

Praying the Psalms

My Spiritual Practice

The book of Psalms is often called the prayer book of the Bible. The psalms can express what we may be feeling but can't find the words to speak (or pray).

I have begun the practice "praying the psalms" using the same psalm daily each week. It is not a *study* of the psalms but a way of spending meditative, contemplative time with a psalm, allowing the words to speak to me, and allowing me to speak to God.

1. I begin by writing (or copying) the words of the psalm, selecting a translation that speaks to me at the moment.
2. As I read through it, I note the words or phrases that catch my attention. I highlight those words by choosing colour that fits the tone or helps keep my attention.
3. I add a visual image that evokes an experience similar to the highlighted words. I draw from a collection of my own photographs. Or I may find other images to attach to the psalm. On one occasion I simply added the word "silence" because that was my most honest emotional response. Sometimes I don't add any image but remain with the words of the psalm.
4. I stay with the same psalm over several days, allowing different parts of that scripture to touch me. Each day I may use different highlighting colours and insert different images to keep my focus for that day.
5. When I am ready to move on from that psalm, I move on and repeat the process. I began with Psalm 1 and have moved through them in numerical order. That prevents me from the temptations to only pick favourite psalms or to look for a psalm that fits my momentary mood. Instead, I want to allow the psalm to speak to me.

Practical notes:

- a. My practice is to use the computer, building a journal of prayer. To keep the file from becoming too large, I start a new document for every 20 psalms.*
- b. For longer psalms I may break them into smaller sections that are more manageable for reflection. I then move to the next section of that psalm the following week.*

Samples:

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~ Psalm 4 ~
 Answer me when I call, O God of my right!
 You gave me room when I was in distress.
 [NIV: Give me relief from my distress;]
 Be gracious to me, and hear my prayer.

How long, you people, shall my honour suffer shame?
 How long will you love vain words, and seek after lies?

But know that the LORD has set apart the faithful for himself;
 the LORD hears when I call to him.


When you are disturbed, do not sin;
 ponder it on your beds, and be silent.

Offer right sacrifices,
 and put your trust in the LORD.

There are many who say, "O that we might see some good!
 Let the light of your face shine on us, O LORD!"

You have put gladness in my heart
 more than when their grain and wine abound.

I will both lie down and sleep in peace;
 for you alone, O LORD, make me lie down in safety.
 [NRSV]

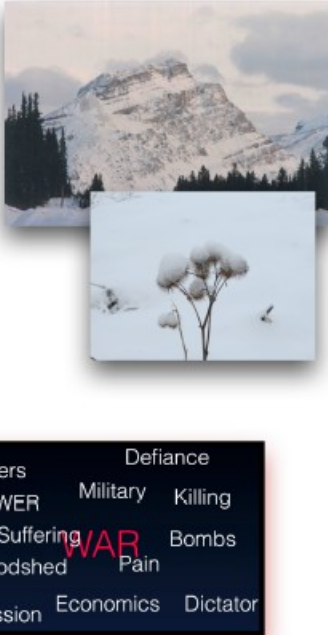


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~ Psalm 2 ~
 Why do the nations conspire
 and the peoples plot in vain?
 The kings of the earth rise up
 and the rulers band together
 against the Lord and against his anointed, saying,
 "Let us break their chains
 and throw off their shackles."
 The One enthroned in heaven laughs;
 the Lord scoffs at them.
 He rebukes them in his anger
 and terrifies them in his wrath, saying,
 "I have installed my king
 on Zion, my holy mountain."

I will proclaim the Lord's decree:
 He said to me, "You are my son;
 today I have become your father."
 Ask ME,
 and I will make the nations your inheritance,
 the ends of the earth your possession.
 You will break them with a rod of iron;
 you will dash them to pieces like pottery."

Therefore, you kings, be wise;
 be warned, you rulers of the earth.
 Serve the Lord with fear
 and celebrate his rule with trembling.
 Kiss his son, or he will be angry
 and your way will lead to your destruction,
 for his wrath can flare up in a moment.
 Blessed are all who take refuge in him.
 [NRSV]



WAR

Rulers Defiance
 POWER Military Killing
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Len Rempel (Canada), 2022

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