Samuel 19-20). We too should sing about God's glorious work and blessings in our lives. David foretells the words of Jesus on the cross in Psalm 22. He writes, "My God, my God, Why have you forsaken me?" while enduring yet another great trial. David's public testimony tells us to teach our children and future generations about the wonders of The Lord.

Psalm 23 is often read at funerals to comfort those who mourn. It reminds us that the Lord is the shepherd that leads us through the dark valley and shadows of death into greener pastures.



## **He is Our Rock and Shield**

Psalm 28 describes our Creator as our Rock. He is our solid foundation. He is immovable. God is our salvation. David's prayer in Psalm 33 refers to The Lord as our real source of safety. With God as the foundation and shield, we can protect those we love and guard them against spiritual attacks, dangers of the world, and cultural pressures.

- What does it mean to you that God is your rock and shield?
- Whose are you responsible to shield these days?

## **Book 2: Prayers of Rescue**

The second collection (Chapters 42-72), mainly written by David and the sons of Korah. Just as Exodus describes the deliverance of the nation of Israel, many of these psalms describe the rescue, call to worship, confession of sin, and encouragement to trust God.



### **The Sons of Korah**

Korah was a popular leader among the Levites, who took care of the tabernacle and all of its implements, including the Ark of the Covenant. Korah led a rebellion against his first cousins, Moses and Aaron (Numbers 16). He died when the ground under him split apart and swallowed him up due to God's judgment after failing to recognize his influential position and greed. Korah's sons remained faithful and trusted God though and were rewarded with an appointment by David as choir leaders in the Temple.

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Psalm 42 opens with the metaphor of a deer longing for streams of water to remind us to thirst for God for eternal life. The writer was discouraged during his exile to a place far from Jerusalem and could not worship in the Temple. This psalm calls on us to meditate on God's kindness whenever we are lonely or depressed and in need of His help.



## Savior

Notice the hope and goodness in Psalms 42 and 49. The word 'savior' in Psalm 42:11 means "deliverer." It points to Christ as our Savior who delivers us from the eternal penalty of our sins (i.e. hell). Psalm 49 speaks to the futility of riches, pride, and fame. Just as Jesus "saves" us from the consequences of our sins, God protects us from all sorts of trouble when we obey His commands.

- Do you meditate on God's Word when you feel lonely or depressed?
- Do you pursue riches and let your pride get in the way of your relationships, especially one with God?

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Psalm 50 is a psalm of Asaph, one of David's chief musicians, who remind wicked, hard-hearted people about God's judgment for their false faith and immoral lives. Did David realize this when he wrote Psalm 51? David's confession and plea for mercy came after his adultery with Bathsheba and the killing of her husband, Uriah to cover up the affair.



## Guilt

Few heroes of the Bible sunk to the depths of sin that David reached. Once the prophet, Nathan pointed out David's sins, he realized being sorry wasn't enough. David understood the

consequences of his sins affected not just his own life, but that of others. Most importantly, it hurt his relationship with God so David turned first to God to change his heart.

Like David, we can never please God simply by outward actions if our heart is not right. If you have done something that leads to deep guilt, you must repair your relationship with God first. Through prayer, you can let Him repair your relationship with others –and repair your relationship with Him.

- What sin and guilt do you carry around with you today?
  - Who else was affected by that sin?
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David writes Psalm 61, 62, and 63 while seeking refuge in the wilderness during his son, Absolum’s rebellion against his kingdom (2 Samuel 15-18). In these psalms, David professes his own confidence in God and dependence upon Him. These psalms encourage us to trust in God as our rock and salvation.

Psalm 72 is a coronation hymn at the end of King David’s life that marks the change of command to his son Solomon. David’s prayer was that Solomon would reign in a way that reflected the justice of God. It also contains a prophetic reference to another king that foreshadows the coming of Christ.

Book 2 ends with “Amen and amen.” just as Psalm 41 did at the end of Book 1.



## **God Buddy Focus**

The Psalms have become the “go-to” book of the Bible for anyone to go in a time of spiritual need. In the first book of

Psalms, we gain insight into King David as he pours out his heart to God. He begs for protection and asks for help against the enemies. The second book reminds us that God is the mighty Judge that rescues those who delight in Him and obey Him.

Like David, we can find comfort in our dark valleys when we go first to God. He is our refuge, our rock, and our salvation. Like David, we are far from perfect, but we can also become “a man after God’s own heart.”

This week:

- Find some quiet time with God and read Psalms 22, 23, 51, and 72.
- Break down each psalm verse-by-verse.
- Pray that God will show you how the key message of each can apply to your everyday life.

The next post will provide lessons from the third, fourth and fifth books from Psalms.