



BIBLE

STUDENT BOOK

▶ **7th Grade | Unit 6**

BIBLE 706

The Psalms

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The Psalms

Introduction

The Book of Psalms is the largest book in the Bible. It contains 150 Psalms, and each psalm is a chapter of the Bible. It has the longest chapter (Psalm 119 with 176 verses) and the shortest chapter (Psalm 117 with 2 verses). The Psalms are also one of the most beautiful parts of the Bible. The Psalms are primarily prayers. These prayers incorporate just about every human emotion possible, from the greatest joy and praise to the most profound sorrow and despair. Athanasius, one of the great Christian leaders of the early church in the fourth century, said that the rest of Scripture is God's Word to us, but the Psalms are God's Word for us. By this he meant that the Psalms are God-given prayers for us to pray. Furthermore, the Psalms help teach us how to pray.

In Old Testament times, Jewish people originally composed the Psalms. David, who became the great king of the Jewish people, composed many of the Psalms. Other Jewish people, including Moses and Solomon, also wrote Psalms. Many people had a hand in writing and collecting the 150 Psalms that we have today. Through it all, God was the One inspiring the writing and collecting of these ancient prayers. We can be sure that the Psalms are, indeed, God's Word to us and for us.

Throughout the history of the church, the Psalms have been considered the church's primary "prayer book." Jesus Himself prayed the Psalms, and He quoted the Psalms during His ministry (for example, in Mark 15:34, Jesus quotes Psalm 22:1 on the cross). If the church has found the Psalms to be a good source of prayer, it is because God inspired these prayers to nourish the life of the church and the life of the individual Christian. Furthermore, the church has always seen Christ throughout the Psalms. Jesus also showed the disciples that the Psalms referred to Him in many places (Luke 22:44).

It is important to know about the Psalms. The purpose of this LIFEPAC® is to help you learn much more about the Book of Psalms. It is even more important to learn to pray the Psalms. By studying this LIFEPAC, you will not only learn much more about the Psalms, but you will also come to love the Psalms more and pray them more. The Psalms are God-inspired prayers that can help you grow closer to God all the days of your life.

In this LIFEPAC, you will learn more about what Psalms are. You will learn about the history of the Psalms and the types of Psalms. In Section Two, you will learn about Hebrew poetry, since the Psalms are actually examples of Hebrew poetry. Finally, in the last section of this LIFEPAC, you will study one psalm—Psalm 100—in much detail, in order to help you explore the riches contained in God's Word through the Psalms.

Objectives

Read these objectives. The objectives tell you what you will be able to do when you have successfully completed this LIFEPAC. When you have finished this LIFEPAC, you should be able to:

1. Describe the Psalms and tell what they are.
2. Describe the history of the Book of Psalms.
3. Identify the types of Psalms.
4. Explain the use of the Psalms.
5. Summarize the variety of Hebrew poetry in the Old Testament.
6. Compare and contrast the parallels of Hebrew poetry.
7. Explain the patterns of Hebrew poetry.
8. Identify the Hebrew poetry of Psalm 100.
9. Describe the history and explain the meaning of Psalm 100.

1. THE BOOK OF PSALMS

God is the object of the Psalms. As David writes in Psalm 62:1–2, “Truly my soul waiteth upon God: from him cometh my salvation. He only is my rock and my salvation; he is my defence; I shall not be greatly moved.” All of the 150 Psalms of the Bible are ultimately about God. The Psalms express in poetic form the drama of human relationships with God, especially as lived by the people of Israel. We learn much about God and ourselves in the Psalms.

The Psalms are chiefly about God and our relationship with Him. They tell of all kinds of events concerning the people of Israel and God.

Read Psalm 62.



The Psalms are about God and the relationship he has with His people. They are prayers and songs from individuals and groups of people to God.

In this section of the LIFEPAK, you will learn much more about the Book of Psalms. You will explore the question: What are the Psalms? You will learn about the history of the Psalms. Finally, you will learn about the types of Psalms and their use.

Section Objectives

Review these objectives. When you have completed this section, you should be able to:

1. Describe the Psalms and tell what they are.
2. Describe the history of the Book of Psalms.
3. Identify the types of Psalms.
4. Explain the use of the Psalms.

Vocabulary

Study these words. Learning the meanings of these words is a good study habit and will improve your understanding of this LIFEPAK.

anatomy (ə nat' ə ē). The structure or inner part.

anonymous (ə non' ə mäs). The author's name is unknown.

ascend (ə send'). To move gradually upward.

attributed (ə trib' yüt ed). Assigned or considered as belonging to another.

exaltation (eg zôl tã' shən). An act of exalting, or elevating in praise.

extols (ik stôls'). Praises highly or glorifies.

formation (fôr mã' shən). An act (or acts) of giving form or shape to something.

laments (lã mentz'). Having sorrow for or mourning.

precepts (prē' septs). Rules, laws, directions.

predominates (pri dom' ə nãts). Exerts controlling power or influence.

Psalter (sãl' tär). The Book of Psalms in the Old Testament.

seer (sē' ər). Someone who receives messages from God through visions or dreams.

Septuagint (sep tōō' ə jint). The Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament accomplished in Alexandria, Egypt about 250 BC

symbolizes (sim' bə līz iz). Represents, expresses, or identifies by a symbol.

topical (top' i kəl). Of, relating to, or arranged by topics.

Note: All vocabulary words in this LIFEPAK appear in **boldface** print the first time they are used. If you are unsure of the meaning when you are reading, study the definitions given.

Pronunciation Key: hat, āge, cāre, fār; let, ēqual, tēm; it, īce; hot, ōpen, ōrder; oil; out; cup, pūt, rüle; child; long; thin; /ʒh/ for then; /zh/ for measure; /ə/ represents /a/ in about, /e/ in taken, /i/ in pencil, /o/ in lemon, and /u/ in circus.



What are the Psalms?

The words “Psalms” and “**Psalter**” (as the Book of Psalms is sometimes called) come to us from the Greek translation of the Bible known as the **Septuagint**. The Greek word most used in that translation for the writings we have in the Book of Psalms was *psalmoi*, referring to “songs

sung to the accompaniment of stringed instruments.” Therefore, the very name “Psalms” helps us to begin to answer the question: What are the Psalms? They are religious songs, written by various ancient Jewish authors. Most of the Psalms were originally intended to be

accompanied by stringed instruments that are plucked, such as the harp, lyre, psaltery, or zither.

The Hebrew word used for these writings of the Bible was *tehillim*, meaning “praises.” This word also helps us understand that many of the Psalms are songs of praise to God.

The Psalms are also *prayers*. In fact, one of the first collections of the Psalms in the Bible was titled “The prayers of David, the son of Jesse” (Psalm 72:20). As mentioned in the introduction of this LIFEPAAC, the Psalms were given to us by God as prayers inspired by Him. The Psalms are not only prayers, they help us learn how to pray. They express in all forms of human language and emotion the prayers of God’s people.

Finally, the Psalms are also *Hebrew poetry*. The Psalms were written in the distinctive fashion of Hebrew poetry. Almost one-third of the Old Testament was written in the form of Hebrew poetry, so there are many other passages outside the Book of Psalms that use Hebrew poetry. Much more will be said about the Psalms as Hebrew poetry in Section Two of this LIFEPAAC.

It should be noted that *Psalms* are found in other parts of the Old Testament, too, not only in the Book of Psalms. A few of the many examples of other Psalms in the Old Testament are:

1. **The Song of the Sea** (Exodus 15:1–18) celebrates God’s deliverance of the Israelites from the Egyptians at the Red Sea.
2. **The Song of Moses** (Deuteronomy 32:1–43) contrasts God’s faithfulness with Israel’s unfaithfulness.
3. **The Song of Hannah** (1 Samuel 2:1–10) is a psalm of thanksgiving to God.
4. **David’s Song of Deliverance** (2 Samuel 22:2–51) is a psalm of thanksgiving. It is also preserved as Psalm 18 in the Book of Psalms.
5. **King Hezekiah’s Song** (Isaiah 38:9–20) is a thanksgiving psalm used when presenting a thank offering in the Temple.
6. **Jonah’s Prayer from the belly of the fish** (Jonah 2:2–9) is actually a psalm of thanksgiving!
7. **The Prayer of Habakkuk** (Habakkuk 3:2–19) is a hymn praising God for divine victory on behalf of the people Israel.



Complete the following statements.

- 1.1 The Book of Psalms is the a. _____ book in the Bible, and it contains b. _____ Psalms.
- 1.2 The Psalms are primarily _____.
- 1.3 The Psalms help teach us how to _____.
- 1.4 The church has always seen _____ throughout the Psalms.
- 1.5 The Greek word *psalmoi* referred to “_____ the accompaniment of stringed instruments.”
- 1.6 The Hebrew word used for these writings of the Bible was *tehillim*, meaning _____.



Complete the following activities.

1.7 Describe three characteristics of the Psalms that help answer the question:

“What are the Psalms?”

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

1.8 There are Psalms in the Bible that are outside the Book of Psalms. Choose one of these Psalms—either one of the seven noted in this section or another of your choosing—and tell the way(s) this psalm describes the relationship between the psalmist(s) of God.

My choice of the Psalm outside the Book of Psalms: _____

Describe the relationship between the psalmist(s) and God: _____

TEACHER CHECK

_____ initials

_____ date

Organization of the Psalter. The Book of Psalms is actually composed of several *collections* of Psalms. It consists of five distinct “books” or collections of Psalms. Each one of these five books concludes with a **doxology**. Psalm 150, which concludes the last of the five books, is actually a fitting doxology to the entire Psalter.

The organization of the Book of Psalms into five books is as shown in Table 1.

The arrangement of the Psalms into these five books was probably in imitation of the five books of Moses (the Torah) found in the beginning of the Bible (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy). Some people find a general likeness in themes or topics of the five books of the Psalms when they are

compared to the corresponding five books of Moses. This topical likeness is shown in Table 2.

The whole Book of Psalms ends with a wonderful psalm of praise. It begins with two Psalms that are keynotes to the faith of the people of Israel. Psalm 1 opens the Psalter and extols the virtue of meditating on the Law of God (the Torah). Psalm 2 offers a meditation on the Messiah (literally, “the Anointed One”). These two themes—the will of God in the Law and the future coming of the Messiah to begin God’s Kingdom—were the two most important beliefs of the Jewish people at the time the Psalter was arranged in its final form. You will learn more about the history and formation of the Book of Psalms in the next part of this Section of the LIFEPAAC.

Book I	Psalms 1-41	Concluding doxology: Psalms 41:13
Book II	Psalms 42-72	Concluding doxology: Psalms 72:18-19
Book III	Psalms 73-89	Concluding doxology: Psalms 89:52
Book IV	Psalms 90-106	Concluding doxology: Psalms 106:48
Book V	Psalms 107-150	Concluding doxology for the entire Psalter: Psalms 150

| Table 1: Organization of the Book of Psalms

Book of Psalms	Book I (1-42)	Book II (42-72)	Book III (73-89)	Book IV (90-106)	Book V (107-150)
Book of Moses	Genesis	Exodus	Leviticus	Numbers	Deuteronomy
Topical Likeness	Man and Creation	Deliverance and Redemption	Worship and Sanctuary	Wilderness and Wandering	Scripture and Praise

| Table 2: Topical themes of the Books of Psalms and the Law of Moses

History of the Psalms

The earliest Psalm is **attributed** to Moses (Psalm 90) and has been dated by some scholars at 1440 BC, when Moses led Israel out of Egypt. David wrote most of the Psalms in the Psalter. At least seventy-three of the Psalms are attributed to David. David reigned over Israel from about 1010 BC to 970 BC. Therefore, we can date many of the Psalms around those dates. Some of the Psalms were attributed to David's son, Solomon (Psalms 72 and 127). Others were written during Solomon's reign as king over Israel from 970 BC to 930 BC (Psalms 88 and 89).

Of the several Psalms written by **anonymous** authors, some are dated later in Israel's history. Many scholars believe that the longest of the Psalms—Psalm 119—was written at the time of the Babylonian captivity in 586 BC. Psalm 137 was also written during this period of exile (586–538 BC). Psalms 107 and 126 were written as praises sung when the Jews returned from exile to the Holy Land about 538 BC. Psalm 147:13 praises God, "For he hath strengthened the bars of thy gates; he hath blessed thy children within thee." This praise could refer to the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem by Nehemiah about 444 BC.

From knowledge about the men who wrote many of the Psalms and the times in which they lived, we can date the Psalms from at least the period of 1440 BC to 444 BC. Therefore, we can see that the Psalms were written over a period of at least one thousand years!

Even though the Psalms had human writers, the true author of the Psalms was God. God inspired the Psalms just as much as He did any other part of the Scriptures. God used the writers of the Psalms to help human beings sing His own praises. God used the personality and character of men such as David and added to them the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. This allowed the psalmists and others to sing accurate and eternal truths about God.



| Moses wrote the earliest Psalm (Psalm 90).

Real people, real problems, and real situations are mentioned in the Psalms. This is part of the reason the Psalms can become our own prayers. We can relate to the people, problems, and situations that the psalmists faced. For example, when David fled from his son, Absalom, he prayed (Psalm 63:1), "O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is." When David recognized his sin, he cried out to God (Psalm 51:2), "Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin." The richness of the Psalms is found in their reality of human experience. They speak of great problems and of great faith in God.



Answer true or false.

- 1.11 _____ The earliest Psalm is attributed to Solomon.
- 1.12 _____ David wrote most of the Psalms in the Psalter.
- 1.13 _____ All of the Old Testament Psalms are found in the Book of Psalms.
- 1.14 _____ Psalm 147 may be one of the most recent Psalms, written in the time of Nehemiah.
- 1.15 _____ The richness of the Psalms is found in their reality of human experience.
- 1.16 _____ The Psalms were written over a period of less than five hundred years.
- 1.17 _____ Psalm 2 describes the Messiah.

Match these items.

- | | |
|----------------------|--|
| 1.18 _____ God | a. oldest Psalm |
| 1.19 _____ David | b. a doxology Psalm |
| 1.20 _____ Psalm 119 | c. written by David after he sinned |
| 1.21 _____ Psalm 107 | d. Psalm written during the time after the exile |
| 1.22 _____ Psalm 90 | e. true author of the Psalms |
| 1.23 _____ Psalm 51 | f. written during the Babylonian captivity |
| 1.24 _____ Psalm 150 | g. wrote seventy-three Psalms |
| | h. the longest Psalm |

Formation of the Psalter. We have seen that the 150 Psalms of the Psalter were written over a period of a thousand years. During this time, and extending beyond it for almost 200 years, various collections of the Psalms were assembled. In other words, the Psalter went through a long process of **formation** to get to the current organization of the Psalms that we have today. We can say that the Psalter underwent a few stages (or steps) of formation over a long period of time. This process of formation did not happen by accident. God's guiding hand and inspiration was upon the writers of the Psalms, and it was also upon those who



| The Holy Spirit inspired the writers of the Psalms.

1.67 Choose one of the Psalms listed in the Section from the Hebrew prayer book for specific situations and needs. After writing the Psalm chosen and the situation/need in the spaces below, read the Psalm and explain why you think this Psalm was chosen for that specific need or situation.

Psalm chosen: _____

Situation/Need: _____

Explanation: _____

TEACHER CHECK

_____ initials

_____ date



Review the material in this section in preparation for the Self Test. The Self Test will check your mastery of this particular section. The items missed on this Self Test will indicate specific areas where restudy is needed for mastery.

SELF TEST 1

Match the following items (each answer, 2 points).

- | | | | |
|--------------|-----------------|----|---|
| 1.01 | _____ Psalm 1 | a. | the concluding doxology of the entire Psalter |
| 1.02 | _____ Psalm 23 | b. | read at Jesus' Last Supper |
| 1.03 | _____ Psalm 51 | c. | the shortest Psalm |
| 1.04 | _____ Psalm 90 | d. | written during the Babylonian Exile |
| 1.05 | _____ Psalm 92 | e. | the longest Psalm and an acrostic Psalm |
| 1.06 | _____ Psalm 103 | f. | written by King Saul |
| 1.07 | _____ Psalm 110 | g. | written by David after he sinned |
| 1.08 | _____ Psalm 119 | h. | extols virtues of the Law of God |
| 1.09 | _____ Psalm 137 | i. | one of the best known and loved Psalms |
| 1.010 | _____ Psalm 150 | j. | read on every Jewish Sabbath |
| | | k. | oldest Psalm |
| | | l. | Royal (Messianic) Psalm |

Answer true or false (each answer, 2 points).

- 1.011** _____ David wrote most of the Psalms in the Psalter.
- 1.012** _____ There are other Psalms in the Old Testament outside the Book of Psalms.
- 1.013** _____ The richness of the Psalms is found in the reality of their human experience.
- 1.014** _____ The order of the Psalms follows no plan or purpose.
- 1.015** _____ Jewish scribes helped preserve the Book of Psalms through careful copying over the centuries.

Complete these statements (each answer, 2 points).

- 1.016** The Psalms are primarily _____ .
- 1.017** The church has always seen _____ throughout the Psalms.
- 1.018** The Greek word *psalmoi* referred to “ _____ to the accompaniment of stringed instruments.”
- 1.019** The earliest Psalm is attributed to _____ .
- 1.020** The majority of the Psalms fit into three main types: a. _____ , b. _____ , or c. _____ .
- 1.021** The _____ Psalms are those in which the king of Israel is either the speaker or the focus of attention.
- 1.022** The _____ Psalms are concerned with such issues as the problem of evil, the suffering of the righteous, the justice of God, and the law of God.
- 1.023** The group of Psalms known as the _____ was used during pilgrimages to or processions around Jerusalem or the Temple.

Match the following items (each answer, 2 points).

- | | |
|---|------------------|
| 1.024 _____ the true author of the Psalms | a. Solomon |
| 1.025 _____ seventy-three Psalms attributed to him | b. chief scribe |
| 1.026 _____ said that the Psalms contained all the truth of the Old Testament | c. God |
| 1.027 _____ said that the Psalms teach Christians the anatomy of their own souls | d. Nehemiah |
| 1.028 _____ some Psalms were written during his lifetime after the exile | e. John Calvin |
| | f. David |
| | g. Martin Luther |

Write the letter of the correct answer in the blank (each answer, 2 points).

- 1.029** The 150 Psalms of the Psalter were written over a period of _____ years.
a. a hundred b. five hundred c. seven hundred d. a thousand
- 1.030** The stages of formation of the Psalter may be compared to the formation process of a(n) _____ .
a. mountain b. river c. iceberg d. landslide
- 1.031** The second stage in the formation of the Psalter was the formation of _____ .
a. a group of men to write more Psalms
b. individual songs into special groups used for public worship
c. new Psalms by David's son, Solomon
d. the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem
- 1.032** The final assembly of the Psalter was probably accomplished by _____ .
a. David and his soldiers
b. the succeeding kings of Judah over many years
c. a small group of men or even by one man
d. the early Christians as they began to worship
- 1.033** The Greek translation of the Old Testament made about 250 BC, in Alexandria, became known as the _____ .
a. standard text of the Bible b. Septuagint
c. Vulgate d. orthodox Bible

Complete the following lists (each lettered item, 2, points).

- 1.034** List three characteristics of the Psalms that help answer the question:
"What are the Psalms?"

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

1.035 List the three sub-categories of Hymn Psalms.

- a. _____
 b. _____
 c. _____

1.036 List four common uses of the Psalms.

- a. _____
 b. _____
 c. _____
 d. _____

Answer the following questions (each answer, 5 points).

1.037 What are some ways that Christians preserved the Psalms? _____

1.038 What is meant by a "Lament" Psalm? _____

80 100	SCORE _____	TEACHER _____	initials	date
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