

Growth Group Leader Guide

This “growth group leader guide” is meant to be just that, a guide. Please feel free as the leader of your group to add questions or comments as you feel necessary to fit your group’s dynamics.

Also, don’t feel pressured to cover every question.

Intro to Psalms

- What does it mean that we interpret Scripture literally?
- Does interpreting Scripture literally mean we never see passages as written figuratively? Why is this question important when studying the Psalms?
- Do you find yourself resistant to reading biblical passages as figurative? Why or why not?
- Does your Bible clearly distinguish which texts are poetic? How?
- How is the modern American use of poetry different from that of biblical poetry?
- How many English poems can you recite from memory? Why, in your opinion, is poetry so rarely employed in our modern American culture?
- If you have a favorite Psalm share it and explain why.

There are 7 different subgenres found within the Psalter

- Take some time and read the description of each subgenre. Also pick one Psalm from each type to read and discuss as a group.

Lament Psalm

- In a lament, an individual or a group cries out to God in distress.
 - Ex. Psalms – 3, 9, 12, 13, 17, 42, 60, 74, 94, 139

Praise Psalm

- These psalms are characterized by the prominent motif of praising God.
 - Ex. Psalms – 103, 104, 106, 111-113, 149, 150

Thanksgiving Psalm

- As indicated by the title, these songs thank God for answering the request of the worshiper.
 - Ex. Psalms – 18, 32, 40, 65, 75, 92, 107, 136

Celebration Psalm

- These psalms celebrate God's covenant relationship with the king and the nation.
 - Royal psalms – 2, 24, 93, 101, 110
 - Songs of Zion – 46, 76, 87, 125

Wisdom Psalm

- Wisdom psalms deal with topics such as the divine source and nature of true wisdom and questions about injustices experienced or witnessed in this life. Wisdom psalms recast the themes of wisdom literature as songs of worship.
 - Ex. Psalms – 1, 19, 73, 119

Penitential Psalms

- Penitential psalms, whether individual or corporate, give voice to the psalmist's repentance.
 - Ex. Psalms – 6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, 143

Imprecatory Psalms

- In such psalms, the speaker calls on God to enact his divine justice against the psalmist's enemies. Often the plea is accompanied by a recounting of the psalmist's innocence.
 - Ex. Psalms – 35, 60, 70, 109, 137, 140.
- Christians sometimes have trouble squaring such psalms with the biblical injunctions to forgive one's enemies. Nevertheless, in both the Old and New Testaments, the authors of Scripture point to God's ultimate intervention

against evildoers as a source of comfort (Ps. 73:17-20; Rom. 12:19; 2 Thess. 1:6-8).

- **Dietrich Bonhoeffer writes on the imprecatory psalms:** God's vengeance did not strike the sinners, but the sinless man who stood in the sinners' place, namely God's own Son. Jesus Christ bore the wrath of God, for the execution of which the psalm prays. He stilled God's wrath toward sin and prayed in the hour of the execution of divine judgment: "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do!" No other than he, who himself bore the wrath of God, could pray in this way. That was the end of all phony thoughts about the love of God which do not take sin seriously. God hates and redirects his enemies to the only Righteous One, and this One asks forgiveness for them. Only in the cross of Jesus Christ is the love of God to be found.
- Prior to reading the material above, were you aware of different subgenres within the Psalter?
- Which type of psalm most expresses your current life situation to God? (Ex. thanksgiving, lament, praise).
- As God's people no longer live in the land of Israel under a Jewish king, what is the continuing significance of the "royal psalms" or "songs of Zion"?