

Learning to Pray From the Psalms

"LORD, You Are...
...I Am..."

Lesson 2
April 16

Many psalms begin with an acknowledgement of who God is, and that's where we started in Lesson 1. The God who hears our prayers is our Creator, our King, and our Judge. He desires to be our Rock and our Shepherd. Having acknowledged who God is, many of the psalms move on to acknowledge who we are, and that's a great focal point for Lesson 2.

We are created with God-given hearts.

I will give thanks to the LORD with my whole heart;
I will recount all of your wonderful deeds. (Psa 9:1)

With my whole heart I seek you;
let me not wander from your commandments! (119:10)

Give me understanding, that I may keep your law
and observe it with my whole heart. (119:34)

- In your own words, what do the psalmists mean when they describe doing something "with my whole heart"?
- Why is it important that we engage our "whole hearts" when we pray to God? The opposite of that would be praying half-heartedly, right? Maybe James 1:5-8 comes to mind here. What's the difference between praying with our "whole hearts" and being "double-minded"?
- Using just the passages above, as we look around them at the surrounding verses before and after, what impact can be made on my life when I seek God with my "whole heart"?

We are poor and needy.

As for me, I am poor and needy, but the Lord takes thought of me.

You are my help and my deliverer; do not delay, O my God! (Psa 40:16-17)

Incline your ear, O LORD, and answer me,
for I am poor and needy. (86:1)

- These are just a couple of many examples where the psalmists describe themselves as “poor and needy.” Were they just talking about the amount of money they had or is it deeper than that? In what ways are we all “poor and needy,” and how should that shape the way we pray?
- The psalms encourage us to picture ourselves as “in need” of:
 - 🕯 A shepherd (Psa 23:1; 28:9; 80:1; 119:176; 124). Why? Following that “LORD, you are... I am...” pattern we noticed earlier, how should this shape the way we pray?
 - 🕯 Light, salvation, and strength (Psa 27:1). Why? Following that “LORD, you are... I am...” pattern we noticed earlier, how should this shape the way we pray?

We are unworthy sinners.

There is no soundness in my flesh because of your indignation;
there is no health in my bones because of my sin.

For my iniquities have gone over my head;
like a heavy burden, they are too heavy for me. (38:3-4)

- Throughout the psalms, God is described as “merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love” (86:15; 103:8; 145:8). That’s a powerful description given by God himself that stretches all the way back to Exodus 34:6. What difference can it powerfully make in our prayers?
- Finally, let’s read the prayer of David in Psalm 25. What can we learn from this psalm to help us grow in our own prayers to the same God who heard David 3,000 years ago?