

## An Introduction to the Psalms – AEMMC Life Groups, 2011

*Blessed are those who do not walk  
in step with the wicked  
or stand in the way that sinners take  
or sit in the company of mockers,  
but who delight in the law of the LORD  
and meditate on his law day and night.  
They are like a tree planted by streams of water,  
which yields its fruit in season  
and whose leaf does not wither—  
whatever they do prospers. - Psalm 1:1-3*

### The Book of Psalms

In Jewish usage, the Book of Psalms is divided into five books, each closing with a benediction:

1. The first book is the first 41 Psalms. All of these are ascribed to David except Psalms 1, 2, 10, and 33.
2. The second book consists of the next 31 Psalms (42–72). Eighteen of these are ascribed to David.
3. The third book contains seventeen Psalms (73–89), of which Psalm 86 is ascribed to David
4. The fourth book also contains seventeen Psalms (90–106), of which Psalm 90 is ascribed to [Moses](#), and Psalms 101 and 103 to David.
5. The fifth book contains the remaining 44 Psalms. Of these, 15 are ascribed to David, one (Psalm 127) as a charge to Solomon.

The Psalms, like the other wisdom literature of the Old Testament, is Hebrew poetry.

But Hebrew poetry is different than English poetry. English poetry rhymes words, but Hebrew poetry repeats ideas and metaphors.

Praise and prayer characterize the Psalms, but there are also distinct types:

Wisdom (Psalm 1) / Praise (33, 103, 139),  
Historical (68, 78, 105), / Relational (8, 16, 20, 23, 55),  
Pleading and Intercession (35, 69, 109, 137),  
Repentance (6, 32, 51, 102, 130, 143),  
Messianic or Kingship (2, 8, 16, 22, 40, 45, 69, 89, 102)

### Week 1 - Psalm 1

Martin Luther translated the Bible into German. In 1528 he wrote the introduction to the Psalms.

"Many of the Fathers have loved and praised the book of Psalms above all other books of the Bible.

No books of moral tales and no legends of saints which have been written, or ever will be, are to my mind as noble as the Book of Psalms.

"The Book of Psalms has other excellencies: it preserves, not the trivial and ordinary things said by the saints, but their deepest and noblest utterances, those which they used when speaking in full earnest and all urgency to God.

"It not only tells what they say about their work and conduct, but also lays bare their hearts and the deepest treasures hidden in their souls: and this is done in such a way which allows us to contemplate the causes and the sources of their words and works.

"It is therefore easy to understand why the Book of Psalms is the favourite book of all the saints. "

## Read and Discuss

Read the Psalm together out loud. Have one person read v 1-3, and another read 4-6.

Discuss:

Why might this Psalm be an introduction to the entire book of Psalms? Does this Psalm remind you of other Psalms? Have someone look at Psalm 19.

Trees and rivers (or streams) are powerful pictures of life and the Spirit in Scripture. Trees teach us about time and process. Things grow and change over time.

Rivers teach us about life, and persistence. Where rivers flow, they bring life.

## Share Stories:

Ask if anyone in your group has special experience with trees or rivers.

Human life begins and ends in a garden, with water, trees and fruit. Look at Ezekiel 47:1-12, and then compare Revelations 22:1-5.

Now come back to Psalm 1.

\* What have you learned about the relationship of the Word and the coming Kingdom?

\* How can we experience the future kingdom in life here today?

Read Jeremiah 2:13

Most of us are not wicked people. We know God and try to love Him. Yet there is something broken in us. We are not good lovers. We aren't even very smart. We know where true life is, but we look for substitutes.

## PRAY Together

Ask if someone in your group would be vulnerable and share an area where they need prayer.

If your group is larger than six, you might divide into groups of two to pray for each other.

Pray the Psalm for your group and for the church.

May God give you delight in His Word.

May God make you blessed as you seek His face.

May the Word come to life as you open your Bible.

May God speak through His Word and give you life.

Psalm 119:129-135

*Your statutes are wonderful;  
therefore I obey them.  
The unfolding of your words gives light;  
it gives understanding to the simple.  
I open my mouth and pant,  
longing for your commands.  
Turn to me and have mercy on me,  
as you always do to those who love your name.  
Direct my footsteps according to your word;  
let no sin rule over me.  
Redeem me from human oppression,  
that I may obey your precepts.  
Make your face shine on your servant  
and teach me your decrees.*