

TOOL: Processing from the Psalms

Scripture before screen • Daily



Introduction

Reading through the Psalms is a great way to engage scripture and connect with God. A couple of things to keep in mind as you're processing through the Psalms:

Psalms are poetry. They're not biblical theology, they're biblical *experience*. They're modeling for us what it looks like to worship God in Spirit and in truth - and they're letting us know that life can be messy and confusing.

They're still true. C.S. Lewis has two books that talk about pain and grief. One, *The Problem of Pain* unpacks how pain works, why it exists, and where God is in it. And the other, *A Grief Observed*, is a journal he didn't intend to be read. It is the words of a man in pain and in deep grief. A lot of people feel uncomfortable reading *A Grief Observed* because Lewis says things like "God's abandoned me". And people protest, "but that's not true!" And while it may not be true that God has abandoned us, it **is true** that sometimes it feels that way. There is truth in our experience and in our feelings. It's true that sometimes it feels lonely. Sometimes it feels like God has failed. Sometimes it seems that God is gone. And the Psalms are scriptures that let us know that God understands that reality. The Psalms have been described as our honest prayer book.

They give us permission to feel the tension. Truth and life often seem to testify different things. God says he is good, but someone we love is harmed. God says he is with us, but we feel terribly alone. When truth and life seem to contradict each other we have three options: (1) deny our experiences (2) deny truth or (3) enter the tension. The book of Psalms is the record of how saints before us have handled that tension.

They give us words when we run out. There are seasons of our spiritual life where we seem to run out of words to pray. This is to be expected. Rather than faking it or rejecting prayer, the Psalms are a gift to us, as it remains the Church's prayer book.

We can return to these words that have been prayed for thousands of years to carry us through these seasons.

Practice

As you begin to meditate on the Psalms, feel the freedom to begin anywhere. Open up Psalm 1, or select Psalms that share a theme and dive in.

We've cultivated a list of Psalms you could start with. These all involve the theme of waiting on God. Waiting for God, by very definition, gives us permission to say that our current experience is not God showing up the way we want God to. It includes frustration, lament. Waiting for God also includes a sense of eagerness, trust, and anticipation for what God will do.

We've [provided a journal here](#) that you can make a copy of and use to guide your personal time in the Psalms. For each Psalm, you'll read the Psalm and then spend some guided time processing and praying with God.

Debrief your experience

After practicing with this tool, debrief your experience with your Praxis Group. Below are some questions to process together:

- Check in on life. (Where are you experiencing Christ's presence this week? What burdens are you carrying?)
- What did you learn from this practice?
- Describe your experience with this practice. (What feelings came up, what went well, what got in the way? How has it impacted your relationship with God?)
- What is the next step for you?