

Praising God
Through
Prayer and
Worship

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HARVEST HOUSE PUBLISHERS

EUGENE, OREGON

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PRAISING GOD THROUGH PRAYER AND WORSHIP

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Published by Harvest House Publishers

Eugene, Oregon 97402

www.harvesthousepublishers.com

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Arthur, Kay, 1933-

Praising God through prayer and worship / Kay Arthur and Pete De Lacy.

p. cm.—(The new inductive study series)

ISBN-13: 978-0-7369-2304-0 (pbk.)

ISBN-10: 0-7369-2304-7

1. Bible. O.T. Psalms—Devotional use. 2. God—Worship and love. 3. Worship. 4. Prayer—Christianity. I. De Lacy, Pete. II. Title.

BS1430.54.A78 2008

223'.20071—dc22

2008002134

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Printed in the United States of America

08 09 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 / BP-SK / 11 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

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PSALMS

WHAT WOULD DAVID DO?



Remember the popular question, what would Jesus do? If you study the Gospels, the answer is clear—He would pray early, late, and often. He would cry out to God, confident that God would hear and answer. Was Jesus' prayer life special because He was the Son of God, God made flesh? Yes! Did His pattern reflect the Old Testament, God's Word to mankind in writing? Yes again! The psalms show us how David and others prayed in the millennium before Jesus was born.



DAY ONE

As you read any book of the Bible, you'll see the author emphasize subjects by repeating key words and phrases. Since you'll be marking many of these words and phrases throughout Psalms, a good technique is to record them and how you plan to mark them on a 3 x 5 card and use this as a bookmark. Doing this from psalm to psalm will help you mark consistently and save time.

Read through Psalm 1 (it's only six verses) to see what the

psalm is about. Now read it again, and mark every reference to the *Lord*, including pronouns. To help you get started, we suggest you mark *Lord* with a purple triangle shaded yellow, and mark *blessed* with a purple cloud around it shaded pink. You'll see this second key word over and over in the psalms in other forms (*bless*, *blessing*, and *blesses*).

Perhaps you noticed the contrast between two kinds of men. Contrasts are usually introduced by the word *but*, so watch for this indicator as you read. You can mark them with a little “lightning bolt” like this: *but* or a simple slant like this: *but*.

Read the psalm again, marking *wicked*¹ and its synonyms and also the contrasting *righteous*. You may want to circle *wicked* with a black cloud and write an *R* through *righteous*.

What is the righteous man like? What does he do and not do? What is he compared to?

What is the wicked man like, and what is he compared to? How does this contrast help you understand how God views the two kinds of people? What are the righteous promised?

Which would you rather be? Why?

Determine a theme for this psalm and record it on PSALMS AT A GLANCE, on page 193.

Now let's look at Psalm 2. Mark *nations* and its synonyms, *Lord* (watch for pronouns too), *Son* (read carefully so you catch all the synonyms), and *Zion*. Consider marking *nations* green and underlining it brown. Mark *Lord* as you did in Psalm 1. Before you choose a way to mark *Son*, identify Him. (If you're unsure, read Acts 13:32-33 for a little help.)

Add *nations*, *Zion*, and *Son* to your bookmark.

What attitude toward God do the nations (the peoples, kings, and rulers) have?

What is God's attitude toward the nations? What evidence does the text give to help you understand why God has this attitude?

Read Micah 4:1-3 to see how the message of Psalm 2:1-4 applies to a prophet in “the last days.”

If the nations believed this psalm’s truth about the King, what would their attitude be, and how would they act? What does God tell them?

Some classify this as a coronation psalm, written to celebrate the anointing and installation of David or one of his descendants as king. How does Psalm 2 help you see that its powerful truth has a future fulfillment? How does it promise hope for you and me today?

How does this psalm help you pray and worship more intimately?

Finally, determine a theme for this psalm and record it on PSALMS AT A GLANCE.

DAY TWO

Today read Psalm 3 and mark references to the *Lord* and to the psalmist (identified by pronouns such as *I*, *me*, and *my*). Simply underline or color references to the psalmist. The superscription identifies the author and what his occasion for writing was. For us the issue is not so much what David felt on a specific occasion, but generally how we relate in our circumstances to the cry of the psalmist’s heart.

How do you relate to the psalmist’s cry? Mark *save* and add it to your bookmark.

What truths about God help you cling to Him in times of distress?

The psalmist cried out for God’s blessing on His people (verse 8). During Old Testament times this would probably refer to whom? To whom today? Is there hope for blessing for those who belong to God today?

What time of day does this prayer seem to refer to?

Think on these things and then record a theme for Psalm 3 on PSALMS AT A GLANCE.

Now read Psalm 4 and mark references to the *Lord*. This is a pattern for all the psalms, but we'll keep reminding so you won't forget. Just remember, Beloved of God: Habits are developed by repetition. We hope that by the end of your study of Psalms, this will become your habit for studying the Word.

As in Psalm 3, the psalmist refers to his own condition—things going on around him. Mark references to the psalmist as you did before and take note of his circumstances. Also note the time of day as you did in Psalm 3.

Note the contrast between two kinds of people. Mark *sin* in verse 4 and add it to your bookmark. Throughout the Bible, sin and righteousness are major determinants of man's relationship with God.

Which category does the psalmist put himself in? Do you identify with him? Can you turn this psalm into your own prayer before you go to bed tonight?

Finally, record a theme for Psalm 4 on PSALMS AT A GLANCE.

DAY THREE

Read Psalm 5 and note the psalmist's purpose for writing and the timing. Now read it again and mark references to the *Lord*, the psalmist, and his enemies. Add *sing*² and *loving-kindness*³ to your bookmark and mark them in this psalm. *Lovingkindness* describes covenant love, steadfast and merciful. Also mark *iniquity*⁴ and *transgression*,⁵ synonyms for *sin*. Although there are sometimes slight distinctions in meaning in the Hebrew, they're minor and infrequent

enough for us to mark these words the same way for now. Add these to your bookmark because you'll see them over and over in Psalms.

What characteristics of the Lord do you see in this psalm? How do they compare with what you learned in the first four psalms? The psalms are so rich in describing God and His works, you might enjoy journaling what you learn about Him from psalm to psalm. It's early enough in the study so if you want to do this, go back to day 1 and compile into one list what you've seen so far. Add what you learn from each of the remaining 145 psalms.

What is God's attitude toward wickedness in all its forms? What contrast do you see between sinful behavior and what God is like? Notice that the contrast is not between David's enemies and himself, but between his enemies and God. What does this tell you about David?

How does David's example contrast with the way people relate to God today? How do you relate to Him?

Determine a theme for Psalm 5 on PSALMS AT A GLANCE.

DAY FOUR

Read Psalm 6 without stopping to mark anything. What kind of psalm is this? What does the psalmist ask for? Verse 2 says his "bones are dismayed,"⁶ and he asks to be healed. What seems to be his problem? How does verse 2 relate to verse 1?

Again, read and mark references to the *Lord* and the psalmist, and add to your journal about God.

When David asks for healing, does he appeal to his character or God's? What characteristics does David appeal to?

Lovingkindness (verse 4) is a characteristic of God we see throughout the Bible. The word is translated from the Hebrew *chesed*, a covenant term.

Observe the verb tenses in verses 8 and 9. “Has heard” in English implies action already completed. What does this tell you about David’s confidence in prayer? Do you have this confidence? If not, our prayer for you is that by the end of this study of psalms you will gain this intimacy and confidence in prayer and worship that David had toward God.

Don’t forget to record a theme for Psalm 6 on PSALMS AT A GLANCE.

DAY FIVE

Read Psalm 7 today, marking *Lord*, *sing*, *praise*, *righteousness*,⁷ *wicked*, and *judgment*. Add the new key words to your bookmark. You’ll find *sing*, *praise*, and *thanks* throughout the psalms.

Now, what did you see regarding justice for the righteous and his enemies? What conditions bring judgment? What brings vindication? What characteristic of God is the basis for just judgment?

What did you learn about God to take to heart today, to trust in as David the psalmist did?

Finally, determine a theme for Psalm 7 and record it on PSALMS AT A GLANCE.

DAY SIX

Get ready to sing today, Beloved. Read the first and last

verses of Psalm 8 and mark repeated phrases that remind you of praise choruses or songs.

Now read the whole psalm, marking references to *God* and *man*. Then list everything you learn about God and man in these nine verses.

What do you see about yourself in relation to God? How will you respond to God today in worship in light of this truth?

Finally, determine a theme for Psalm 8 and record it on PSALMS AT A GLANCE.

DAY SEVEN



Store in your heart: Psalm 5:3

Read and discuss: Psalms 1–8

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION OR INDIVIDUAL STUDY

- ☞ What situations in the psalmist's life caused him to cry out to God?
- ☞ What did you learn about God's character and ways in these psalms?
- ☞ What did you learn about the relationship between God and the nations—those who do not obey Him?
- ☞ Do these psalms give you patterns for prayer—when to pray, why to pray, and how to pray?
- ☞ Summarize the message of these psalms—share what you put on PSALMS AT A GLANCE.
- ☞ What message of hope do these psalms give?

- ☞ What applications can you make to your own life?
- ☞ How does this week's study motivate you to pray?

THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK

Psalms 5:3 says, "In the morning, O LORD, You will hear my voice; in the morning I will order my prayer to You and eagerly watch." Oh, that we would eagerly watch for God's answer. What a great example! Think about this: Every morning when you wake up, lift your voice to God in prayer for that day. Then eagerly watch through the day to see His answers. Wow! Wouldn't you like to have that reliance on God? Maybe you already do.

Cultivating this intimacy with God takes time and practice. It's developed over a lifetime of various circumstances. Wherever you are in your walk with God, whatever He has taken you through, He is always there. His lovingkindness and mercies are new every morning. He never abandons you.

The superscriptions of Psalms 3 through 8 tell us David wrote them. Even if you haven't studied 2 Samuel and 1 Chronicles to learn about David, you can learn volumes about his life from the way he prays and the things he prays for.

How about you? If people overheard you praying, would they know about your life, about what's going on? Would they learn about your daily needs, wants, and fears, as well as the reasons for your confidence?

What would your prayer life reveal about your relationship to God? If you made a list of what you asked Him for, what you said to Him, and how you praised Him for what He has done and will do, would people know you worship God?

And if people wrote down your prayers for a day, would they get the idea that you truly rely on God? After all, in these

first eight psalms we've already seen prayer in the morning and evening, on arising and retiring. When do you pray?

We've asked these questions to cause you to take stock, to start to measure your own intimacy with God in prayer and worship. The Word of God will do its work as you continue through the psalms. It will lay bare things that need healing, but it will also give you encouragement and hope.

As we spend a lifetime praying, we gain more and more confidence and more and more intimacy with God from our eager watchfulness for His answers. Often we think of prayer as communicating *to* God, talking *to* or *with* Him, and our Bible reading and study as hearing *from* God. Both are true. If we don't apprehend these two functions properly, our intimacy with God won't grow as deep as it should.

Prayer is indeed talking to God and answers are God speaking back to us. Answers may come right away or be delayed. We may need a season of prayer before we receive an answer, and Scripture emphasizes persevering prayer. But God does speak back to us.

Bible reading and study is clearly hearing from God, but we must come before Him in prayer before we begin because spiritual things are spiritually discerned (1 Corinthians 2:13-15). We ask our resident Teacher, the Holy Spirit, to open the eyes of our understanding. The insight into Scripture that He gives is the answer to prayer.

Psalms 1:2 points to this twofold approach to God. It describes the man who is blessed: "But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and in His law he meditates day and night." Prayer and Bible reading and study go hand in hand in our communication with God—a growing intimacy that helps us worship Him in all we do.