

ST ARMANDS KEY LUTHERAN CHURCH  
SARASOTA, FLORIDA

**COME, JOIN THE THURSDAY CONVERSATION!**  
ON  
**THE BOOK OF PSALMS**

Lesson Plan for September 26, 2013

Conversation #1 – “*The Book of Psalms: an overview*”

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Our objectives for this Thursday’s Conversation:

1. to experience fellowship within this group and to feel comfortable sharing personal ideas, feelings, and experiences as they relate to The Psalms.
2. to describe the place of Psalms in the context of the Bible;
3. to list features of particular psalms that can be seen throughout the Book of Psalms;
4. to identify select psalms according to various literary types;
5. to make connections between the words of psalms and our own journeys of faith;
6. to commit to a reading and praying of The Psalms on a regular basis;
7. to use several translations of the Scriptures, in addition to that used most frequently;

**AN OPENING PRAYER OF WORSHIP AND PRAISE ...** (PSALM 95:1–7)  
*(spoken antiphonally – from “The Psalms in Modern Speech” translated by Richard S. Hanson – Fortress Press)*

Come, let us sing to The Lord!  
***Let us shout to our mighty Savior!***  
Let us approach him with praise  
***and laud him with music,***  
For The Lord is a powerful God,  
***the ruler of all other gods.***  
He possesses all parts of the earth;  
***even the tops of the mountains.***  
The sea is his, for he made it,  
***and his hands formed the dry land.***  
Enter! Bow down and worship!  
***Let us kneel to The LORD, our Maker!***  
for he is our God,  
***and we are his people, his flock, the sheep of his hand.***  
**AMEN.**

## AN INITIAL CONVERSATION'S "ICEBREAKER" –

*(Instruction: as part of a brief group introduction, each participant is requested to identify her/himself and also to voluntarily answer any one of the following questions:)*

1. What is the very first memory you can recall of hearing psalms?
2. Do you have recollections of memorizing a psalm? Which one?
3. When have you most often turned your attention to reading the Psalms?
4. What are some general impressions that you have of Psalms?
5. Which Scriptural version do you prefer to use when reading the Psalms? Why?
6. How would you describe the Psalms to someone totally unfamiliar with them?
7. Have you participated in any previous studies of The Psalms?

### A) **SOME GENERAL OBSERVATIONS ABOUT THE PSALMS:**

- Placement of Psalms is between Job and Proverbs
- Psalms included in the collection known as "*The Writings*" in the Hebrew Scriptures. One of the 3 major collections known to the early church.
- English title of the book is (*depending on which version used*) interchangeable: "Psalms" or "The Psalms."
- Title in the Hebrew Scriptures is *tehillum*, which means "songs of praise."  
(this word is formed from the same Hebrew root as the word *hallelujah*)
- Title in the Greek Septuagint, *psalmos* means "a song sung to the accompaniment of a stringed instrument(s)."
- Complete collection of 150 psalms is usually divided into 5 sections or "Books"
  - 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

There is no clear rationale for the division noted above; these books are unequal in length. While there is no unifying theme in one book as compared with another, there are more psalms of lament in Books I & II, and more psalms of praise in Book V. Some scholars theorize that since the 5 Books of the Law are attributed to Moses (*Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy*), and Psalms was attributed to David, he, too, must have 5 books to his credit!

One characteristic is shared in common by all 5 books: each concludes with a doxology, a declaration of praise of either one or two verses, or a whole psalm, as in the case of Psalm 150. When the psalms were organized into 5 separate sections/books is unknown.

- Psalms were written in the form of poetry and will be examined as such in our **THURSDAY CONVERSATIONS**. *(Therefore, any biblical version that does not present the psalms as poetry will not be very helpful in our discussions!)* In Hebrew poetry there is no intent to rhyme words in one line with the next. Rather there is a matching of thoughts or concepts with one or more lines. *(to be illustrated more thoroughly in a future session.)*

- B) **OPPORTUNITIES FOR FURTHER PERSONAL EXPLORATION** – In addition to dealing with all of the “technicalities” of the Psalms, it is hoped that some persons will also want to delve deeper and approach individual psalms in a reflective way so that they become a true source of inspiration for personal prayer. Therefore, a resource sheet will regularly be attached to each week’s Lesson Plan; that addenda will optionally suggest your daily reading and reflection on one or two psalms. As you read, consider any question(s) related to each psalm; allow the psalm to serve as a basis for personal prayer. At the start of next week’s **CONVERSATION**, and continuing regularly thereafter, there will be a short initial period of time devoted to very briefly sharing personal discoveries to the extent that any one of you is willing to open yourself to others! **Consult Resource Sheet 1A**

**C) ATTENTION TO SPECIAL TEXTUAL & TECHNICAL DETAILS: Consult Resource Sheet 1B**

- Poetic format in printing of the Psalms: see Psalm 1 – note extra space between vss. 3-4; an indication of a break between stanzas
- Footnotes *(some Bibles have more footnotes than others)*; paying attention to them can sometimes enhance greater understanding of the text: see Psalm 2:11-12 and accompanying footnote. Also see “GNT” version of those verses printed at end of Resource 1B.
- Psalm Titles or superscriptions: see Psalm 3 (Resource sheet 1B for an illustration)
  - 117 psalms have titles
  - 72 psalms are attributed to David
  - Psalms are also attributed to other persons and groups
    - Korahites – Ps. 42-49 attributed to Korahites *(guild of Temple singers)*
    - Asaph – Ps. 50; 73-83 *(one of David’s chief musicians-see I Chron. 25:1-2)*
    - Solomon – Ps. 72, 127
    - Ethan the Ezrahite – Ps. 89
    - Moses – Ps. 90
- Events specific to David’s life – 13 psalms have such a reference (Ps. 3 – Resource 1B)

- **“Selah”** – see use in Ps. 3
  - used 71 times in 39 different psalms
  - meaning is unclear – no consensus
  - possibly musical/liturgical cue to musicians and other worship leaders
    - “lift up” (louder) singing or playing
    - “to turn....bend” as to a posture of submission when praying
    - an “interlude” during which something else is played
  - in public reading, the word “*Selah*” is usually not spoken!

#### D) **IDENTIFYING PSALMS BY A VARIETY OF TYPES**

- no consensus of agreement on types among biblical scholars
- ....therefore, there are no “clear-cut” guidelines to follow
- all psalms cannot be classified neatly into one type or another; aspects of 2+ types are often frequent in same psalm; not always used in same order

#### E) **PSALM TYPES FOR OUR CONSIDERATION:**

1. **Sacred History Psalms** – Psalms of this type are very long; also called *psalms of the mighty acts of God and salvation history psalms*. They recount in chronological order many of the mighty acts of God in forming the people of Israel and in delivering them from bondage. Elements of many other psalms make reference to God’s mighty acts on behalf of his people. Read PSALM 78. & (Ps. 105, 106, 135, 136)
2. **Songs of Trust** – Almost all of the psalms of trust are written in the first person as prayers or affirmations of faith and confidence in God. They express an absolute dependence upon the Creator, Redeemer, and God. The content of these psalms transcends all of the intervening centuries so that the words may be read and prayed today without regard to the particular circumstances that prompted their writing in the first place. As an example read PSALM 16. & (Ps. 11, 23, 27:1-6, 62, 63, 91, 121, 131)
3. **Psalms of Lament** – More psalms are classified as laments than any other type (*about 1/3 of the Book of Psalms*) There are two subtypes: Community laments and Individual laments. Psalms of Lament are expressed as grievances or complaints against God and/or against the enemy. Almost all of the 50+ laments include other elements such as petition, expression of trust, questioning God, remembering God’s past actions, and vows of praise. As an example read PSALM 13. & (Ps. 3, 12, 22, 31, 39, 42, 57, 80, 85, 88, 90, 94, 137)
4. **Hymns of Praise** – Key words are *“rejoice, praise, sing, glory, joy, joyful!”* The praise is always directed toward God in honor and recognition of who God is and what God has done on behalf of the people. There are two subtypes: Community praise and Individual praise. Psalms praising God as Creator are often identified as a different type. The element of thanksgiving is also present in many psalms of praise. As an example read PSALM 100. & (Ps. 8, 33, 66, 104, 111, 145, 146, 148, 150)

5. **Enthronement Hymns** – These psalms call believers to praise and worship God who is Lord, King of the Universe, of the world, of the nations, and of the people whom God has chosen. *God's enthronement is forever (29:10), over the flood (29:10), over the nations (47:8), from of old (93:2), over all the earth (95:4, 5; 97:9), as judge of the world (96:13) and in Zion (99:2).* For typical example read PSALM 95. & (Ps. 29, 47, 93, 96, 97, 98, 99)
  
6. **Songs of Zion** – “**Zion**” is a word of uncertain origin that was used frequently as a synonym for Jerusalem, which was also called the city of David. Jerusalem was set high on a hill and was identified as God's holy hill. It was a stronghold, a fortress that served as the capital city of the nation of Israel. It was a holy city for it was where the Temple was built. *For the Lord has chosen Zion; he has desired it for his habitation. (132:13)* As an example read PSALM 84. & (Ps. 46, 48, 76, 87, 122, 132)
  
7. **Royal Psalms** – The focus in these psalms is on the reigning king of Israel, not on God. These psalms describe or refer to different situations in which the king is involved: thanksgiving for victory over enemies (18), prayers for the king's safety before battle (20), thanksgiving for protection during battle (21), the occasion of the king's marriage (45), the king's ascent to the throne (2, 72, 110) and a series of vows made by the king to God (101). For a good example read PSALM 21. & (Ps. 2, 18, 20, 45, 72, 89, 101, 110)
  
8. **Songs of Thanksgiving** – The words “**thanks**” and “**thanksgiving**” appear in 32 psalms. However, not all these psalms are included in the category of songs of thanksgiving. Thanksgiving is an aspect of some psalms of praise. Even in some psalms of lament there are expressions of thanksgiving when the psalmist realizes that God is able to bring deliverance from whatever it is that provokes the lament. There are community psalms as well as individual psalms of thanksgiving. The thankfulness of the psalmist arises in response to a good harvest, healing from disease, victory in battle, deliverance from enemies, trouble and danger, and God's wondrous deeds. See PSALM 30. & (Ps. 34, 67, 92, 107, 118, 124, 138)
  
9. **Wisdom Psalms** – This type is not easily identified! Many of the wisdom psalms can be classified with other types. They are much like proverbs with short, memorable sayings of common wisdom. Often *light* is contrasted with *darkness*, *good* with *evil*, and *the righteous* with *the wicked*. For our purpose, we will also include as wisdom psalms those that focus on the Law. Examples: read PSALM 1. & (Ps. 37, 49, 73, 112, 119, 127, 128, 133)

10. **Liturgies** – Though all of the psalms have been used in the worship life of God’s people, there are several that are associated with festivals or other special worship experiences in the Temple. Some liturgy psalms are related to a pilgrimage to Jerusalem and to the Temple (122). Others are entrance liturgies that were used as worshippers stood outside the Temple gates awaiting entrance (15 & 24). Psalm 136 was included among the sacred history psalms. However, because the second line of each verse begins with the repeated response ... **for his steadfast love endures forever....** , this psalm very possibly was used as a litany during congregational worship. Example – read PSALM 24. & (Ps. 68, 82, 115, 134)

F) **PRACTICUM TO IDENTIFY PSALM TYPES** – consult Resource Sheet 1C  
(Answer key with explanatory notes will be distributed at end of session as – Resource 1D)

G) **A CONCLUDING ACT OF WORSHIP** – Unison reading of Psalm 62:5-7

*For God alone my soul waits in silence,  
For my hope is from him.  
He alone is my rock and my salvation  
My fortress; I shall not be shaken.  
On God rests my deliverance and my honor;  
My mighty rock, my refuge is in God. Amen*

H) **GENERAL PREPARATION FOR NEXT WEEK:** *In the ensuing week, pay special attention to the names/titles by which God is addressed in your private and corporate prayers! Prepare to share!*

## Psalms Resource Sheet 1A

### **PSALM SUGGESTIONS FOR PRIVATE READING & REFLECTION DURING COMING WEEK**

<u>DAY</u>	<u>PSALM(s)</u>	<u>NOTES TO ACCOMPANY YOUR READING, REFLECTION and PRAYERS:</u>
1	1	This is a <b>WISDOM</b> psalm, serving as introduction to The Psalms. Notice contrast between the “ <b>wicked</b> ” and the “ <b>righteous;</b> ” How do you, as a believer, meditate “ <b>on the Law of the Lord?</b> ” Pray that God will lead you “ <b>in the path of righteousness!</b> ”
2	13 & 16	Psalm 13 is a <b>lament</b> ; Psalm 16 is one of <b>trust</b> . See the difference? Which psalm best reflects the state of your spiritual journey today? Pray, expressing your trust and confidence in God! .... or, pray a lament expressing your grievance(s) to God.
3	21 & 24	Psalm 21 is a <b>royal</b> psalm, wherein the King celebrates victory. What recent victories have you celebrated? Psalm 24 is a <b>liturgical</b> psalm; to be said on entry into the Lord’s Temple. What is your prayer as you prepare to worship God in church this week?
4	30	This is a psalm of <b>thanksgiving</b> for healing. Notice the contrasts, the “ <b>ups</b> ” and “ <b>downs</b> ” of the psalmist’s experiences. Which lines of this psalm can you employ as your personal prayer?
5	78	Read esp. vss. 1-8. What is the purpose for remembering this <b>sacred history</b> of God’s dealings with His people? Skim through the remainder of the psalm; notice the acts of the people in contrast to the acts of God. Pray that you remain faithful to God’s way!
6	84	This is a <b>Song of Zion</b> with references to the Temple. Can you identify specific ways in which <b>SAKLC</b> is a dwelling place for God? What is your favorite verse of this psalm? Pray for God to meet you in our church sanctuary!
7	95&100	Psalm 95 is an <b>enthronement</b> psalm; Psalm 100 is a psalm of <b>praise</b> . Notice the similar emphasis in both of these psalms. What reasons does the psalmist suggest for praising God? Pray or sing your own prayer of praise to God!

(SAKLC 2013 per hjm)

New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

**BOOK I**  
**(Psalms 1–41)**

**Psalm 1**

<sup>1</sup> Happy are those  
    who do not follow the advice of the  
wicked,  
or take the path that sinners tread,  
    or sit in the seat of scoffers;  
<sup>2</sup> but their delight is in the law of the LORD,  
    and on his law they meditate day and  
night.  
<sup>3</sup> They are like trees  
    planted by streams of water,  
which yield their fruit in its season,  
    and their leaves do not wither.  
In all that they do, they prosper.  
  
<sup>4</sup> The wicked are not so,  
    but are like chaff that the wind drives  
away.  
<sup>5</sup> Therefore the wicked will not stand in the  
judgment,  
    nor sinners in the congregation of the  
righteous;  
<sup>6</sup> for the LORD watches over the way of the  
righteous,  
    but the way of the wicked will perish.

**Psalm 2**

<sup>1</sup> Why do the nations conspire,  
    and the peoples plot in vain?  
<sup>2</sup> The kings of the earth set themselves,  
    and the rulers take counsel together,  
    against the LORD and his anointed,  
saying,  
<sup>3</sup> “Let us burst their bonds asunder,  
    and cast their cords from us.”

(Psalm 2 – continued)

<sup>4</sup> He who sits in the heavens laughs;  
    the LORD has them in derision.  
<sup>5</sup> Then he will speak to them in his wrath,  
    and terrify them in his fury, saying,  
<sup>6</sup> “I have set my king on Zion, my holy hill.”  
  
<sup>7</sup> I will tell of the decree of the LORD:  
He said to me, “You are my son;  
    today I have begotten you.  
<sup>8</sup> Ask of me, and I will make the nations  
your heritage,  
    and the ends of the earth your possession.  
<sup>9</sup> You shall break them with a rod of iron,  
    and dash them in pieces like a potter’s  
vessel.”  
  
<sup>10</sup> Now therefore, O kings, be wise;  
    be warned, O rulers of the earth.  
<sup>11</sup> Serve the LORD with fear,  
    with trembling <sup>12</sup> kiss his feet, <sup>[a]</sup>  
or he will be angry, and you will perish in  
the way;  
    for his wrath is quickly kindled.

Happy are all who take refuge in him.

**Footnote:**

- a. [Psalm 2:12](#) Cn: Meaning of Heb of verses 11b and 12a is uncertain

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**NOW COMPARE text of: "NRSV" (above)**  
**with "GNT" (below)**

## Psalm 2:11-12

*Good News Translation (GNT)*

<sup>11</sup> Serve the LORD with fear;  
tremble <sup>12</sup> and bow down to him;<sup>[a]</sup>  
or else his anger will be quickly aroused,  
and you will suddenly die.  
Happy are all who go to him for protection.

### Footnote:

- a. [Psalm 2:12](#) Probable text tremble ...  
him; some other possible texts with  
trembling kiss his feet and with  
trembling kiss the Son and tremble  
and kiss the mighty one; Hebrew  
unclear.

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## Psalm 3

**A Psalm of David, when he fled from his  
son Absalom.**

<sup>1</sup> O LORD, how many are my foes!  
Many are rising against me;  
<sup>2</sup> many are saying to me,  
"There is no help for you<sup>[b]</sup> in God."  
*Selah*  
<sup>3</sup> But you, O LORD, are a shield around me,  
my glory, and the one who lifts up my  
head.  
<sup>4</sup> I cry aloud to the LORD,  
and he answers me from his holy hill.  
*Selah*  
<sup>5</sup> I lie down and sleep;  
I wake again, for the LORD sustains me.  
<sup>6</sup> I am not afraid of ten thousands of people

who have set themselves against me all  
around.

<sup>7</sup> Rise up, O LORD!  
Deliver me, O my God!  
For you strike all my enemies on the cheek;  
you break the teeth of the wicked.

<sup>8</sup> Deliverance belongs to the LORD;  
may your blessing be on your people!  
*Selah*

### Footnote:

- b. [Psalm 3:2](#) Syr: Heb *him*

## PSALMS RESOURCE SHEET 1C

### PRACTICUM TO IDENTIFY PSALM TYPES

**Instruction:** Read the lines from selected Psalms in the left column. Look for the name of a psalm type in the right column that matches the quote. Place the appropriate number in the blank.

#### **WORDS FROM REPRESENTATIVE PSALMS:**

#### **PSALM TYPE**

1. *Great is the Lord and greatly to be praised in the city of our God. His holy mountain...is the joy of all the earth* (48:1,2b)           **Song of Thanksgiving**
2. *How long, O Lord? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me? How long must I bear pain in my soul?* (13:1-2a)           **Sacred History Psalm**
3. *For the Lord is a great God, and a great King above all gods. In his hand are the depths of the earth; the heights of the mountains are his also* (95:3-4)           **Hymn of Praise**
4. *For God alone my soul waits in silence, for my hope is from him, He alone is my rock and my salvation, my fortress; I shall not be shaken.* (62:5-6)           **Song of Zion**
5. *Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth. Worship the Lord with gladness; come into his presence with singing* (100:7-8a)           **Wisdom Psalm**
6. *Our ancestors, when they were in Egypt, did not consider your wonderful works; they did not remember the abundance of your steadfast love. .. Yet he saved them for his name's sake.* (106:7-8a)           **Song of Trust**
7. *In your strength the king rejoices, O Lord, and in your help how greatly he exults* (21:1)           **Psalm of Lament**
8. *Lift up your heads, O gates! And be lifted up, O ancient doors! that the king of glory may come in. Who is the King of glory?* (24:7-8a)           **Royal Psalm**
9. *Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain. Unless the Lord guards the city, the guard keeps watch in vain.* (127:1)           **Enthronement Psalm**
10. *O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; for his steadfast love endures forever.* (107:1)           **Liturgy Psalm**