

Most Christians for most of the Christian centuries have learned to pray by praying the Psalms. The Hebrews, with several centuries of a head start on us in matters of prayer and worship, provided us with this prayer book that gives us a language adequate for responding to the God who speaks to us.

The impulse to pray is deep within us, at the very center of our created being, and so practically anything will do to get us started – “Help” and “Thanks!” are our basic prayers. But honesty and thoroughness don’t come quite as spontaneously.

Faced with the prospect of conversation with a holy God who speaks worlds into being, it is not surprising that we have trouble. We feel awkward and out of place: “I’m not good enough for this. I’ll wait until I clean up my act and prove that I am a decent person.” Or we excuse ourselves on the grounds that our vocabulary is inadequate: “give me a few months - or years - to practice prayers that are polished enough for such a sacred meeting. Then I won’t feel so ill at ease.”

Untutored, we tend to think that prayer is what good people do when they are doing their best. It is not. Inexperienced, we suppose that there must be an “insider” language that must be acquired before God takes us seriously in our prayer. There is not. Prayer is elemental, not advanced, language. It is the means by which our language becomes honest, true, and personal in response to God. It is the means by which we get everything in our lives out in the open before God.

Commentary on Psalms from The Bible Project:

- <https://thebibleproject.com/explore/psalms/>
- <https://thebibleproject.com/all-videos/?category=&q=psalms>

Commentary on Psalm 73 from bible.org

- <https://bible.org/seriespage/6-psalm-73-suffering-righteous-and-success-sinners>
- <https://bible.org/seriespage/3-success-sinners-and-suffering-saints-psalm-73>
- <https://bible.org/seriespage/24-psalms>
- <https://bible.org/seriespage/25-wisdom-literature-psalms-part-i>
- <https://bible.org/seriespage/26-wisdom-literature-psalms-part-ii>

For more information on Psalms visit:

- <https://www.biblica.com/resources/scholar-notes/niv-study-bible/intro-to-psalms/>

READ Psalm 73

(The following discussion questions are adapted from The Serendipity Bible)

Opening

- If you had to choose between being A. prosperous and wicked B. poverty stricken and pure in heart, what would you be? Why?

Digging in — Discovering the Word

- Asaph is credited with Psalms 50 and 73-83. He was most likely a poet associated with the Temple. What is his nagging doubt in this psalm (vv. 2-3)?
- What had he seen (vv.4-12)? What attitudes may be undermining his faith?
- Do you think Asaph is objective in what he sees? Why or why not? What does he find both attractive and negative in the life-style, worldview and agnosticism of the rich?
- What was he hoping his “pure heart” would get him (vv.13-14)? What causes him to change his mind (vv. 15-17)? To what might the “sanctuary of God” refer? What new insight does he gain? Why does Asaph feel like God sleeps (v.20; see 35:23;44:23)?
- What “glory” does Asaph have in mind (vv.24-25; see 16:9-11)? What path will he take toward it (vv.23-28)?
- What constant hope literally surrounds Asaph’s envy and despair (vv. 1,28)

Connecting the Dots — Applying the Word

- Imagine your life now is just a dream(or a nightmare), and when you awake, all will return to normal. What heavy burden, human ill or gross injustice would you like to wish away, as if it were but a dream? Do you every share Asaph’s envy? Does his insight satisfy you? Why or why not?
- Name some rich and famous people who have committed suicide, gone through a string of unhappy marriages or lost fortunes to drugs and alcohol? What comes first the problems or the money? What problems does money create? If you were suddenly rich and famous, would you be free of these problems?
- When your feet have stumbled in this area, how have you recovered your balance?
- Have you had a “sanctuary” experience? When? Where? What happened? What are you doing to keep that faith perspective alive?
- How would you explain to a child why God does not knock down bullies and trouble-makers at school?