

A few practical hints for praying the Psalms

Praying the Psalms

1. "The Psalms teach us to pray through imitation and response...Real prayer is always an answer to God's revelation. The Psalms are BOTH prayer and revelations about God the perfect ideal soil for learning prayer.
2. The Psalms take us deep into our own hearts 1000 times faster than we would ever go if left to ourselves...Religious/moral people tend to want to deny the rawness and reality of their own feelings, especially the darkness of them...The secular world has almost made an idol of emotional self-expression...But the Psalmists neither 'stuff' their feelings nor 'ventilate' them. They *pray* them—they take them into the presence of God until they change or understand them.
3. Most importantly, the Psalms force us to deal with God as He is, not as we wish he was. "Left to ourselves, we will pray to some god who speaks what we like hearing, or to the part of God we manage to understand. But what is critical is that we speak to the God who speaks to us, and to everything He speaks to us...the Psalms train us in that conversation." (quote from Eugene Peterson's Answering God)

Based on: http://www.redeemer.com/connect/prayer/praying_psalms.html

Suggestions

1. **Try to understand the whole psalm before praying it.** Read it a couple of times. Consider the whole; where the psalmist begins, where he ends, how he gets there. If there are historical notes given consider the story of redemption to gain context. Write out the questions the psalm provokes in your heart and mind.
2. **Meditate on a part of the psalm.** Is there a particular verse that is particularly relevant to your life right now? Memorize it. Read it aloud, sing it. Why is this word chosen or important here? What difference would this make in my life if I believed this with all my heart? Pray it; for yourself and for others.
3. **Use the Psalms to praise God.** Talk to God about God. The psalms will force us to see our God from the perspective of other believers from other times. We need their help

Hope devotional reading | Week 2 Psalm Two

Excerpts from John Calvin's comments on the Psalms

1 Why do the nations rage
and the peoples plot in vain?
2 The kings of the earth set themselves,
and the rulers take counsel together,
against the Lord and against his Anointed, saying,
3 "Let us burst their bonds apart
and cast away their cords from us."
4 He who sits in the heavens laughs;
the Lord holds them in derision.
5 Then he will speak to them in his wrath,
and terrify them in his fury, saying,
6 "As for me, I have set my King
on Zion, my holy hill."
7 I will tell of the decree:
The Lord said to me, "You are my Son;
today I have begotten you.
8 Ask of me, and I will make the nations your
heritage,
and the ends of the earth your possession.
9 You shall break them with a rod of iron
and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel."
10 Now therefore, O kings, be wise;
be warned, O rulers of the earth.
11 Serve the Lord with fear,
and rejoice with trembling.
12 Kiss the Son,
lest he be angry, and you perish in the way,
for his wrath is quickly kindled.
Blessed are all who take refuge in him.

P s a l m T w o

Why do the nations conspire and the peoples plot in vain?

We know how many conspired against David, and endeavored to prevent his coming to the throne, but David was thoroughly persuaded that he had been made king by divine appointment. He encouraged himself by strong confidence in God against the whole world as he nobly poured contempt both on kings and their armies, because they waged war, not against mortal man, but against God himself. The ground of such confidence was that he only followed the call of God. From this he concluded that in his person, God was assailed; and God would not but show himself the defender of the kingdom of which he was the founder. God principally proves his faithfulness in this, that he does not forsake the work of his own hands, but continually defend those whom he has once received into his favour.

By honoring himself with the title of the Anointed, David declares that he reigned only by the authority and command of God. That he prophesied concerning Christ, is clearly manifest from this, that he knew his own kingdom to be merely a shadow. Those things which David testified concerning his own kingdom are properly applicable to Christ. Let this, therefore, be held as a settled point, that all who do not submit themselves to the authority of Christ make war against God. Since it seems good to God to rule by the hand of his own Son, those who refuse to obey Christ himself deny the authority of God, and it is vain for them to profess otherwise.

Wicked men may now conduct themselves as wickedly as they please, but they shall at length feel what it is to make war against heaven. God is so far exalted above the men of this world that the whole mass of them could not possibly obscure his glory in the least degree. As often, then, as the power of man appears formidable to us, let us remember how much it is transcended by the power of God. In these words there is set before us the unchangeable and eternal purpose of God effectually to defend the kingdom of his Son, of which he is the founder; and this may well support our faith amid the troublous storms of the world. Whatever plots, therefore, men may form against it, let this one consideration be sufficient to satisfy us, that they cannot render ineffectual the anointing of God.

He said to me, "You are my Son; today I have become your Father."

David, indeed, could with propriety be called the son of God, on account of his royal dignity, just as we know that princes, because they are elevated above others, are called both gods and the sons of God. But here God, by the singularly high title with which he honours David, exalts him not only above all mortal men, but even above the angels. This the apostle (Hebrews 1.5) wisely and diligently considers, when he tells us this language was never used with respect to any of the angels. David, individually considered, was inferior to the angles, but in so far as he presented the person of Christ, he is with very good reason preferred far above them. By the Son of God in this place we are therefore not to understand one son among many, but his only begotten Son, Christ Jesus, that he alone should have pre-eminence both in heaven and on earth.

When God says *I have become your Father, or I have begotten you*, it ought to be understood as referring to men's understanding or knowledge of it; for David was begotten by God when the choice of him to be king was clearly manifested. The same explanation is to be given of the words as applied to Christ. He is not said to be begotten in any other sense than as the Father bore testimony to him as being his own Son. It is not implied that he then began to be the Son of God, but that his being so was then made manifest to the world.

Finally, this begetting ought not to be understood of the mutual love which exists between the Father and the Son; it only signifies that he who had been hidden from the beginning in the sacred bosom of the Father, and who afterwards had been obscurely shadowed forth under the law, was known to be the Son of God from the time when he came forth with authentic and evident marks of Sonship, according to what is said in John 1:14, "We have seen his glory, as of the only begotten of the Father."

Ask of me, and I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth your possession. The Father will deny nothing to his Son which relates to the extension of his kingdom to the uttermost ends of the earth. Christ collects the dispersed remnants of his people from all quarters and keeps them joined together by the sacred bond of faith, so that not one corner only, but the whole world, is subjected to his authority.

Therefore, you kings, be wise; be warned you rulers of the earth. David does not even spare kings or rulers themselves, who seem unrestrained by laws, and exempted from ordinary rules. Much more does his exhortation apply to the common class of men, in order that all, from the highest to the lowest, may humble themselves before God. A speedy repentance is necessary, since they will not always be favoured with the like opportunity. David says be wise. The beginning of true wisdom is when a man lays aside his pride, and submits himself to the authority of Christ and serves him with fear. This service is not grievous, but pleasant and desirable, since it furnishes matter of true gladness. The only true and salutary joy is that which arises from resting in the fear and reverence of God.

Kiss the Son, lest he be angry and you be destroyed in your way.

Since it is the will of God to reign by the hand of his Son, and since he had engraven on his person the marks and insignia of his own glory, the proper proof of our obedience and piety towards him is reverently to embrace his Son, whom he has appointed king over us. The term kiss refers to the solemn token or sign of honour which subjects were accustomed to yield to their sovereigns. God is defrauded of his honour if he is not served in Christ. The ungodly is warned that the wrath of God will cut them off when they think themselves to be only in the middle of their race. But David, in the end encourages God's faithful and devout servants to entertain good hope, by setting God's faithful and devout servants to entertain good hope, by setting forth the sweetness of his grace. As believers might have applied the severity of which he makes mention, he opens to them a sanctuary of hope, where they may flee, in order not to be overwhelmed by the terror of God's wrath.