

The Psalms are a unique book in the Bible. They are written by the people of God as songs to God so that we might have a voice and expression in our relationship with God. These songs are the God-given handbook for the public and private worship of the church.

For centuries, the Psalms have been sung, prayed, studied, and meditated on by the people of God. They are the inspired work of at least eight different authors over the course of a nearly 1,000-year period. In his introduction to the Psalms, Martin Luther said that by the Psalms you will find "a faithful mirror reflecting with perfect purity the image of Christianity." This is because they contain within them the entire scope of redemptive history. They tell the story from creation through the law, the tabernacle, and the temple, to the exile of God's people, and looking forward to the promised hope of the Messiah and the new creation. They address theological issues like divine revelation, the nature and character of God, the problem of sin, and the hope of salvation.

However, the Psalms are not just meant to be studied or understood. Like many other songs, the Psalms give words and expression that meet us at the level of our hearts. More than any other book of the Bible, the Psalms meet us in the vast variety of human emotions and experiences. Through them, we are given language of praise and thanksgiving, of despair and darkness, of the burden of guilt and shame over our sin, of hope and help. They are intended to be immersed in so that we are shaped through them in the way we understand the world, ourselves, and how we relate to God.

In other words, the Psalms are not to only be known, but they are meant to be participated in. They are to be prayed and sung and recited and meditated. Through this engagement, we find connections to every situation we face in life, whether emotional, spiritual, or social. We learn the problems that might arise, where to place our focus, how to posture ourselves, how to address God, and how to get the help we need. We learn to do what the psalmists do - we depend on God for help and acceptance, we pursue consolation through lament, we discover God's grace through confession and repentance, and we align with God's perspective as we contemplate his character, creation, and commands.

And most of all, the Psalms point to Jesus. When we understand them in the context of the rest of scripture, we see that he is the promise and fulfillment of all that is found in the Psalms. The words of these songs often gave expression to his heart as well as an explanation of his mission. The hope that's found in the Psalms is a hope that's ultimately found in a Savior.

If you let them, the Psalms will form you more fully into the image of Jesus. This study is intended to press you into understanding, experiencing, and living out the Psalms. Through it, we hope that you will find comfort and hope, grace and peace, and a greater nearness to Christ himself.