

FEATS Module 5: Wisdom Literature
Homework to be Completed
Prior to Learning Session #3

Note: There are four PDF files of articles associated with this learning session. Be sure you download them from the FEATS Homework website.

Reading and Discussion Preparation for Psalms: Introduction to Psalms

The book of Psalms is more than a collection of chapters that offer praise, laments, songs, and requests to God. *Each psalm is an invitation for the reader to pray along.*

Psalms as a book of teaching on prayer

Eugene Peterson, *Working the Angles* (e.g., pages 50, 54-56) says that the Psalms is the book from which Christians have always learned to pray (till our age!). We should not assume we know how to pray. God wants to guide us.

B. S. Childs (*Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture*) talks about the “canonical shaping” of the Psalter. The Psalter is divided into five books, like the Torah (note the Blessings at the end of 41, 72, 89, 106). Psalm 1 is the introduction to the whole - asking you to treat the Psalter like Torah.

But note that the Psalter teaches not by telling but by showing. The Psalms speak *from* God by showing us how to speak *to* God.

Psalms as a book

But beyond Psalm 1 there isn't much structure. People often wish they could get a hang for the structure of the Psalms as a whole, as you might want to get a hang for the structure of Genesis or Isaiah. Unfortunately (?) the Psalter doesn't work like that - it doesn't have that sort of a structure. But...

Instead of looking for a structure of the whole, we can aim to understand the *types* of psalm that keep recurring. The main ones are songs of 1) praise or hymns, 2) prayers or laments (corporate and individual), and 3) thanksgivings or testimonies (corporate and individual).

Psalms as an evangelistic book

Walter Brueggemann: The psalms make it possible to talk about things that you can't talk about anywhere else - they make it possible to be real.

Psalms as a book for preaching

We need to take account of its presence in Scripture, which includes the NT - but beware of letting the NT muffle this part of the Word of God. Some psalms may point to Jesus, but they also had significance for the readers before Jesus.

We need to take account of the way this book communicates - not in the form of teaching but in the form of actual prayer and praise.

Homework for Psalms

NOTE: The psalms within the categories below are not the only ones that fit the category. There are other psalms that would fit as well, and you are welcome to find them and include them in this month's homework.

Week One: Songs of praise or hymns

Read Psalms 8, 19, 82, 93, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100, 103, 104, 146, 147

1. For any of the psalms above, list some attributes of God that are stated or assumed (and note which psalm you are reading)
 2. Note any psalm that you find interesting and/or can identify with personally.
 3. Based on these psalms, what sorts of things are appropriate to say to God? (What is appropriate to put in prayers to God?)
- Read article "The Costly Loss of Praise" by Rolf Jacobson

Week Two: Prayers / Petitions / Laments (corporate and individual)

Read Psalms 6, 13, 22, 25, 42, 43, 44, 58, 74, 85, 86, 89, 106

1. For any of the psalms above, list some attributes of God that are stated or assumed (and note which psalm you are reading)

2. Note any psalm that you find interesting and/or can identify with personally.
 3. Based on these psalms, what sorts of things are appropriate to say to God? (What is appropriate to put in prayers to God?)
- Read article “The Dynamic Cycle of Praise and Prayer in the Psalms” by John Goldingay

Week Three: Prayers / Petitions / Laments (corporate and individual) - cont.

Read Psalms 10, 12, 26, 31, 38, 39, 54, 55, 60, 70, 102, 109, 137

1. For any of the psalms above, list some attributes of God that are stated or assumed (and note which psalm you are reading)
 2. Note any psalm that you find interesting and/or can identify with personally.
 3. Based on these psalms, what sorts of things are appropriate to say to God? (What is appropriate to put in prayers to God?)
- Read article “The Costly Loss of Lament” by Walter Brueggemann

Week Four: Thanksgivings or testimonies (corporate and individual)

Read Psalms 23, 40, 90, 92, 107, 121, 122, 124, 127, 138

1. For any of the psalms above, list some attributes of God that are stated or assumed (and note which psalm you are reading)
 2. Note any psalm that you find interesting and/or can identify with personally.
 3. Based on these psalms, what sorts of things are appropriate to say to God? (What is appropriate to put in prayers to God?)
- Read article “The Psalms as Canon” by Walter Brueggemann