

Bible Study on Psalms

Community Lament and Praise Psalms – Sharing Our Pain and Joy

In these praise and lament psalms you will see God's people as a group cry out to him and praise him as they share their sorrows and joys.

A few psalms that fit into this category are Psalms 44, 80, 90, and 124.

Psalm 44

Read Psalm 44 and work through these questions.

1. What title would you give verses 1-8?
2. What title would you give verses 9-16?
3. What title would you give verses 17-22?
4. What title would you give verses 23-26?
5. God lets the psalmist ask these questions, and he lets the community struggle with the answers. Share, if you can, a time you struggled in a similar way. Did that struggle harm or help your faith? *Oratio (prayer), Meditatio (Meditate on Word), Tentatio (temptation)*

Psalm 80

Read Psalm 80 and work through these questions.

1. Psalm 80 is one of 11 psalms credited to Asaph. This psalm provides a mini-history of the people of Israel. Covering nearly 750 years, it tells how God brought his people out of Egypt, transplanted them in Canaan, and enabled them to grow into a mighty nation. Then the psalm laments the destruction brought about by enemy attacks and invasions. What similarities and differences do you notice in verses 3, 7, and 19?
2. The nation of Israel is called "a vine" (vv. 8-12) in this psalm. What further information do you find about this vine in Isaiah 5:1-6?
3. What proof do you find in this psalm that God's actions produced his intended effect?
4. In John 15:1-8 makes it clear that Jesus became the true Vine, producing the holy fruit ancient Israel is not produce. He grafted us by faith into himself so that we are now branches. Since this is true, for what specific things can you ask God both for yourself and for your congregation?

Psalm 90

Read Psalm 90 and work through these questions.

1. Psalm 90 is the only psalm authored by Moses.
 - a. How do verses 1 and 2 describe God?
 - b. How do verses 3, 5-6 and 10 describe people?
 - c. Why would the whole community lament this situation?
2. We are mortal; our Lord is eternal. What insight into God's eternal nature are we given in verse 4?
3. In verse 12, Moses prays that God would give him and his people, "heart(s) of wisdom." For what was he asking? Describe the characteristics of wise heart.
4. Because of our sins, we are mortal. Many fear physical death. What feeds this fear – even for believers?
5. How could the truths of Psalm 90:1-2 comfort someone who faces such fears?

Psalm 124

Read Psalm 124 and work through these questions.

1. Psalms 120-134 are all "songs of ascents"; several including Psalm 124, are written in such a way that successive verses pick up and develop the thoughts of earlier verses. This causes the thoughts themselves to "ascend" through the psalm. What ideas are picked up and developed further in each pair of verses below?
 - a. Verses 1 and 2...
 - b. Verses 3 and 4a...
 - c. Verses 4b and 5...
 - d. Verse 7...
2. In verse 8, Israel acknowledges "our help is in the name of the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth." Because God has the kind of awesome power that could create our universe, we know he has the power to help us with our problems too. God uses his power in love for his own. In what ways is Psalm 124 an answer to the questions raised in Psalm 44?

After reading and rereading a psalm, ask yourself these questions. What words or phrases stick out to you? How do these words or phrases reveal the poet's purpose for the psalm? What effect does this psalm have on you as you meditate on it?