

Getting Started

HOW TO STUDY THE PSALMS

1. Spend time dedicating your study time to the Lord in prayer. (IOUS)
2. Read the psalm you are studying straight through without stopping, out loud if you can.
3. Read it again more slowly, this time marking interesting words, thoughts, images, or questions you may have.
4. Use the checklist for additional observations. Challenge yourself to come up with 50 unique observations (not meanings) for each psalm.
5. Consider the psalm in the overall place in the psalter. How might this impact how you understand this psalm? How might this point to Christ? How might Jesus have prayed this psalm?
6. Jot down some ideas on the meaning of this psalm after this initial reflection.
7. Check a commentary or consult the suggested links for additional insights. This may also help you to refine your interpretation.
8. Most importantly, after studying the psalm, ask yourself how you can use this psalm to pray. Can you follow its train of thought? Can you focus on an image or truth about God? How can this truth impact your daily life? Are there areas of confession and repentance this psalm surfaces?
9. Read it through from beginning to end one more time, this time pausing to pray as you are prompted.
10. Close your time in worship and thanksgiving using the playlists or suggested tracks if you wish.

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- Book:** What book is this psalm in? How might this give some context?
- Notes:** authorship, tunes, types of song, situation? If there is one, can you find the narrative and read it for background?
- Genre:** What **genre(s)** best describe this psalm?
 - Lament, hymn, wisdom, confidence, remembrance, kingship?
 - Does it have an element of prophecy as well?
 - The psalm may fit more than one genre.
- Flow/sections:** Does the psalm have a train of thought? Is there a story that unfolds? Does it increase or decrease in direction or intensity? Try to block out the sections of the psalm.
- Chiastic structure:** Does the psalm begin/end with exact or similar ideas? If you were to move inwards, where might the central “bullseye” be?
- Parallelism:** Take some time to explore the terms in the parallel lines. How do they extend or show the opposite? How does it deepen the point the psalmist is trying to make?
- Repetition:** Are there any words, phrases, ideas, motifs, etc. that are repeated?
- Grammar I:** Look at the pronouns. Are they:
 - First person: I, me, my, we us, our
 - Second person: you, your
 - Third person: he, she, it, they, them
 - Are they singular or individual? Or are they plural, more than one?
- Grammar II:** Look at the verbs. Are they:
 - Present—current situation
 - Past—already happened once (imperfect) or completed for good (perfect)
 - Future—still to come
- Emotional Tone:** Major (positive) or minor (negative) key or both? Where and how does it transition and change?
- Themes:** Are there any themes?
 - God/His nature, creation/fall, nations, Zion, Law/Torah, Covenant, future
 - Christ: does this psalm point to Him? How? Does he pray this?
- Imagery:**
 - Similes, metaphors, personification, symbols, motifs?