

Psalm Writing Workshop

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One of the great Christian thinkers Athanasius in 370 AD commented that “while the rest of the bible speaks to us, Psalms speaks *for* us.” Psalms teaches us how to relate to God as Gods’ beloved people, individually and together!

There is no wrong way to do this! Give it a go! Let’s listen to a number of Psalms from scripture, modern interpretations and new Psalms. What do you notice?

The psalm writing toolbox:

1. **Pen and Paper...** journaling.
2. **A list of God’s nature** (see Psalm 40)
 - Adjectives: awesome, majestic, mighty, incredible, creator, sovereign..
 - Expand the list (additions from the group workshop)... merciful, faithful, angry, tenderness, strength, unchanging, loving, adorable, mysterious, comforter, eternal, omnipresent (everywhere), omnipotent (all powerful), omniscient (all knowing), inviting, caring, holy, sovereign, loyal, all truth, all light, just, life-giving...
3. **List human/consequences of Gods nature** (link these with the list above):
 - a. For example if God is creator and God is awesome in power, then we are “fearfully and wonderfully made”
4. **List of human emotions and questions for God (see attached)**
5. **List of metaphors attached to the emotions or nature of God** (used the everyday relatable things)
 - a. Eg God is a rock and fortress
 - b. The Lord is my shepherd
 - c. “My heart has turned to wax; it has melted away within me” Ps 22:14
6. **List of Poetic Devices**
 - a. Common Poetry
 - b. Hebrew poetry
 - Acrostic poems (using the Hebrew alphabet, eg Psalm 119). These use a word and each line starts with the next letter of that word. You could use a word that describe God.
 - Some more technical Hebraic poetic devices.
 - **Synonymous parallelism**- expression in the first line is repeated in the second. Two lines that say nearly the same thing, in order to drive a point across.
 - **Psalm 139:7-8**
⁷Where can I go from your Spirit?
Where can I flee from your presence?
⁸If I go up to the heavens, you are there;
if I make my bed in the depths, you are there.

▪ **Psalm 20:7-8**

⁷Some trust in chariots and some in horses,
but we trust in the name of the Lord our God.

⁸They are brought to their knees and fall,
but we rise up and stand firm.

- **Synthetic Parallelism**- one thought is stated and the following verses develop or complete the thought

Eg. Psalm 84:10-11

¹⁰Better is one day in your courts
than a thousand elsewhere;

I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God
than dwell in the tents of the wicked.

¹¹For the Lord God is a sun and shield;
the Lord bestows favor and honor;
no good thing does he withhold
from those whose walk is blameless.

7. **Your story:** Write from your own experience (DAVID: being a shepherd, killing someone and sleeping with their wife, having a son try and kill you, Jonah in the belly of the whale, going on pilgrimage, being in exile "by the rivers of Babylon")
8. A structure to work from.
 - a. Types of psalms
 - b. Lament/praise/Wisdom/nature/word of god/penitential/worship/suffering/assurance/praise/royal/Protection
 - c. Community or individual

Psalm 96- A typical structure of a song of praise

 - Invitation to praise (v 1-3, 7-10a, 11-12a)
 - Followed by reasons for praise (v 4-6, 10b, 12b-13)
 - Together they describe the nature and consequences of God's rule
9. An epiphany, relationship with Jesus and ability to listen and wait.
10. Finally Time with God! Let it flow. If you're stuck choose a psalm, your favourite and try re-writing that.

Appendix:

Psalms to Start with (with commentary from various sources):

Psalms of praise (think of Psalm 8), of testimony (think of Psalm 46), of confession (think of Psalm 51), and of lament (think of Psalm 13)

Psalm 55 – about being betrayed by someone close to you.

Psalm 56 – about feeling trapped, pinned down or captured.

Psalm 57 – about feeling threatened by a powerful enemy.

Psalm 51 – about repentance.

Psalm 95 or 96 or 150 Party time, sing for joy.

Psalm 42 & 43 Downcast, Disturbed, Depressed and Hopeful

Psalm 73 Why do good things happen to bad people? Jealousy/Envy

Psalm 130 Getting out of a hole of your own making. Repentance.

Psalm 121 HELP and Hope

Psalm 10 "Why, Lord, do you stand far off? Why do you hide yourself in times of trouble?"

Psalm 3 – short. Facing hard times and asking for God's involvement.

Psalm 6 – short. In the middle of sadness, looking for a sign of God's presence.

Psalm 13 – short. Trying to find faith in the middle of loneliness and depression.

Psalm 19 – medium. Celebrating God and making confession.

Psalm 40 – long. Waiting for God and expressing faith in the time of waiting.

Using Psalm 10 as a structure. (from Chats August)

Feel free to be creative, use imagery, metaphor or even try an acrostic poem to a word such as

S.O.V.E.R.E.I.G.N. (a number of Psalms were written as acrostic poems often using the Hebrew alphabet, eg 119).

"Why God, why?" (Write down a cry from the heart to God. It could be personal or on behalf of others.)

"While other people seem to..." (Expand on the why question reflecting on those who seem to have no problems.)

"Arise Lord! Lift up your hand, O God.

Yet you O God..." (Write down some of the promises of God, reassurances of faith, the character of God, the acts of God through history (both personally and throughout history))

A Coffee Psalm

O
God,
You
are
like
coffee!

You percolate . . . and the mere sound of you stirs me from sleep. I thirst for you, O God, in the morning when I wake up. Your aroma permeates my soul when I come into your presence. You pour yourself out and shower me with blessings. You fill my cup with good things. Your heat and steam rise as incense and fill my nostrils. I lift you up with my hands and drink you into my being. Your warmth penetrates my mouth. O taste and see that the Lord is good! Your warmth continues to travel through me, warming my gut. You dwell ever within me. You energize me, O God. After a time, you give me energy to set about the tasks you lay before me. I return to you, O God, throughout the day, and get renewed and refreshed every time I drink you in. O taste and see that the Lord is good! You restore my soul and fill my senses. You help me get through the day when my sleepiness tries to keep me from doing your will. O taste and see that the Lord is good. O God, you are like coffee to me!

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A Periodic Chart of Human Emotions

Kris Girrell

Joy 1 J 1.001	Kris Girrell															Peace 2 P 1.111		
Love 3 L 3.141	Adoration 4 A 4.000												Hope 5 H 4.41	Blessing 6 B 5.001	Bliss 7 Bl 5.555	Delight 8 DI 9.250	Contentment 9 Ah 10.000	Happiness 10 Ha 12.365
Care 11 C 22.19	Empathy 12 U 22.222												Reflection 13 Rf 22.686	Solemnity 14 So 23.001	Gratitude 15 Gr 24.700	Elation 16 El 28.960	Excitement 17 Ex 29.501	Ecstasy 18 X 30.000
Humor 19 Ho 32.021	Giddiness 20 Gd 33.333	Playfulness 21 Pf 33.950	Creativity 22 Cv 35.101	Awe 23 Oo 38.838	Reverence 24 Rv 39.222	Spirituality 25 St 40.000	Worthiness 26 Wo 42.012	Beloved 27 Lv 48.111	Satisfaction 28 Sa 49.019	Humility 29 Ge 50.050	Pride 30 Pr 51.600	Grace 31 Gc 52.050	Astonishment 32 As 52.995	Amazement 33 Az 53.010	Surprise 34 Su 54.000	Jubilation 35 Ju 55.555	Cheer 36 Ch 55.950	Eagerness 37 Ea 56.950
Enthusiasm 38 En 57.001	Exhilaration 39 Eh 58.100	Optimism 40 Op 59.782	Sexiness 41 Sx 60.001	Sensuality 42 Sn 62.420	Pleasure 43 Mm 62.555	Innocence 44 In 63.141	Anticipation 45 At 64.995	Bravery 46 Bv 68.241	Certainty 47 Au 69.002	Longing 48 Ln 71.000	Impatience 49 Im 72.727	Determination 50 Dt 77.777	Confusion 51 Hm 78.257	Distant 52 Ds 79.001	Comfort 53 Cm 80.008	Nostalgia 54 N 84.123	Tranquility 55 Tq 88.888	Relief 56 Rx 90.000
Lethargy 57 Lg 93.041	Disappointment 58 Bm 96.096	* Passion 59-73	Frustration 74 Fr 152.44	Exasperation 75 Ep 151.86	Anxiety 76 Ax 158.22	Fear 77 Fe 169.01	Terror 78 Tr 174.97	Shock 79 Sk 178.48	Shame 80 Sh 180.95	Vulnerability 81 Vu 183.84	Exposure 82 Ed 188.89	Disgrace 83 Dg 191.02	Humiliation 84 Hu 192.66	Hurt 85 Ow 192.86	Embarrassment 86 Em 195.0	Remorse 87 Rm 197.23	Contempt 88 Co 198.96	Guilt 89 Gu 199.99
Unhappiness 90 Uh 200.01	Sadness 91 Sa 201.86		** Depression 92-106	Grief 107 Gf 202.89	Pessimism 108 Ps 205.11	Boredom 109 Bd 205.68	Envy 110 Ev 210.55	Anger 111 An 211.22	Agitation 112 Ag 215.95	Aggravation 113 Av 220.88	Tension 114 Tn 228.28	Stress 115 Ss 232	Apprehension 116 Ap 245.01	Doubt 117 Db 257.11	Hesitation 118 Hs 277.11	Homesick 119 Hk 285.21	Loneliness 120 Lo 291.01	Grouchiness 121 Sa 296.22

* Passion Series

** Depression Series

Rapture 59 Ra 98.600	Infatuation 60 In 99.999	Lust 61 Lu 100.00	Obsession 62 Ob 104.02	Desire 63 De 110.01	Arousal 64 Ar 121.212	Jealousy 65 Jl 124.241	Rejection 66 Re 132.99	Resentment 67 Rs 138.91	Bitterness 68 Bt 140.01	Loathing 69 Lo 141.29	Hatred 70 Ht 144.99	Wrath 71 Wr 145.01	Fury 72 Fu 148.28	Rage 73 Rg 150.96
Melancholy 92 Ml 1001.0	Withdrawal 93 Wd 1010.0	Isolation 94 li 1011.0	Abandonment 95 Ab 1100.0	Condemnation 96 Cd 1101.0	Despair 97 Ug 1221.12	Devastation 98 Ono 1348.0	Emptiness 99 Ep 1500.0	Worthlessness 100 Wt 1929.0	Depression 101 Dp 2000.1	Misery 102 Ms 2290.1	Hopelessness 103 HI 2470.1	Gloom 104 Gm 2525.1	Dread 105 Dd 6.0x10 ²⁴	Numbness 106 Mu 0000

	Happiness	Caring	Depression	Inadequateness	Fear	Confusion	Hurt	Anger	Loneliness	Remorse
Strong	Delighted	Adoring	Alienated	Blemished	Alarmed	Baffled	Abused	Affronted	Abandoned	Abashed
	Ecstatic	Cherishing	Barren	Blotched	Appalled	Befuddled	Aching	Belligerent	Cut off	Debased
	Elated	Compassionate	Beaten	Broken	Desperate	Chaotic	Anguished	Bitter	Deserted	Degraded
	Energetic	Devoted	Dejected	Crippled	Distressed	Confounded	Crushed	Enraged	Destroyed	Delinquent
	Enthusiastic	Doting	Depressed	Damaged	Frightened	Confused	Degraded	Fuming	Empty	Depraved
	Euphoric	Fervent	Desolate	False	Horried	Dizzy	Destroyed	Furious	Forsaken	Disgraced
	Exhilarated	Idolizing	Despondent	Feeble	Intimidated	Flustered	Devastated	Heated	Isolated	Evil
	Overjoyed	Infatuated	Dismal	Finished	Panicky	Rattled	Discarded	Infuriated	Marooned	Exposed
	Thrilled	Passionate	Empty	Flawed	Paralyzed	Shocked	Disgraced	Intense	Neglected	Humiliated
	Vibrant	Worship	Gloomy	Helpless	Petrified	Speechless	Forsaken	Outraged	Ostracized	Judged
	Zippy	Zealous	Grieved	Impotent	Shocked	Startled	Humiliated	Provoked	Outcast	Mortified
			Grim	Inferior	Terrified	Stumped	Mocked	Seething	Rejected	Shamed
			Hopeless	Invalid	Wrecked	Stunned	Punished	Storming	Shunned	Sinful
Medium			In despair	Powerless		Taken-aback	Rejected	Vengeful		Wicked
			Woeful	Useless		Thrown	Ridiculed	Vindictive		Wrong
			Worried	Worthless		Trapped	Tortured			
	Aglow	Admiring	Awful	Defeated	Afraid	Adrift	Annoyed	Aggravated	Alienated	Apologetic
	Buoyant	Affectionate	Crestfallen	Deficient	Apprehensive	Ambivalent	Belittled	Annoyed	Alone	Ashamed
	Cheerful	Attached	Demoralized	Impaired	Awkward	Bewildered	Cheapened	Antagonistic	Apart	Contrite
	Elevated	Empathetic	Devalued	Imperfect	Defensive	Disordered	Criticized	Cranky	Cheerless	Culpable
	Gleeful	Fond	Discouraged	Incapable	Fearful	Disorganized	Damaged	Exasperated	Companionless	Demeaned
	Happy	Kind	Dispirited	Incompetent	Fidgety	Disturbed	Depreciated	Grouchy	Dejected	Downhearted
	In high spirits	Kind-hearted	Distressed	Incomplete	Fretful	Foggy	Devalued	Hostile	Despondent	Flustered
	Jovial	Loving	Downcast	Ineffective	Jumpy	Frustrated	Discredited	Ill-tempered	Estranged	Guilty
	Light-hearted	Partial	Fed Up	Inept	Nervous	Misled	Distressed	Irate	Excluded	Regretful
	Lively	Sympathetic	Lost	Insignificant	Scared	Mistaken	Impaired	Irritated	Left out	Remorseful
Light	Merry	Tender	Melancholy	Lacking	Shaky	Misunderstood	Marred	Offended	Lonely	Repentant
	Sparkling	Trusting	Miserable	Lame	Skittish	Perplexed	Mistreated	Resentful	Oppressed	Sorrowful
	Up	Warm-hearted	Regretful	Overwhelmed	Spineless	Puzzled	Resentful	Sore	Uncherished	Sorry
			Sorrowful	Small	Threatened	Troubled	Troubled	Spiteful		
			Tearful	Substandard	Troubled		Used	Testy		
			Upset	Unimportant			Wounded	Ticked off		
	Contented	Appreciative	Blah	Dry	Anxious	Distracted	Let down	Bugged	Blue	Bashful
	Cool	Attentive	Disappointed	Meager	Careful	Uncertain	Minimized	Dismayed	Detached	Blushing
	Fine	Considerate	Downcast	Puny	Cautious	Uncomfortable	Neglected	Galled	Distant	Chastened
	Glad	Friendly	Funk	Tenuous	Disquieted	Undecided	Put away	Grim	Insulated	Embarrassed
	Good	Interested in	Glum	Tiny	Shy	Unsettled	Put down	Impatient	Melancholy	Hesitant
	Gratified	Like	Low	Uncertain	Tense	Unsure	Rueful	Irked	Remote	Humble
	Keen	Respecting	Moody	Unconvincing	Timid		Tender	Petulant	Separate	Meek
	Okay	Thoughtful	Morose	Unsure	Uneasy		Touched	Sullen	Withdrawn	Reluctant
	Pleasant	Tolerant	Somber	Weak	Unsure		Unhappy	Uptight		Sheepish
	Pleased	Warm toward	Subdued	Wishful	Watchful					
	Satisfied	Yielding	Uncomfortable		Worried					
	Serene		Unhappy							



Happy



Angry



Sad



Frustrated



Sneaky



Scared



Surprised



Shy



Bossy



Sleepy



Embarrassed



Mean



Proud



Nervous



Silly



Disappointed



Confused



Impatient



Curious



Kind



Obnoxious



Excited



Grumpy