

DON'T KNOW HOW TO PRAY?

An Answer from the Psalms



A Workbook on Prayer and Praying the Psalms
By Pastor David Braden

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Introduction

“Turn to the Lord’s prayer in the sermon on the mount” is the answer most often given when asked the question on the cover of this workbook. And it is a good answer and perhaps the best answer for new Christians.

Many God-fearing Christians all over the face of the earth have committed this prayer to memory and use it on many occasions.

However, there is another answer.

Why not turn to the book of Psalms, Israel’s songbook, Israel’s prayer book, and use the Psalms that were prayed by many God-fearing, God-loving persons? The people praying these Psalms prayed in every situation in life and in such a way that the Holy Spirit deemed their prayers worthy of recording for future generations.

Well, that’s fine for you to say, but which one should I pray, and how do I do it? Many are national prayers, congregational prayers, prayers in the third person plural, etc. How can I make these prayers my own?

That is the purpose of this study course and booklet...to provide some introductory instruction to people who want to pray the Psalms. It also provides answers to other questions such as “Why should I pray the Psalms?” or “Who else is doing this?”

Praying the Psalms is not a new or novel idea. Dedicated Christians have, for centuries, prayed the Psalms. One author I was reading recently wondered why Christians today aren’t praying the Psalms. I believe many do. They just don’t talk about it.

I’ve have prayed the Psalms for some time now and find it to be an enriching, rewarding experience. Sometimes, when I’m having a bad day (or just don’t know what’s going on except that my countenance is downcast), I spend 30-40 minutes praying some of the Psalms I’ve memorized, and often, after the time of prayer, the cloud has lifted.

Praying the Psalms renews our minds and does a warfare. It is a putting off of the old, natural patterns of thinking and putting on the new, the ways, plans and purposes of God.

I am convinced that praying the Psalms will enrich the devotional life of anyone with the discipline to embrace it.

I also know that since the Psalms are the Word of God that they are powerful, effective and alive to work in us the purposes of God, to make us more like Christ.

This course was first taught as a 4 session course at Church. This workbook was developed as a guideline for each of the four sessions.

Additionally, T.M. Moore’s book “God’s Prayer Program, Passionately Using the Psalms in Prayer” was used as a supplemental reading assignment for the course. There are a number of references to his book in this document.

Lesson #1

- Lesson #1 Outline:**
- I. Growing in God's Word.
 - II. Why should we pray?
 - III. Why pray the Psalms?
 - IV. Homework for the next class
 - V. A caution

I. Growing in God's Word:

There are many ways we can be involved with God's Word. Each of these ways can be useful to us.

1. **Reading** scriptures
2. **Understanding** what you're reading (see Neh. 8: 2, 3, 8)
3. **Meditating** on a passage (Ps 1)
4. **Memorization** "Thy Word have I hid in my heart..." (Ps. 119:11)
5. **Studying** the Word in depth
6. **Hearing** the Word preached
7. **Listening** to scripture songs
8. **Obeying** what God's Word says
9. **Sharing** God's truth with others
10. **Quoting** God's Word in times of trial or spiritual warfare (see Matt. 4)
11. **Praying** God's Word (e.g. praying the Psalms)
12. _____

Can you identify another way to be involved in God's Word.(add at # 12 above)

The fact that there are so many ways to experience God's Word in our lives gives us a strong clue as to the importance of God's Word in our lives.

II. **Why should we pray?**

I encourage you to look up the scriptures as you read through this listing.

1. Prayer is the natural expression of our new life in God's family.
2. Prayer is our life line to the Father; in it, we communicate and fellowship with our Heavenly Father.
3. This is the example given us by Jesus' life. (see p. 30)
4. It is a command. (Matt. 7:7 – ask, seek, knock)
5. Through prayer, we bring down the blessings of heaven on ourselves and others. (Ja. 5:16 – *prayers of a righteous man...*)
6. Prayer is transformational; through it, by the Holy Spirit, we are changed and transformed. (Ps. 51 – David's petition to "*create in me a clean heart.*")

7. Prayer maintains the devil's defeat. It is part of our spiritual armor/weaponry. It is vital to defeating our enemy. (see Eph. 6:10-20 – *praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit...*)
8. Prayer strengthens our faith. Ps. 40:1-3 Note what God did in response to David's cry for help.
9. Prayer is the way to know great and hidden things. (see Jer. 33:3)
10. Prayer pleases God. (He sees us doing something He has commanded us to do.) Ps. 27:8 "*When you said: Seek my face...*"
Also: Ps 50:15 "*Call on me in the day of trouble...*"
11. Prayer is the surest way to know peace. (see Phil. 4:6-7)
12. Prayer is our means of help in times of trouble. (Ps. 28:1, Ps 40:1-2)

From these 12 reasons alone, we should easily be able to agree with T.M. Moore when he says: "Mastering the discipline of prayer is something to which every Christian must devote himself." (pp. 48-49)

Do these potentials and promises encourage you to become more effective in prayer?

And...these are just some of the reasons to cultivate an effective prayer life. (Our workbook provides 17 reasons for prayer.)

See if you can add several more reasons. Be sure to provide a scripture quote or an explanation for your responses below.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

III. Why pray the Psalms?

1. Praying the Psalms teaches us to pray with wisdom, boldness and in ways we would probably never think to pray.

Examples: Ps 119:33-40 - Look for 8 important ways every Christian should pray.

Ps 90: 12, 16-17 – "teach us to number our days"

Ps 2:2 - the kings and rulers of the earth

2. The Psalms remind us of **who God is** and, in doing so, provide us words with which to pray and worship Him.

Examples: Ps 145: 3, 5, 6b, 7-8, 17) – "His greatness is unsearchable."

Ps 8, 19 (creation Psalms)

Ps 90: 1-2 (Eternal, everlasting)

3. The Psalms provide one of the most complete pictures of who God is.
- 8, 19, 100 He is the Creator of the universe.
 - 93 He is the ruler of all He has made.
 - 50, 96 He is the judge of all men.
 - 95, 105 He is the redeemer of His people.
 - 50, 111 He is all wise, powerful and glorious in all He is and does.
 - 23 He is our shepherd who leads, feeds, guides, heals and protects.
 - 40 He is the one who rescues us from the difficulties of life.
 - We see pictures of Jesus suffering (22), His vicarious atonement (69), His resurrection (16) and His eternal reign (2) Messianic themes appear in many of the Psalms (40)
 - 145 His greatness is unsearchable (has no limits).

4. The Psalms encourage us to think great thoughts about God.
- e.g. Ps 40 He thinks about us.
 G. Ervin calc = 7 Xs/sec (that God thinks about us)

Scientific fact: The human brain is capable of processing 10^{15} actions/**sec** (and He created it.)

As we meditate and pray on these Psalms, we build within ourselves a more complete picture of the God we serve. We are continually reminded of features of God that we wouldn't ordinarily think upon. This alone will increase our faith and trust in God.

5. The Psalms remind of what God has done and will do.

Examples: Ps 84:11b "No good thing does He withhold from those who walk uprightly."

Ps 145: 9, 14-16 "*You open Your hand and satisfy the desire of every living thing.*"

Ps 46 (A Mighty Fortress – Luther) – refuge and strength

6. The Psalms present us with a wide range of individual situations and needs. In these situations, we learn the prayers of godly saints and how we too can pray when we find ourselves in similar situations. As we pray these Psalms, they become our words, our prayers.

Ps 40 in a horrible pit
 Ps 51 David – repenting
 Ps 73 complaint about the prosperity of the wicked

Who hasn't, at some time in their life, prayed Psalm 23 or 51?

Our prayers become informed and guided by the words and thoughts that are provided in the scriptures.

7. The Psalms are a part of the sword of the Spirit and praying the Psalms is one of the ways we can effectively employ this spiritual weapon.

Examples

- “waking up with a cloud, a downcast spirit” (see introduction)
- feeling my mind hassled

8. Praying the Psalms engages the power and effectiveness of the Word of God, our spiritual sword, that cleanses and renews our minds.

Illustration: The first time I began a program of memory work, I experienced a work of cleansing and a renewed excitement about God’s Word. I was so excited about it that I became instrumental in persuading others that they too should embrace a memory program.

9. We know that the Psalms are God’s Word and praying them pleases Him.

I believe that God enjoys hearing His children saying His words back to Him.

10. In praying the Psalms, we get a glimpse into the heart and life of men and women of God. This will be challenge to us to live holy lives.

Example: Ps 35:11-14 David’s prayer for his enemies
Neh. 1: Nehemiah heard the news of the demise of Jerusalem. Then he prayed and fasted for 4 months. (even though he had never been there nor known anyone who was living in Jerusalem at the time)

11. The Psalms provide us many examples of people who had a problem. As they begin to pray, we hear the groanings of their hearts for freedom and deliverance. As they continue to pray, they come through the difficulty and come to a place of peace and praise, of worship. As such, they are a help and a guide for us when we are trying to persevere in a trial.

Examples: Ps 22 the suffering of the cross, to praise
Ps 43 rejection, self-rebuke, praise, hope
Ps 13 hopelessness, confidence, praise

Too often, we stop short of a completed prayer. Our prayers are usually ended when we complete our petition or complaint. The Psalms show us a pattern of completed prayer.

We see the instantaneous results of a Psalm of prayer.

Important note: Praying the Psalms is not always the answer to a problem or difficulty you may be facing. Other actions such as repentance, confession, forgiveness, restitution, etc. may be the appropriate action following a prayer to resolve a conflict or difficulty.

12. Praying the Psalms remind us:

- Of who we are Ps 100
- to be thankful Ps 100
- to have an attitude of praise Ps 100
- of His blessings and promises Ps 91:3-15 (as a result of vv. 1-2: dwells and trusts)
- of His mercy in choosing us (see Romans 9)

13. Praying the Psalms reminds us of God’s wisdom.

- Examples: Ps 1 - the Godly vs the ungodly
 Ps 40 - the person God uses:
- a. v.4 *“makes the Lord his trust”*
 - b. v.8 *“delight to do your will”*
 - c. v.8b *“law is within my heart”*
- Ps 84 – the person God uses - *“makes it a spring”*
 Ps 91 – the person God uses - *“set his love on me (God)”*

Note the blessings that accrue from this action.

14. Praying the Psalms is a deterrent to sin. (Ps. 119:11 *“Thy Word have I hid in my heart that I might not sin against God.”*)

15. When you pray the Psalms, you begin to understand the wisdom and beauty of each Psalm. They become familiar friends that are available to you at all times and in all circumstances.

- sitting in the Dr.’s office waiting for the doctor – rehearsing Ps 148-150
- sitting at a traffic light waiting for the complete intersection light rotation because you barely missed the green light.
-

Can you think of additional reasons as to why praying the Psalms is desirable?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

IV. Homework for the next class

1. Read chapters 1 and 2 of T.M.Moore’s book on Prayer.
2. Memorize either of the following “verbatim” Psalms:
 Psalm 8, or
 Psalm 150, **or**
 Do the Psalm 90 Verbatim Praying exercise that begins on page 83.

V. A caution

Taking up the discipline of praying the Psalms will not be an easy task. No true discipline ever is. It will require determination and perseverance on your part.

Nothing worthwhile ever comes without a price.

If you're looking for an easy way to become effective in prayer, there is none.

Especially in prayer, there is a warfare to be fought. Our enemy does not want us to be effective in prayer. He does not want to see a church and its people effective in prayer.

Prayer is hard work and learning to pray the Psalms will be one of the most difficult adventures in which you will ever engage.

Don't be discouraged. Saints throughout the ages have found this discipline to be a source of great power, blessing and encouragement and a help to intimate fellowship with God.

Lesson #2

Last week: Growing in God's Word.
Why should we pray?
Why pray the Psalms?

Lesson #2 Outline:I. Themes in the book of Psalms
II. "How to" pray the Psalms
III. Preparing to pray
IV. Homework for the next class

I. Themes in the book of Psalms

Psalms is a book of music without notes and prayers without restraint. (Original tunes are no longer in existence.)

It contains some of the highest notes of praise while also containing some of the lowest notes of struggling hearts that will break if their deliverer doesn't answer soon.

The Psalms start where we are and teach us how to find refuge in the Lord, regardless of our emotional state, so that we may rest and rejoice in Him.

Themes in Psalms: Following are some of the themes found in the Psalms.

- thanksgiving and adoration (100)
- individual and community praise
- individual and national lament (137)
- royal – focusing on the kingship of God
- songs of Zion
- penitential/confession (32, 38, 51)
- imprecatory – not cries for personal vengeance but to God to vindicate His name and preserve the office and mission of His plan of salvation against those who have tried to usurp the cause of God and Christ in the world
- Messianic (22)
- wisdom (1, 119)
- testimony (40)
- admonition/warning (50)
- songs of ascent – to be sung when going to Jerusalem (120-134)
- Hallel – high praise 146-150

II. "How to" Pray the Psalms

A. **Verbatim Praying** (8, 19, 23, 38, 44, 51, 56, 57, 67, 80, 84, 90, 92, 145)

Praying the words that are in the text, just as they are.
In some Psalms, you may want to change the action from indicative (statement of a fact) to direct address.

Example: Ps 23 "*The Lord is my shepherd.*"
to: Lord, You are my shepherd.

B. Paraphrase Praying (9, 18, 26, 36, 59, 62, 84)

Paraphrase praying is useful when the circumstances of the prayer don't fit with ours but suggest something similar.

e.g. Ps 59:1-4 (p. 89) We may not have enemies lurking behind a tree but we do have spiritual enemies that will try to trip us up.

Ps 84:9 "Behold our shield; look upon the face of Your anointed."
This is a reference to the king of Israel. Our prayer might be for our president or people in positions of authority.

C. Praying over a Psalm (78, 104, 105, 106, 147)

Summarize large sections. Useful in praying longer Psalms.
Summarize the content of the Psalm or of each stanza/segment.

107: Ways people go astray: lost their way, rebelled, iniquities, busy in business.

Especially useful for Psalms that rehearse the history of Israel. Ps 78

D. Responsive (1, 37, 46, 73, 87, 91, 99, 114)

Respond to issues raised in the Psalm or in each segment.
Allow the Psalm to guide your prayers.

e.g. Ps 1 guard: my steps/path; my friendships; the desires of my heart

E. Guided (2, 47, 67, 72, 73, 80, 129, 130, 133, 134)

Let the Psalm guide you to pray for something particularly pressing in your life or for someone else:

e.g. Ps 67 might guide you to pray for missions
Ps 129 : persecution – persecuted church
Ps 90:16 "...let your work appear to your servants and your glory to their children"

We could pray that God will reveal Himself and His glory to the youth of CCW.

F. Combination (18 (see Moore: p. 100), 19, 40)

Some Psalms can be combinations of any of the 5 methods above.

e.g. 19 vv. 1-11 guided : praise – creation and the Word
vv. 12-14 verbatim

In class: Review the following Psalms and determine how to pray: 1, 8, 18, 59, 78, 106*

III. Preparing to Pray

The following outline is suggested as a guide to be used in preparing to pray a psalm.

1. Select a psalm.
2. Read through it several times until you have a sense or understanding of the psalm.
3. Note the following:
 - A. Type of Psalm (general category)
 - B. Theme
 - C. Key verse/s
 - D. Segments
 - E. Key words
 - F. Determine “how to pray”
 - G. Identify any memory work you want to do.

An excellent way to pray a “Verbatim” Psalm is to commit it to memory.

This stores the Psalm in your heart so that it is readily accessible to you no matter where you are. (Doctor’s office, waiting at a stop light, standing in line at Walmart, etc.)

It also serves to eliminate distractions and the wandering mind. Recalling a Psalm from your mind requires a higher level of concentration than reading it from a page and therefore forces you to focus more intently on it.

A recommended memory process:

1. Begin by selecting a short Psalm (e.g. 8, a Psalm of ascent from 120-134, 121 is an excellent starting choice “I lift up my eyes to the hills...”)
2. Do one verse a day.
3. Read the verse out loud 10 times.
4. Close the book and say it out loud 10 times. By now, you will most likely have it committed to memory. This process might take 5 minutes.

5. On day two, take the next verse and follow the guidelines of step 4.
6. Then add the verse from the previous day and repeat them in sequence 5 times.
7. Continue this process a verse per day until the entire Psalm is stored in your heart.

IV. Homework for the next class

1. Select a Psalm and walk through the steps of Section III.
2. Read chapter 3 of the work book.

Lesson #3

Lesson #1: Growing in God's Word.
Why should we pray?
Why pray the Psalms?

Lesson #2: I. Themes in the book of Psalms
"How to" pray the Psalms

- verbatim
- paraphrase
- praying over a psalm
- responsive
- guided
- combination

Preparing to pray

Lesson #3 Outline:

- I. Difficulties with praying the psalms
- II. Personalizing the psalms
- III. Examples of paraphrase praying
- IV. Homework for final session

I. Difficulties with praying the psalms

1. Not all of the Psalms are written as prayers to God. Some Psalms were originally written as devotional thoughts about God (23); a few Psalms pour out anger at enemies (3, 4); some Psalms are instructional (119) - teaching the Law of God.

Ps 1 is a wisdom psalm that contrasts the righteous and the ungodly.

Ps 2 is a Messianic psalm in which the ungodly are shown to war against God's rule. God's Son is established as the ruler over all nations and the earth's rulers are warned to serve the Lord with fear.

2. Not all psalms are directly addressed to our present circumstances; e.g. psalms of Zion, songs of ascent. (were sung by Israelites when making a pilgrimage to Jerusalem for an annual feast).

Why not try reciting Psalms while you're on vacation when you're on the road.

3. Not all psalms are written in language that is easy to grasp; e.g. 91: "*He who dwells in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.*" (What/where is the secret place? How do you find it?)
4. Some are filled with historical references or narratives; e.g. 78
5. Some don't fit our needs; e.g. 137

6

So...how do we personalize the psalms so that they fit our current need and rhetorical style? How do we bring them to our present-day situation? How do we work with a psalm so that it becomes “our words?”

III. Personalizing the Psalms

1. Change nouns, pronouns, verb tenses and moods.
e.g. change from statement of fact (indicative) to direct address

e.g. 23: *“The Lord is my shepherd.”* To: Lord, You are my shepherd.
“I shall not want.” To: I won’t lack anything that I need.

e.g. 76 *“In Judah, God is known.”* To: Lord, your people know You well.
“His name is great in Israel.” To: We exalt your great name, O Lord.

e.g. 149:2 *“Let Israel rejoice in their maker.”*
To: *“We rejoice in You, our Maker.”*
2. Change OT reference to NT realities.

Israel	to: the church (see Rom. 2:28-29: the true Jew)
Offer sacrifices	to: offer sacrifices of praise
Egypt	to: our own deliverance from the bondage of sin
Promised land	to: the land of promises
Israel’s kings	to: our rulers and public officials
3. Change the enemies of the psalmist - to: our spiritual enemies
4. A psalm does not describe our personal situation.

e.g. 88 – Many of us are not in this depth of despair. But, we may know someone who is. Pray for them.
5. Praying what God desires or warns us about.

e.g. Ps 48 – describes the church as “the joy of the whole earth.” This is certainly not true in our world today. But, this is what God desires. So we can pray that God would send a Spirit of revival to His church and put in her the godly characteristics that would make her the joy of the whole earth.
6. Sing the Psalms/Compose a melody for a psalm

7. Praying the Messianic psalms (see P. 115 Moore for further discussion of this topic.)
 - A. Keep in mind our union with Christ
 - B. Recall the work of Christ (see Ps 22)
 - C. Meditate on His glory.

8. Problem Psalms:
 - 119 - length
 - 45 – references to “the king’s daughter”
 - 49 – the foolishness of the unbelief of the peoples of the world
 - 58 – unrighteous “gods”

IV. Examples of paraphrase praying

In many psalms, the wording or circumstances do not entirely fit our own. The following examples provide exercises in paraphrasing a psalm so that they closely align with our circumstances or use wording which is more appropriate for our way of speaking and more meaningful to us. (A modern paraphrase translation can be helpful in this exercise.)

1. Psalm 23

(rich in symbolism – see “A Shepherd Looks at Ps 23” by Phillip Keller)

“The Lord is my shepherd. _____
 I shall not want. _____
 He makes me to lie down in green pastures. _____
 He leads me beside the still waters. _____
 He restores my soul. _____
 He leads me in paths of righteousness _____
 for His Name’s sake. _____
 Yea though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death

 I will fear no evil _____
 For You are with me _____
 Your rod and your staff, they comfort me _____
 You prepare a table before me _____
 In the presence of my enemies. _____
 You anoint my head with oil _____
 My cup runs over. _____
 Surely goodness (**tov**)and mercy shall follow me _____
 all the days of my life _____
 And I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever

2. Psalm 1

Blessed is the man _____
 Who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, _____
 Nor stands in the path of sinners, _____
 Nor sits in the seat of the scornful. _____

But his delight is in the Law of the Lord _____
And on His Law he meditates day and night. _____
He shall be like a tree _____
Planted by the rivers of water _____
That brings forth its fruit in its season. _____
Whose leaf also shall not wither. _____
And whatever he does shall prosper. _____
The ungodly are not so, _____
But are like the chaff which the wind drives away. _____
Therefore, the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment _____
Nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous _____
For the Lord knows the way of the righteous _____
But the way of the wicked shall perish. _____

V. Homework for the next class

1. Read Chapter 4 in "Moore"
2. Select a psalm and paraphrase it so that it will be your words, your situation.

or: Compose a melody for a Psalm or a portion of a Psalm.

Word Study from Ps 23:6

"good" from Hebrew word "tov" = to be good, beneficial, be well, be pleasing, be favorable, to be lovely, to be cheerful, to be happy, to be comfortable, to be right, to make good, to do well, do good, to adorn, to cheer up, to please. It ranges from practical economic or material good to abstract good. It may refer to moral goodness or what is good philosophically. It can also refer to good quality.

Does this enlarge the meaning of the phrase "yom tov?" (good day)

For Meditation:

Also the word "follow" in this verse means **to pursue, to chase after**.

What are the implications of **chasing after** rather than following?

What does this say about the heart of God? _____

Why would the God of the universe be chasing after you (or me)?

What will God do when he "catches us?" _____

Do you "comprehend"/"know" that God is pursuing you? _____

Could this knowledge give you hope when you're in a desperate situation?

Consider this translation: It is a guarantee that every day of your life God is chasing after you with His "tov" and "chesed" (covenant faithfulness).

Lesson #4

- Lesson #4 Outline:**
- I. the promise of the program
 - II. staying with the program
 - III. homework
 - IV. “by the numbers”

Review:

“How to” pray the Psalms

- Verbatim
- Paraphrase
- Praying over a psalm (lengthy psalms)
- Responsive
- Guided
- Combination

- homework assignment Lesson #3
 - Select a psalm and paraphrase it so that it will be your words, your situation; **or**
 - Compose a melody for a Psalm or a portion of a Psalm.

- Difficulties with praying the psalms
- “How to” personalize the psalms

I. The Promise of the Program:

What will your prayer life be like in 3 years? _____

How do you envision it? _____

What do you want it to be? _____

1. a greater sense of the presence of God
2. greater consistency in prayer
3. more comprehensiveness in prayer (cover more subject matter)
4. greater sense of freedom
5. enrichment of all of your prayers
6. see an increase in the quickening power of the Holy Spirit as He brings Psalms to your remembrance in times of ministry.
7. greater effectiveness and power in prayer
8. a greater focus on heavenly realities

9. an enlarged picture in our hearts of the greatness of God (p. 137)
10. an enlarged vision of the person and work of Jesus
11. improved relationship with the Lord
 - the sense of God's presence throughout the day
 - greater insight into the glory of God in every day experience
 - strength for spiritual warfare
 - knowing greater joy and peace
 - more abundant life

II. Staying with the Program:

How will you be able to stay on the program in the midst of the many obstacles you will face?

A. What might the obstacles be?

1. Praying the Psalms is something new to us, something with which we are not familiar. It will require changes, adaptations, adjustments in your usual "modus operandi", it will take you "out of the comfortable."

It may be slow at first and frustrating.

2. Praying the Psalms will require more time and concentration in your prayer life. It will be work (but work well-worth the reward.)
3. You may feel that praying the psalms limits you from getting to the issues that are important to you.
4. Be assured (if you aren't already) that the devil doesn't want you to grow in your prayer life. He will work with numerous distractions to hinder your progress. (the phone will ring, a child will cry, Fedex will deliver a package, a thought will trigger a mental path that takes you away from praying, an emergency will come up the needs to be dealt with right now, etc.)
5. And...the excuses...see chapter 1 of our workbook

"Most things worthwhile in our lives come with a price tag."

B. What can I do to overcome these obstacles?

1. Design a program of praying the psalms that you are willing to embrace.

Go slowly, very slowly at first. Don't commit to the world.

I recommend that you start by memorizing a single Psalm. (See p.12, paragraph III.3.G for a memorization process) Use this as a pilot project to give you a feel for the amount of work involved in a single psalm. Then you'll be more prepared to design a longer-range program.

Experiment. (Most experiments don't go perfectly the first time.)

2. Don't allow guilt over a missed assignment to derail you. Any time we submit to a regular schedule, we run the risk of imposing a kind of legalism on ourselves (complete with self-condemnation) that can be oppressive.

"You will not be able to keep any schedule perfectly."

"The moving finger writes..." (O. Khayam)
Guide the moving finger that is now writing.
(You can't change what it wrote yesterday.)

Simply move on. Pick up where you left off.

Take advantage of the current opportunity you have.

Don't allow the devil to get you in a "dither" (relic word from the past; or, if you prefer "a tornado of confusion") over the previous day's missed opportunity.

3. Learn to deal with distractions. Most of them can be ignored. If a distraction is particularly troublesome, take a moment to pray over it and ask God for help to resolve it or release it.

Call a distraction a distraction. Recognize it for what it is. This is similar to our spiritual warfare...one of the first steps in overcoming is to vocally state that your issue is an attack from the devil. (bring it out into the open, out of the hidden recesses of your mind.)

4. Resist the devil. (James 4:7)
5. Find an accountability partner.
6. Pray the Psalms with someone; at a Bible study, a church meeting, at home with your family, etc.
7. Recognize that prayer is hard work. The holy men of old recognized it as "the labor of God."

III. Homework

1. Finish the book

2. Design and begin your own personal “praying the psalms” program

IV. By the numbers (For your information and curiosity)

Average psalm length (excluding 119) = 15 verses

(with Ps 119 = ~ 16 verses/psalm)

Average length of time to read an average psalm at normal speed = about 1 minute

Psalms with 40 or more verses = 8

Psalms with 30 – 39 verses = 5

Psalms with 20-29 verses = 26

Psalms with 19 or less verses = 111 = 74% of the psalms

Psalms with 6 or less verses = 19

Psalm with the least verses = 117 = 2 verses

Total # of verses in the book of Psalms = 2440

Amount of time needed to read straight through the book of Psalms =

$2440/15 = 162.67$ minutes say about 3 hours to read through the book of Psalms at an average rate of reading.*

* This is using my normal rate of reading (and I’m not a speed reader.)

of verses in each Psalm

	1	11	21	31	41	51	61	71	81	91	101	111	121	131	141
1	6	7	13	24	13	19	8	24	16	16	8	10	8	3	10
2	12	8	31	11	11	9	12	20	8	15	28	10	9	18	7
3	8	6	6	22	5	6	11	28	18	5	22	9	4	3	12
4	8	7	10	22	26	7	10	23	12	23	35	8	8	3	15
5	12	5	22	28	17	23	13	10	13	11	45	17	5	21	21
6	10	11	12	12	11	13	20	12	17	13	48	19	6	26	10
7	17	15	14	40	9	11	7	20	7	12	43	2	5	9	20
8	9	50	9	22	14	11	35	72	18	9	13	29	6	8	14
9	20	14	11	13	20	17	36	13	52	9	31	176	8	24	9
10	18	9	12	17	23	12	5	19	17	5	7	7	8	13	6
Σ	120	132	140	211	149	128	157	241	178	118	260	287	67	128	124

Psalm 32 Paraphrase

Lord, I am blessed because You forgave all of my rebellion and cover my sin.
 Now I can enjoy your presence.
 You bless me by erasing my sins from Your books. You don’t even remember them.

When I refused to recognize my sin, my whole body cried out with conviction.
 Day and night my guilt racked me with pain. My mouth was so dry, I couldn’t even speak.

I recognize my sin that made me a wreck. I can no longer hide my faults from You.

So I confessed my transgression to You and repented. Then You forgave my terrible sin.

Because You are gracious to forgive our iniquity, every godly person will rest securely in You. When judgment comes upon us, I will hide in You when that day comes. I will worship You with songs of deliverance.

Lord, teach me the proper principles of living; guide me so I don't make mistakes. I don't want to be like a horse that can't understand and You have to guide me with a bit in my mouth.

Those who rebel against You have a hard life, but You show mercy to those who trust You.

I am happy because I follow Your principles and I shout for joy because You make me do right.

Psalm 148 NKJV - Verbatim

Praise the Lord!

Praise the Lord from the heavens!

Praise Him in the heights. Praise Him all His angels. Praise Him all His hosts.

Praise Him sun and moon, praise Him all you stars of light.

Praise Him you heavens of heavens and you waters above the heavens.

Let them praise the name of the Lord for He commanded and they were created. He established them forever and ever, He made a decree which shall not pass away.

Praise the Lord from the earth!

You great sea creatures and all the depths,

Fire and hail, snow and clouds, stormy wind fulfilling Your word;

Mountains and all hills, fruitful trees and all cedars;

Beasts and all cattle, creeping things and flying fowl;

Kings of the earth and all peoples, princes and all judges of the earth.

Both young men and maidens, old men and children.

Let them praise the name of the Lord. For His name alone is exalted.

His glory is above the earth and heaven.

And He has exalted the horn of His people, the praise of all His saints- of the children of Israel, a people near to Him. Praise the Lord!

Recommended reading:

“The School of Prayer” by Andrew Murray

“Intercession” by Andrew Murray

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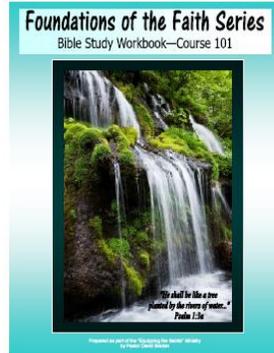
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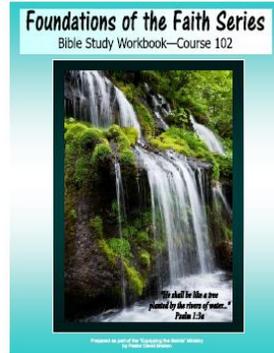
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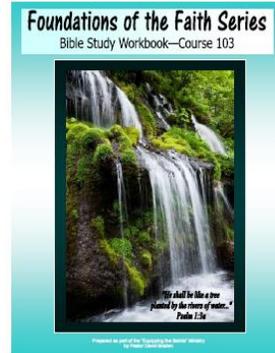
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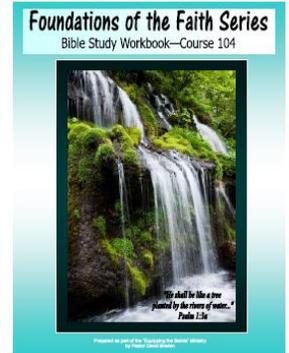
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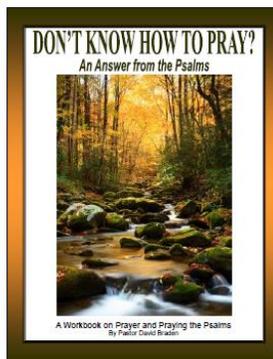


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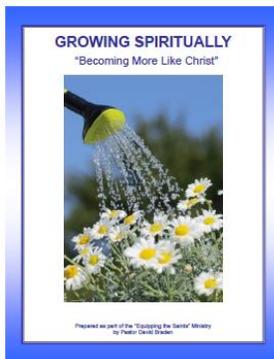
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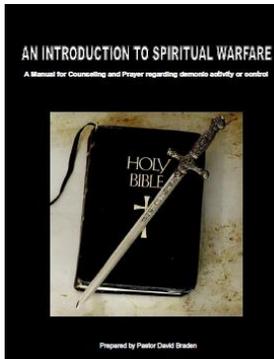
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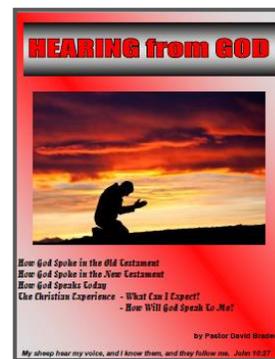
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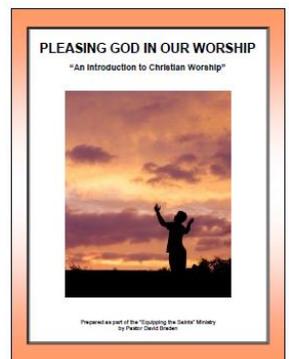
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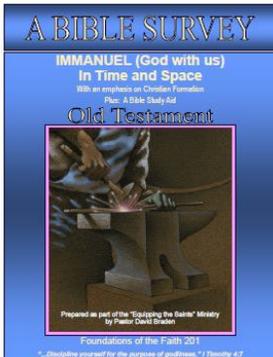


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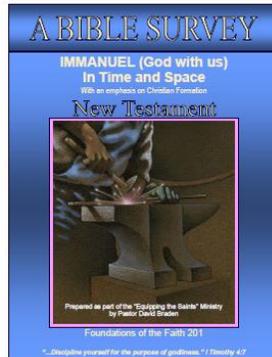
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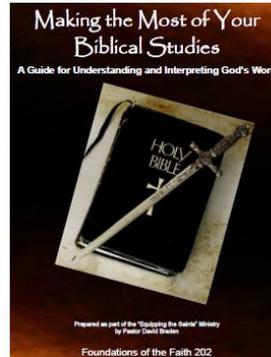
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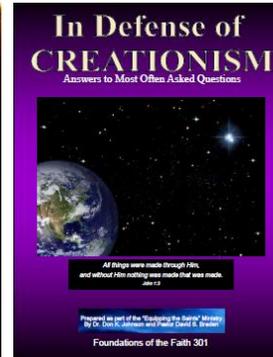
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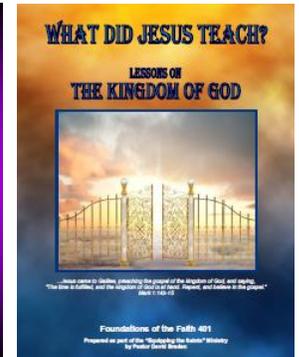
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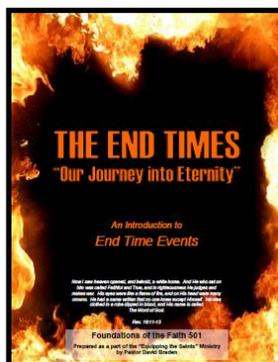


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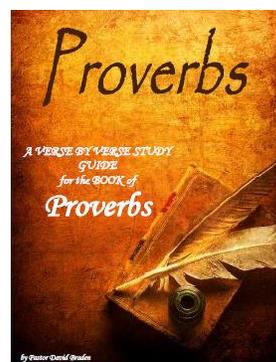


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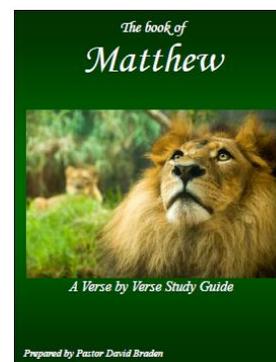
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