

Wisdom From Above For Living Here Below – Part 5

PSALMS – WHOLLY HUMAN

Explain OT Wisdom Literature

- Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon

Explain LIFE GRID

- DOING (external, physical life) – Proverbs, Job
- FEELING (internal, spiritual life) – Song of Solomon, Ecclesiastes
- CENTER (prayer, worship) – Psalms

PSALMS – WHOLLY HUMAN

The word “Psalm” comes from a Greek word that means “a poem sung to musical accompaniment.” The Hebrew name is “tehillim” which means “praises.” Thus, the book of Psalms is a collection of very personal songs and poems that were sung or read in worship. As the book grew over the centuries, its contents were adapted by the Jews for their personal devotions as well. **Literally, the Psalms taught God’s people to pray!**

In this collection, you will find prayers from suffering people, hymns of praise, confessions of sin, expressions of faith, songs about the glories of nature, prophecies of the Messiah and His coming kingdom, prayers for judgments against one’s enemies, and even songs that teach us the history of God’s people ... but in each one the focal point is the Lord. **Whether the writer is looking back, ahead, up, down or around (!), he first of all looks by faith to the Lord.** More than anything else, the Psalms teach us that in our personal relationship with God every expression of human feeling is legitimate and appropriate.

Much of religion seems to be about making each of us a **HOLY human**, trying to keep a list of rules that seem to be contrary to who we really are inside. But the Psalms are about a relationship with God where we can be **WHOLLY human**, letting God know through prayer exactly how we are feeling and what we are experiencing (as if He didn’t know already!).

The psalms teach us to seek God with our whole heart, to tell Him the truth and tell Him everything, and to worship Him because of Who He is, not just because of what He gives. They show us how to accept trials and turn them into triumphs, and when we’ve failed, they show us how to repent and receive God’s gracious forgiveness. The God described in the book of Psalms is both transcendent and immanent, far above us and yet personally with us. He is both “God Most High” and “Immanuel - God with us.” He is a God who is GREAT and a God who is GOOD. But, most of all, **HE IS A GOD WE CAN KNOW!**

About 2/3 of the writers of the 150 Psalms are identified to us, with David leading the way with 73 Psalms. Remember that David was “a man after God’s own heart” – he was not perfect, but his life was an open book before the Lord. Thus, Psalms is a book about communing with God.

Acts 13:22 (KJV) And when he had removed [Saul], he raised up unto them David to be their king; to whom also he gave testimony, and said, I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfil all my will.

Acts 13:22 (MES) God removed [Saul] from office and put King David in his place, with this commendation: 'I've searched the land and found this David, son of Jesse. He's a man whose heart beats to my heart, a man who will do what I tell him.'

One thing that many people miss in studying the Bible is that it is fundamentally a PRAYER BOOK. It commands us to pray over 250 times, speaks of prayer an additional 280 times, gives repeated examples of great men and women praying, and even records many of their prayers, as in the book of Psalms.

Adam and Eve had no Bible, but they did have direct communication and communion with God. However, through willful disobedience they forfeited this personal relationship and were separated from God’s presence due to their sin. This breach of fellowship so grieved God that He immediately began to offer a means of access into His presence for anyone who desired to commune with Him. **The Bible is a record of God’s restoring to humanity the relationship that was lost in Eden.**

Genesis 4:26 And to Seth, to him also there was born a son; and he called his name Enos: then began men to call upon the name of the LORD.

The first people in the Bible who were called God’s people were not called Christians or Jews. The first people who ever belonged to God were called “those who call on the name of the Lord.” The origin and root of everything we are doing today began with people calling on God. Forget North American Christianity! Forget the religion you were raised in! Forget what you’ve learned by hanging around a Pentecostal church! There’s some meat there, but there’s a lot of bones as well. This original episode is the benchmark, the plumbline, the pattern for a relationship with God – CALL ON ME AND I WILL ANSWER YOU! When you don’t know what to do, I’ll tell you what to do! When you’re ready to throw up your hands, throw them up to Me and call on Me – and I will help you! That is how religion began ... and God has never changed!

We all know we are supposed to pray. But sometimes, one of the most frustrating aspects of prayer is not being able to find the right words to express what dwells deep within your heart. What can you pray about? How should you pray about it? What is really a legitimate prayer? The reasons we have these questions is that we really don't understand what prayer is. We think of it as a religious duty instead of an ongoing, daily relationship which – like every other relationship – includes conversation!

The Bible was given, not just so we could have head knowledge of certain doctrines, but so we could return to a personal relationship with God. Such a relationship demands communication, and prayer is conversation with God. **The Bible is a textbook on prayer.** It teaches us the need to pray, the nature of prayer, and the rewards of prayer. But what seems to have been forgotten is that the words of the Bible can also become the very prayer that we need to pray!

PSALMS IS PROBABLY THE BEST PLACE IN THE BIBLE TO LEARN TO “PRAY THE SCRIPTURES”!

Praying the Scriptures invites us to pray and then initiates our prayer.

- Prayer is as natural to a person as crying is to a baby. It is a reflex action of the human spirit; it is often an involuntary reaction that bypasses the mind. It almost requires a conscious action of the will to override this impulse.
- **Exodus 3:7-8a** And the LORD said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people which *are* in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows; And I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey;
- Prayer is not manipulation of God, it is relationship with God
- **Psalms 5:1-3** Give ear to my words, O LORD, consider my meditation. Hearken unto the voice of my cry, my King, and my God: for unto thee will I pray. My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O LORD; in the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up.
- We have communion with God, not because we desire it but because He has declared it, not because we produce it but because He has already provided it. We need only to embrace it, express it and enjoy it.

- The invitation to pray (Bible) contains an explanation of how to pray. LISTENING TO SOMEONE ELSE PRAY IS NOT PRAYER!

Praying the Scriptures unlocks intimacy and breaks inertia that we sometimes feel in prayer.

- Say back to God what God says to you (in His Word).
- Complexity wars against prayer; simplicity allows prayer to flow.
- Let prayer be an honest expression of your life – you can't fool God! Prayer is not supposed to sound like a slick sales pitch!

Praying the Scriptures illustrates how to pray and inspires us as we pray.

- Note that Hebrew poetry is based on "thought lines" and not rhymes. In the Psalms, sometimes the second line repeats the first in different words (24:3), sometimes the second line contrasts with the first (73:1-2), sometimes the second line explains and expands the first (19:7-9), and sometimes the second line completes the first (47:1).
- The Bible scholars see these literary devices as synonymous parallelism, antithetic parallelism, synthetic parallelism, and climactic parallelism. (That's helpful, isn't it?!) But can you see these techniques for what they really are – they are instructions for prayer!
 - Sometimes we “repeat” ourselves
 - Sometimes we “contradict” ourselves
 - Sometimes we “express” ourselves
 - Sometimes we just “leave it” with God by faith!

Psalms 24:3 *Who shall ascend into the hill of the LORD? or who shall stand in his holy place?*

Psalms 73:1-2 *Truly God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart. But as for me, my feet were almost gone; my steps had well nigh slipped.*

Psalms 19:7-9 *The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether.*

Psalms 47:1 *O clap your hands, all ye people; shout unto God with the voice of triumph.*

- THE BOOK OF PSALMS IS THE THESAURUS OF PRAYER!

Praying the Scriptures illuminates our hearts and instructs our words (so they may stay in keeping with God's will).

- **Psalm 51:1-13** ¹ Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. ² Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. ³ For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me. ⁴ Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest. ⁵ Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me. ⁶ Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom. ⁷ Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. ⁸ Make me to hear joy and gladness; that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice. ⁹ Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities. ¹⁰ Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. ¹¹ Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me. ¹² Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit. ¹³ Then will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee.

Praying the Scriptures gives imagery and intensity to our prayers.

- That's why the Psalms are SONGS – because the overflow of the Word and the Spirit produces singing in the soul!
- **Ephesians 5:18-20** And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ;

Praying the Scriptures brings intercession and immortality to our prayers.

- **Revelation 5:8** And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints.
- **Acts 10:4** And when he looked on him, he was afraid, and said, What is it, Lord? And he said unto him, Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God.