

Week 20

May 14 - May 20

1 Kings 2:13-3:15; 1 Chronicles 29:23-25; 2 Chronicles 1:1-13; Psalm 50,73-83,88-89,103,108-110,122,124,131,133,138-141,143-145

This week I read an article by a woman who had been keeping a journal for 20 years. She said it seemed natural for her to continue when her father suffered a major stroke. She described the benefits of her journaling during the five years she cared for her father until his death. She observed, her daily entries provided her with perspective and a unique sustenance.

I must admit I am not the most faithful, but I see many benefits to journaling. Within this week's passages, we will see how it benefited Solomon as he keeps records of people and situations (and later writes 3,000 proverbs and 1,005 songs). We will read of men whose responsibility it was to record the blessings and actions of God for the people of Israel. We will read David's journaling as he uses words to worship God meditatively.

May 14th

Psalm 103, 108-110, 122, 124. "Like Painting a Sunset"

While painting a sunset I use various colors to bring out an accurate illustration of the real thing. In a similar fashion, David uses various descriptions to illustrate the real thing. David writes of God's love, strength, compassion, and more. Yet, he adds still more dimension to the illustration by adding examples of His love, strength, compassion, or whatever the focus.

The quality of an artistic piece is determined by its "depth." Whether it's sculpture, paint, or song, a greater piece has greater depth. That is the element that David continues to add to the word pictures of God.

For instance, as he describes the love of God in Psalm 103, he tells us what God does for us and how that illustrates His love: "He forgives, He fills my life with good things, He will not constantly accuse us, He does not deal with us as we deserve, He understands our weaknesses," etc.

David did the same thing for illustrating God's strength in Psalm 108.

From your personal experiences, what elements of depth could you add to one of God's characteristics?

May 15th

Psalms 131, 133, 138-141, 143. "Encouragement in the Psalms"

The collection of psalms today provides tremendous encouragement for each of us. After reading through these psalms I found myself feeling a bit guilty for the times I ever question God's involvement in my life. These psalms remind us of God's presence, protection and provision.

And again David expounds on God's qualities: Psalm 131—because of God's perfect nature we can trust Him and therefore find contentment, 133—because of God's plan for unity harmony can be found, 138—because God hears and answers our prayers we find encouragement and strength, 139—because God sees all, knows all, is present everywhere and is all powerful we can find confidence in knowing God's plan for our life is perfect, 140—because God provides deliverance and protection we can find assurance for the future, 141—because God cares and wants to help us we can trust Him to be our refuge, 143—because of God's unfailing love we have hope.

If you're ever feeling a bit discouraged, I would highly recommend reading thoughtfully through these psalms (I especially love 139).

May 16th

Psalm 88-89, 144-145. "Musical Tunes"

The psalms today reflect the journals of three men. The first, Psalm 88, reminds us of several things; one would be the variety of emotions each man is experiencing. Heman describes a despairing heart. Furthermore, his purpose is unique in that it is purely a cry to the Lord in desperation. Whereas, Ethan's psalm describes more the historical events of David's reign. And David's two psalms are expressions of complete praise. Another item to note about Psalm 88 is that it is "to be sung to the tune of..." There are several psalms which acknowledge a musical quality. The English word "psalms" itself is a transliteration of the Greek title of the book which is "sacred songs sung to musical accompaniment." It came from the Greek word meaning "striking a string," or "playing a stringed instrument." You can't escape from music in the Psalms. They are the music, the lyrics for the hymns of ancient Israel. It can't be emphasized strongly enough, the importance of music in worship and in the life of the church.

[illegible]

May 17th

Psalms 50, 73-74. "Leading Worship"

Today—and for the next three days—we will be reading "Psalms of Asaph." Asaph and his sons, who worked under his direction, were given orders by King David to "proclaim God's messages to the accompaniment of harps, lyres, and cymbals" (see 1 Chronicles 6:31-39; 15:16-17; 25:1-2).

Numerous Levites were given various responsibilities as it pertained to worship. Asaph's responsibility was to proclaim God's messages. That does not necessarily mean he wrote each of the psalms with his name attached to them, although he may have. He may have collected various songs or documents he adapted for proclaiming God's word. Regardless, the words were expressions from his heart which he believed were appropriate words for the people.

All of that sounds very similar to the responsibilities certain individuals have in our churches today who lead us in worship. It is important, and has been for thousands of years that we have those who direct us to sing words proclaiming God's messages. Furthermore, it is important we have those who contribute with offering thanks and praise, and those who play instruments with that purpose.

May 18th

Psalms 75-78. "Expressions of the Psalms"

Years ago, Dr. Ron Allen visited the church I was at to speak on the Old Testament. Dr. Allen is the senior professor of Bible exposition at Dallas Theological Seminary. One of his favorite topics is the Psalms.

Of all the books in the Old Testament, the Book of Psalms is the one most loved by the family of God. Within the Psalms we find expression to our deepest thoughts of reverence for God, our most excited joy in knowing Him, and our darkest terror in those moments we feel cut off from Him. In the Psalms we have it all: music, wisdom, beauty, truth, theology, experience, emotion, and expression."

Once again, we are reminded of the depth of the psalms. Some people only turn to the Psalms in moments of distress or devotion. Some people turn to them for a quick expression of worship. Only few explore them deeply, even as you are now. Appreciate the depth of the Psalms.

May 19th

Psalms 79-82. "Recorded Variety"

Although all four psalms come from the same individual, there is yet great variety in their contents. The first two psalms are reflections of the nation. The third psalm is a spiritual reminder on a holiday. The last psalm refers to God, the righteous Judge.

What are some of the characteristics of journals? Providing you have journaled, if you were to look through your journal entries you may find great variety. But, then again, perhaps you tend to only journal when you are discouraged, or conversely when you are excited about something that took place. What keeps the Psalms distinct from our personal journals lies in their purpose. The authorship of the Psalms is from individuals inspired by God to record what they did for the glory of God and the benefit of others. The Psalms maintain historical accuracy, biblical consistency, theological purity, transparent confession, poetic beauty, and authentic worship.

What we are learning to appreciate about the depth of the Psalms I would pray we would

do so with their variety. God has given us Psalms that touch our life no matter where we are at.

May 20th

1 Kings 2:13-3:15; 1 Chronicles 29:23-25; 2 Chronicles 1:1-13; Psalm 83.

“Wheels of Justice”

Justice is one of the topics addressed today. The passages in Kings and Chronicles describe the justice Solomon laid forth. His justice was fair and took into consideration the counsel of his father, David. It was also necessary in order to prevent chaos from coming.

Martin Luther King, Jr. said, “True peace is not merely the absence of tension: it is the presence of justice.” Psalm 83 focuses on how God brings justice to the enemies of His people. God’s justice is fair, pure, and certain.

“Though the mills of God grind slowly, yet they grind exceedingly small.

Though with patience He stands waiting, with exactness He grinds all”

(Friedrich Von Logau, 1650).

The wheels of justice don’t always turn at the speed we would like. In fact, sometimes we may wonder if God’s wheels went flat. It is a wonderful thing that God’s wheels turn as they do and not at our speed. His wheels are turning, but what a blessing that He is so patient (see 2 Peter 3:9).

General Questions for each day:

Summarize the day's Bible passage in your own words.

What thoughts, actions, attitudes or beliefs are addressed in the passage?

How is the Holy Spirit leading you to apply this passage to your life today?

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Bible Discussion Guide:

Journals can be a great tool for recording thoughts, prayers, and emotions (whether fears or wonderful things). Journaling can be a form of worship. It's an expression of our heart. It is a great compliment to our daily devotions with Him. It is not just a place of expressing, but also a place to listen, to hear God's whispers.

How would you describe the "depth" of the Psalms?

What specific ways could a person be encouraged by the Psalms?

Other than the obvious part music plays in the Psalms, what other uses of music in Scripture can you think of?

Genesis 4:21 tells us about Jubal, the first musician. The Ark of the Covenant was accompanied by musicians. Jesus and His disciples sang after the Last Supper. Paul and Silas sang in jail. So, what about the importance of music? What about the importance of music in worship?

The Psalms are so full of worship. How could journaling be considered meditative worship? What other benefits are there to journaling?

The following are a few initial thoughts for your journal:

Reflect...

Who are you?

What is your background?

What experiences brought you to this time and place in your life?

Release...

What life changing mistakes have you made?

Are there any buried mistakes in your life that still hold you back?

Have you released your mistakes to God, so you can experience His true blessings for your life?

Surrender...

What event or series of events in your life brought you to your knees?

Where did you focus your thoughts and efforts during crisis?

When did you turn it all over to God?

Praise...

What victories have you experienced in your life?

What blessings has God brought your way?

Think about God's role in your life, and give Him thanks for all you have?

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