

## **Responding to God Word: How to Faithfully Interpret the Bible**

Men's Bible Study at Park View  
A Study of the Old Testament Psalms  
May 24, 2005

David was called a man after God's own heart. Perhaps this was because he was a Psalmist, the one who wrote many of the collection we know as the Psalms. Jesus and the apostles quoted the psalms on many occasions, so we will do well to be familiar with them. This study will look at several Psalms in an attempt to understand how they might best be used today.

Most of the Bible is a record of God's words to God's people. In contrast, most of the Psalms are prayers--people's words to God. The Psalms are like the hymnal or worship book of the Bible.

The Psalms come from different eras of time, written hundreds of years apart. They were written by many different people, although David wrote almost half of them. At times, they seem oddly arranged. But this is not unlike our own hymnals, which have songs which may deal with very different themes from one page to the next.

The Psalms are an exercise in honesty. Meditation on the Psalms can help us to expand the spectrum of emotion in our prayer and worship. The Psalms can help Christians to express themselves candidly and completely to God, with a wide range of feelings expressed. For example, consider the following examples in particular Psalms:

*Forsaken-- Ps. 22*

*Resting in God's care-- Ps. 23*

*Guilt-- Ps. 32*

*Downcast-- Ps. 42*

*Penitence-- Ps. 51*

*Thirst for God-- Ps. 63*

*Envy-- Ps. 73*

*Cut off from support and friends-- Ps. 88*

*Joy-- Ps. 98*

*Mercy-- Ps. 113*

*Love of family-- Ps. 128*

*Depression-- Ps. 130*

*Unity of brothers-- Ps. 133*

*Bitter memories with plea for vengeance—Ps. 137*

*Praise—Ps. 150*

The Psalms can best be used by Christians today for use in private or corporate worship, as guides to prayer, and as demonstrations of the importance of meditation. They also demonstrate the importance of poetry in the life of a people. They are not to be used as guides to church doctrine or as a justification for war or vengeance on one's enemies.

## **Read Psalm 1**

Psalm 1 is an introduction to the book of Psalms. What seems to be the main purpose of this Psalm?

This Psalm uses contrasting metaphors or pictures from the world of creation to teach spiritual lessons. Name these pictures and the lessons they teach.

## **Read Psalm 90 aloud as a prayer.**

This Psalm is the only one attributed to Moses. In what circumstance(s) do you suppose he may have prayed this prayer? At what age?

What is the *predominant feeling or mood* of the Psalm?

In what ways do you identify with the thoughts and feelings expressed in this Psalm?

In what ways, if any, have you heard this Psalm used in public worship? How has that experience affected the way you view or understand this Psalm?

How is God depicted in this Psalm?

How are people depicted?

What does Moses *ask for* in this Psalm? Identify several requests that Moses made of God.

How might this Psalm be profitably be used as a guide to prayer today?