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### The Empirical Development of a Curriculum on Psalms Utilizing a Modified Form-Critical Approach

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Andrews University  
School of Education

THE EMPIRICAL DEVELOPMENT OF A CURRICULUM ON PSALMS  
UTILIZING A MODIFIED FORM-CRITICAL APPROACH

A Dissertation  
Presented in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Philosophy

by  
Ted Ewing  
May 1996

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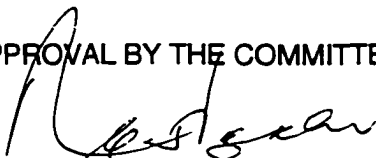
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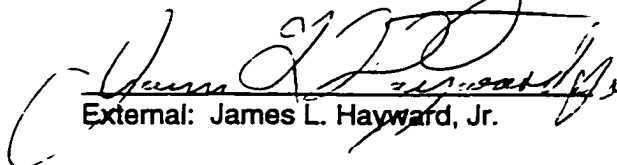
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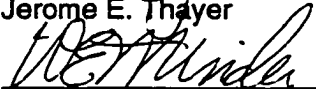
  
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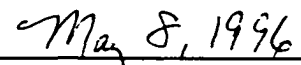
  
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**ABSTRACT**

**THE EMPIRICAL DEVELOPMENT OF A CURRICULUM ON PSALMS  
UTILIZING A MODIFIED FORM-CRITICAL APPROACH**

**by**

**Ted Ewing**

**Chair: Roy C. Naden**

**ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH**

**Dissertation**

**Andrews University**

**School of Education**

**Title: THE EMPIRICAL DEVELOPMENT OF A CURRICULUM ON PSALMS  
UTILIZING A MODIFIED FORM-CRITICAL APPROACH**

**Name of researcher: Ted Ewing**

**Name and degree of faculty chair: Roy C. Naden, Ed.D.**

**Date completed: May 1996**

**Problem**

The purpose of this study was to empirically develop a curriculum on the book of Psalms for readers of the English text that would bridge historical, theological, cultural, and linguistic distance, as well as overcome literary challenges associated with Hebrew poetry including figures of speech, parallelism, and psalm forms.

## Method

The instructional product development methodology employed in this study was based on the work of Baker and Schutz (1971) and Naden (1993). The need for the product was established through a literature review, the specific learners were described, behavioral objectives were constructed, an identical pre-test and post-test were prepared, criteria for the test questions were detailed, an instructional outline was formulated, and the instructional product was tested and revised repeatedly with groups of ever-increasing size. The acceptable level of post-test performance was set at 80/80 (80% of the learners were required to score 80% or higher on each of the 10 post-tests in order to achieve mastery of the instructional objectives).

In the final tryout, the product was presented in the form of a weekend seminar to a group ( $n = 27$ ) large enough to demonstrate statistically significant modification of cognition. The seminar was followed by a focus group interview (FGI) in order to assess the product's value at modifying affect. The FGI included one-third of the seminar participants and was conducted by a professional facilitator. A  $t$ -test for correlated means was used to measure the difference between the group means on the pre- and post-tests.

## Results

At least 80% of the 27 participants achieved 80% or higher on all of the 10 post-tests. Each of the 10 post-test means was significantly different than the pre-test mean at the .05 level. A qualitative analysis of the focus group

interview transcript revealed that positive modification of affect was attained.

### **Conclusions**

This study demonstrated again the value of the empirical development of curriculum, and it resulted in the creation of a curriculum that was proven effective at motivating and equipping participants to study Psalms on their own.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### **Background of the Problem**

Athanasius said, "The psalms have a unique place in the Bible because most of the Scripture speaks *to* us, while the psalms speak *for* us"

(cited in Anderson, 1970, p. x). Martin Luther (1528/1960) maintained:

The Psalter is the book of all saints; and everyone, in whatever situation he may be, finds in that situation psalms and words that fit his case, that suit him as if they were put there just for his sake, so that he could not put it better himself. (p. 256)

The Psalter continues to speak for the community of faith today. Psalms express the full range of emotions that accompany the breadth of human experience. Sorrow and joy, pain and pleasure, despair and hope are all brought to speech in this book that Calvin (1539/1949) called, "An Anatomy of All Parts of the Soul" (p. xxxviii).

The psalms speak primarily for God's people, but they speak to them as well. The psalms call believers to worship (Ps 117), to repentance (Ps 51), to trust (Ps 23), and to obedience (Ps 95). They teach the community of faith about its history (Ps 78), its liturgy (Ps 15), its Creator and Lawgiver (Ps 19), and its King (Ps 24). They exhort (Ps 75), and impart wisdom for living (Ps 1). The

book of Psalms addresses a broad range of topics that inform faith and life.

For these reasons, Psalms has significantly influenced the the life of the church, and the lives of Christians. Robinson (1952) noted:

**The Hebrew Psalter holds a unique position in the religious literature of mankind. It has been the hymnbook of two great religions, and has expressed their deeper spiritual life through the centuries. It has ministered to men and women of widely different races, languages and cultures. . . . No other part of the Old Testament has exercised so wide, so deep, or so permanent an influence on the human soul. (p. 107)**

The book of Psalms has taught Jews and Christians how to praise, how to pray, and how to relate honestly to God in the midst of various circumstances. "The psalms have an evocative power: they communicate beyond the boundaries of ancient Israel" (Gillingham, 1994, p. 5).

The Christian church has made use of Psalms liturgically, devotionally, and pastorally (Brueggemann, 1980). Liturgical use has included reading, confessing, and singing psalms. They call the church to prayer and worship. Numerous psalms have been set to contemporary music (e.g., Pss 3, 5, 16, 95, 100), and others have formed the foundation for cherished hymns of praise (e.g., Luther's "A Mighty Fortress" based on Ps 46).

Devotional use of the psalms has arisen "out of their capacity to express the character of the individual's relationship to God, such as trust, hope, assurance, but also some of the weariness, anxiety, and despair" (Miller, 1986, p. 21) that life dispenses. Pastoral use is rooted in the psalms' value as a balm for the wounded. They are vehicles for expressing anguish, and prayers for those overcome by oppression, grief, sickness, and death. In addition, "the

psalms recognize even before modern psychology that we do not deal with pain by ignoring it but by acknowledging it and moving through it" (Bellinger, 1990, p. 72).

Many pocket-size versions of the New Testament are accompanied by Psalms, since "the New Testament draws more heavily on the Psalms than any other book of the Old Testament" (Miller, 1986, p. 27). The church has recognized this rich interaction.

In addition, the psalms cry to God for deliverance and wait for His salvation--a salvation embodied in the person of Jesus. Miller (1986) claimed:

To the extent that Jesus is the answer, one must have heard what the questions are. And in that sense, the questions, the hopes, the needs to which Jesus is the divine response, the answer of God, are found on the lips of the psalmists. (p. 28)

These same questions, hopes, and needs to which Jesus is the divine response are found on the lips of those who pray the psalms.

Church history is filled with stories of individuals who gained comfort from Psalms. Paul and Silas probably used them while they were "praying and singing hymns to God" in a Philippian prison (Acts 16:25). German scholar Claus Westermann began his great work, Praise and Lament in the Psalms (1965/1981), while interned in a Nazi prison camp during World War II (Westermann, 1984/1989, p. vii). Dietrich Bonhoeffer was also comforted by Psalms during his imprisonment. His final publication before his execution was, Psalms: The Prayer Book of the Bible (1940/1970).

The story of missionary James Gilmour illustrates the way psalms have brought encouragement and strength to individuals for centuries. In the 19th century, Gilmour left the comforts of English civilization to live in the huts of the Mongols. He labored for years with little encouragement, but when he was weary and in need of personal refreshment, he turned to Psalms. He wrote:

When I feel I cannot make headway in devotion, I open in the Psalms, push out in my canoe, and let myself be carried along in the stream of devotion which flows through the whole book. The current always sets toward God, and in most places is strong and deep. (Davison, 1898, p. 270)

The stream has flowed for centuries, carrying many toward God in its graceful current.

Even though the psalms have been such a powerful source of comfort and inspiration to the faith community, at present no empirically developed curriculum on Psalms exists. Over 77% of Scripture is found in the Old Testament (Kaiser, 1987, p. 10). Thirty-three percent of the Old Testament is written in poetic form (Kaiser, 1981, p. 228). Most of that poetry is found in Psalms, yet an empirically developed curriculum covering this important segment of Scripture has never been produced. In addition, much of the literature related to Psalms is highly technical, and suited for those acquainted with Hebrew, not for readers of the English text.

Several challenges to studying Psalms inform the development of a Psalms' curriculum. The first set of challenges flows from the fact that they are historically, theologically, culturally, and linguistically distant from the modern English reader (Longman, 1988; Miller, 1986). The second set of challenges is

associated with their literary genre. They are poetry, and poetry has its own rules for reading (Hirsch, 1967; Longman, 1985; Longman & Ryken, 1993; Petersen & Richards, 1992). An empirically developed curriculum needs to address these issues to effectively help learners develop the necessary skills for studying Psalms.

Historically, psalms were composed between 2,500 and 3,500 years ago. One can imagine the challenges someone would face in the year A.D. 5500 reading something written today (Longman, 1988).

Theologically, psalms reflect a Jewish system of animal sacrifice and temple worship that preceded the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. For example, the idea of salvation in Psalms is more closely related to being delivered from the physical power of enemies, than saved from the spiritual penalty of sin.

Culturally, Psalms are rooted in an agrarian, ancient Near Eastern society. Customs to which they refer may appear strange to Westerners living in a modern, technological society.

Linguistically, the source of distance is rooted in the fact that psalms were written in Hebrew. As a result, some poetic devices, such as alliteration, assonance, onomatopoeia, alphabetic acrostics, meter, and some types of parallelism, are lost in translation.

But these challenges are not insurmountable. The better that one understands Psalms in their original context, the easier it is to ascertain their

meaning and application in the modern context.

The second set of challenges is literary. Reading literature from the ancient Near East is not like reading today's morning paper. "Even when translated, literature from these [ancient] periods . . . is so different from the literature to which the contemporary reader is accustomed that various introductory matters must be addressed in order to make that literature understandable" (Petersen & Richards, 1992, p. 1). A comprehension of the essential features of Hebrew poetry that come through in translation will enable learners to develop a fuller understanding of Psalms. Longman and Ryken (1993) emphasized:

The biblical authors frequently utilize the poetic forms of their day. It therefore becomes incumbent upon readers of the Bible not to depoeticize its form but instead to familiarize themselves with its conventions in order to read it in the way that it was originally intended. (p. 81)

Psalms are Hebrew poetry, and understanding Psalms requires understanding certain Hebrew poetic conventions.

Hebrew poetry is a unique genre, or type of literary composition. In Hebrew poetry, poetic devices are embodied in words, phrases, lines, sections, and the internal structures of entire psalms. Consequently, whole psalms and all their parts must be analyzed and interpreted. Longman (1985) stressed the importance of analyzing the whole:

There is no escape from genre analysis. The question for the exegete is whether his or hers will be conscious and methodical or unconscious. Whenever we read anything we make at least an unconscious genre identification which triggers a certain reading strategy in our mind. (p. 67)

The purpose of this empirically developed curriculum is to encourage a conscious, methodical approach to understanding the biblical text. This kind of reading strategy has the potential to deepen the student's understanding of psalms and appreciation of their artistry.

The individual parts that comprise the psalms also require examination. Therefore, this empirically developed curriculum encourages a conscious, methodical approach to understanding the biblical text through identification of the translatable poetic devices it employs--its figures of speech and its use of parallelism.

In order to understand Psalms, one must understand Hebrew poetry. In order to understand Hebrew poetry, one must understand its poetic devices. "The spiritual, intellectual, and emotional values of the Bible . . . are inseparable from the form they are given in the poems" (Alter, 1985, p. 205). Alter used the word forms in a broader sense than simply understanding the psalm structures provided by form criticism. He used it to mean the myriad of poetic devices that comprise the poetry of psalms. English readers will be better able to appreciate the values Alter mentioned if they are able to understand the figures of speech, different types of parallelism, and forms that make up the book of Psalms.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The book of Psalms has had a significant influence on Jewish and Christian congregations--liturgically, devotionally, and pastorally--and on the individuals who comprise those communities of faith. They have provided



comfort and inspiration for generations. In spite of this, an empirically developed curriculum on Psalms does not exist. The nature of psalms points to the need for a curriculum that would bridge historical, theological, cultural, and linguistic distance, as well as overcome the literary challenges associated with the artistry of Hebrew poetry. This study attempted to provide such a curriculum.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to empirically develop a user-friendly curriculum ready for presentation<sup>1</sup> by ministers to selected congregational members that has been demonstrated effective by the empirical process. This instructional product was based on measurable behavioral objectives that were the foundation of 10 lessons on Psalms, each designed for a 50-minute instructional period. Four introductory lessons explained the nature of poetic language, eight figures of speech, four types of semantic parallelism, and four psalm forms. The fourth lesson also included a section on the personal value of studying Psalms. The remaining six sessions consisted of one summary session and five expositions of each of the psalm forms that modeled study of Psalms to church members. Objectives and lessons were based on the researcher's theological and educational training, experience as a pastor and teacher, and a review of related literature, and were validated with experts in both content and methodology. The curriculum was designed specifically for

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<sup>1</sup>The curriculum content is assumed to be ready for presentation with the exception of the illustrations used, which will vary with each presenter and audience.

readers of the English text of Scripture.

The methodology employed in this study was based on the instructional product development processes of Baker and Schutz (1971) and Naden (1993). It was hypothesized that this process would produce mastery among the learners who attended the Psalms seminar held in San Diego, CA, on December 1-2, 1995. And it was hypothesized that there would be a significant increase in the post-test scores following each session of instruction over the pre-test scores that preceded the instruction.

### **Significance of the Study**

The significance of this study can be measured in two ways. First, the study demonstrates the value of the empirical developmental model. This is of significance because historically, only about 5% of curriculum has been empirically developed. Second, the content itself equips the learners to study Psalms on their own by imparting the skills necessary to identify and interpret figures of speech, parallelism, and psalm forms.

### **Definition of Terms**

*Behavioral objective:* A behavioral objective is a precise description of a learner's post-instructional behavior. This description includes four criteria: (1) the subject, or specified learner; (2) a measurable verb describing the learner's post-instructional performance; (3) the given conditions in which the behavior occurs; and (4) a precise standard of acceptable performance (Baker & Schutz, 1971).

**Mastery:** Mastery is the pre-established level of post-instructional behavior. In this study, the acceptable level of performance on the post-test was set at 80/80. At least 80% of the participants were required to score 80% or higher on each of the ten post-tests in order to achieve mastery for the instructional objectives.

**Empirical instructional product development:** Empirical instructional product development is a process in which instructional materials are developed according to measurable objectives, using members of the target audience for feedback and testing.

### **Delimitations of the Study**

1. This study was developed with the intention of instructing only adults of both genders that regularly attend a local church, have completed high school, are from a variety of ethnic backgrounds, but familiar with American culture. They may be single or married, but must be age 18 or older.

2. The instructional product is introductory only, not an exhaustive curriculum on the study of Psalms.

3. The instructional product was designed to impart skills primarily, and content about Psalms secondarily. Therefore, it covers psalm forms, parallelism, and figures of speech, but not issues such as authorship, dating, and Christian interpretation.

4. The instructional product was designed for English readers of Psalms only. Therefore, technical aspects of Hebrew poetry were not included.

### **Organization of the Study**

This study is divided into five chapters. Chapter 1 is an introductory chapter. Chapter 2 reviews related literature on Psalms. It is outlined according to the approach to Psalms employed in this study and organized under six main headings: approaches to Psalms, a modified form-critical approach, psalm forms, parallelism and poetry, figurative language in Psalms, and Psalm commentaries.

Chapter 3 explains the methodology used in this study--a 10-step process based on Baker and Schutz (1971) and Naden (1993). It includes a list of the instructional objectives used in the study, a description of the statistical analysis used to measure cognitive modification, and a description of the qualitative analysis used to evaluate the instructional product's effectiveness at modifying affect.

Chapter 4 presents the results of the empirical development of the instructional product, the tests, the statistical analysis, and the focus group interview.

Chapter 5 provides the summary, conclusions, implications, and recommendations for further research.

The appendices contain the data of the research, the cognitive instruments (pre- and post-tests), the criteria for each cognitive instrument, a journal of the developmental process, the Instructor's Manual (which consists of all 10 lectures verbatim), the Learner's Manual (which consists of note-taking

outlines, resource sheets, and suggested assignments), master copies of overhead transparencies, a list of questions used to determine modification of affect during the post-instruction focus group interview, and a transcript of the interview.

## CHAPTER 2

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

#### **Approaches to Psalms**

Methodologies for studying Psalms have varied over the centuries. At least six major approaches have been employed in the last 2 millennia (Parker, 1995). First, early church fathers such as Augustine (trans. 1960) took an eschatological-Messianic approach that focused on finding the person of Christ hidden within Psalms. However, their attempts to discover the life of Christ hidden in the verses often led to eisegesis or allegorizing (Parker, 1995).

By the late 19th century, authors such as Delitzsch and Keil (1867/1986) and Perowne (1878/1989) began to use a second approach: the “personal/historical method of psalm study” (Bellinger, 1990, p. 15). They focused on the personal circumstances that may have occurred in the lives of the psalmists and the historical situation out of which each psalm arose. However, their insights were often limited and highly subjective in those instances when no history was explicitly revealed in the psalm. Nonetheless, this approach was still in vogue into the mid-20th century by scholars such as Buttenweiser (1938). Some authors of this era, such as Briggs and Briggs (1907/1987), used a third approach that focused on how the psalms revealed

the events, persons, and politics of the Maccabean era. However, the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls dealt a "death blow" (Parker, 1995, p. 164) to this literary-analytical-historical approach.

Psalm scholarship changed forever in the early 20th century because of the work of Hermann Gunkel (1930/1967), who implemented a fourth approach. He attempted to identify the forms of psalms and reconstruct the special situation-in-life (*Sitz im Leben*) in which they were used. The first of these two concerns spawned a ground-breaking methodology subsequently employed by many others (Allen; 1980; Bellinger, 1990; Brueggemann, 1984; Gerstenberger, 1988; Westermann, 1965/1981; 1967/1980; 1984/1989).

In terms of method, Gunkel began by comparing the psalms and classifying them according to type. He perceived various types of psalms; these types had a fairly consistent form and content. . . . His basis for classification included the structure of the psalm, its vocabulary, and its religious tone. . . . Gunkel's type-analytical method introduced a new departure in psalm interpretation; his work became foundational for contemporary psalm scholarship. (Bellinger, 1990, p. 18)

Gunkel's form-critical approach is examined in greater detail later, but it is important to note that his approach contained two weaknesses. First, the forms Gunkel proposed were not rigid. This spawned disagreement among scholars over the exact classification of each psalm. Second, the reconstruction of the situation-in-life was a subjective enterprise. This second weakness motivated those who followed Gunkel to develop another approach to psalm study.

Norwegian scholar Sigmund Mowinckel was Gunkel's student. He proposed a fifth approach. Following the lead of his mentor, Mowinckel

(1951/1962) looked for the situation out of which the psalms arose, but focused his attention on the cultic background of Psalms. The meaning of the word *cult* in this context differs significantly from its modern usage. "The word signifies organized worship. It does not indicate some aberrant expression of faith or abnormal behavior; cult is rather a technical term indicating primarily, though not exclusively, the organized worship of ancient Israel in the temple" (Bellinger, 1990, pp. 24-25). Mowinckel attempted to discover how psalms functioned in this context, focusing his attention on the dramatic festivals and acts of worship celebrated in the temple. He believed the psalms alluded to these festivals and acts and revealed the setting in which they were used.

One of the weaknesses of the form-critical approach also surfaced here--it was often a highly subjective endeavor to assign psalms a worship setting in which they functioned. In addition, Mowinckel was influenced by his study of other ancient Near Eastern texts. As a result, he tended to impose ancient Near Eastern rituals onto the psalms (Parker, 1995). Those who followed his cult-functional method of psalm study such as Kraus (1961/1987) and Weiser (1962) did likewise.

The canonical approach of Brevard Childs (1979) is the sixth and most recent approach to psalm study. Childs theorized that the titles added to the psalms--after the texts originated, but before they were included in the Hebrew canon--"served not only to identify a presumed author, but to provide some hermeneutical clue to understanding the psalms thus titled" (Miller, 1986, p. 13). Childs had two guiding concerns: how the individual psalms fit into the life of



David or Israel, and how the Psalter came together as a collection. Reflecting on his first concern, he noted,

David is pictured simply as a man, indeed chosen by God for the sake of all Israel, but who displays all the strengths and weaknesses of all human beings. He emerges as a person who experiences the full range of human emotions, from fear and despair to courage and love, from complaint and plea to praise and thanksgiving. . . . The effect of this new context has wide hermeneutical implications. The psalms are transmitted as the sacred psalms of David, but they testify to all the common troubles and joys of ordinary human life in which all persons participate. (Childs, 1979, p. 521)

While the psalms do reflect common experiences of life to which readers can relate, this historicizing approach is similar to the personal-historical approach of Delitzsch and Perowne and subject to the same weakness--subjectivity in assigning a historical context to each psalm.

The second concern guiding Childs's approach is equally problematical. He stressed the importance of examining the Psalter in its canonical form. "The emphasis is hence more upon the Psalter as 'canonical literature'; it is to be read . . . as a whole, rather than sung or prayed as smaller parts of that whole" (Gillingham, 1994, p. 233). While the issues of how and why the Psalter was shaped are important, attempting to fit each psalm into the Psalter can ignore their individual history and uniqueness.

### **A Modified Form-Critical Approach**

This brief overview suggests that none of the historical major approaches alone has been adequate in providing students of Scripture with a satisfactory approach to the study of Psalms. Something else was needed.

Faced with this dilemma, Parker (1995) suggested a modified form-critical approach that is eclectic in nature. He argued that "an eclectic approach respects the individuality of each psalm and represents 'the best of all possible worlds' for studying Psalms" (p. 164). His eclectic approach included the identification and interpretation of prominent poetic devices such as parallelism and imagery. At the same time, it incorporated the identification of a psalm's internal structure or form. The modifications that Parker proposed were not new. Some had been incorporated already into form criticism. This becomes evident upon closer examination of the guiding concerns of form criticism's originators and the ways in which it became modified and refined.

As noted earlier, form criticism began with the work of Gunkel (1930/1967). Gunkel sought to identify types or genres of biblical literature and the setting-in-life (*Sitz im Leben*) out of which those forms arose. The setting was important to him, because he believed that the repeated use of the psalm in that context helped produce the form. However, the reconstruction of the setting was Gunkel's most subjective enterprise. These reconstructions were often very tenuous, and supported by minimal evidence.

The forms, however, were more easily identified. Gunkel noticed that many psalms had similar internal structures and tones. This led him to classify psalms that possessed similar characteristics. He grouped them into five main categories: hymns, individual thanksgiving psalms, communal laments, individual laments, and royal psalms. In addition to these five major categories,

Gunkel identified the existence of seven minor types (pp. 30-39).

His approach revolutionized psalm study. Although it is common for scholars to approach the psalms this way today, it had never been done methodically before Gunkel. As a result,

the greatness of Gunkel's achievement in pioneering a new approach to the Psalms and thereby opening up new possibilities of understanding them in relation to Israel's worship and spirituality remains unchallenged. A whole new era of psalm studies became possible on the basis of the classification of psalm types and the related lines of interpretation which he established. (Clements, 1976, p. 82)

While Gunkel examined the psalms' situation-in-life, Sigmund Mowinckel (1951/1962) probed their "situation-in-liturgy" (Gillingham, 1994, p. 232). He was convinced that

the study of the formal criteria of the different stylistic 'types' shows the way to the different situations in life from which they have sprung. To each of the main psalm types corresponds a definite situation . . . [and] all these situations are cultic situations. (Mowinckel, 1951/1962, p. 28)

Mowinckel entitled his work, The Psalms in Israel's Worship, thus providing a clear announcement of his underlying conviction. He depicted the psalms as cultic songs that corresponded to specific acts within the organized worship of Israel. He insisted that "a cultic interpretation--and a real understanding--of the psalms means setting each one of them in relation to the definite cultic act--or cultic acts--to which it belonged" (Mowinckel, 1951/1962, p. 23). For Mowinckel, all the psalms alluded to certain acts that occurred within Israel's dramatic worship and festivals. Therefore, the discovery of these correspondences was a primary goal of his approach.

Mowinckel sought to integrate his own cult-functional approach with the form-critical approach of his mentor. He articulated two interpretive steps that reflected his dual concern: "The first task is to classify the different forms and styles, thoughts and moods, of the psalms which are more or less distinctly alike in all these respects, and which thus form a special group or 'type'" (p. 24). The second task was to identify the situation-in-cult from which the psalm emerged (p. 26). However, Gunkel's problem with reconstructing the situation-in-life did not resolve itself when Mowinckel changed the setting to a situation-in-liturgic. In addition, "Mowinckel was influenced by comparative Near Eastern texts and by anthropological studies on 'primitive' religions in the ancient world" (Bellinger, 1990, pp. 25-26). As a result, Mowinckel's advances, while influential, still suffered from these two flaws.

The work of these men laid a foundation for Claus Westermann (1965/1981, 1967/1980, 1984/1989), who augmented the findings of Gunkel and modified the research of Mowinckel. Westermann asserted that "the 'categories' of the Psalms are not first of all literary or cultic in nature. They are this of course, but it is not the essential element" (Westermann, 1965/1981, p. 153). He de-emphasized the role of the cult in the formation of Psalms, and suggested that "although many of the psalms point towards some particular 'worship-event', they also point (more significantly) towards a more generally understood 'life-event', whereby that which is common to their human experience is also common to 'everyman'" (Gillingham, 1994, p. 187). Thus, he

created the possibility that the situation out of which the psalms arose was less specific than Mowinckel had maintained, and more applicable to modern readers.

Instead of arising from the cult and reflecting cultic usage, Westermann (1965/1981) proposed that psalms “designate the basic modes of that which occurs when man turns to God with words: plea and praise. As these two basic modes of ‘prayer’ change and expand, the categories also change and expand” (p. 153). These different ways of addressing God, of praying, were represented in the psalm categories. He preserved Gunkel’s major types, but further bracketed them under the two general categories of praise and lament (Westermann, 1965/1981). These two general headings corresponded to two basic ways of praying. Psalms of praise contained prayers of praise and thanks; psalms of lament contained fervent pleas.

Westermann (1965/1981) believed prayer was the situation out of which the psalms arose. The situation that Westermann designated “the real Sitz-im-Leben of the Psalms” (p. 154) was speaking to God in praise or petition. All psalms could be grouped according to form, or the setting out of which they arose, under these two general headings. Westermann augmented and corrected the approaches of Gunkel and Mowinckel through this proposal. In addition, by contending that the psalms were modes of prayer that could be utilized by the community of faith in every generation, he helped take the psalms out of the ancient past and into the experiential present for modern readers.

Another scholar who labored to show the modern application of Psalms was Walter Brueggemann (1984). His primary concern was neither setting nor literary form, but how psalms functioned in the community of faith. He paid attention to form, but attempted "to move beyond the constraints of earlier studies which approach the psalms primarily as ancient texts, attempting instead to discover an appropriate resonance in the meaning of the poetry in a life-setting which is relevant also today" (Gillingham, 1994, p. 188). He grouped psalms into three new categories: psalms of orientation, disorientation, and new orientation (Brueggemann, 1984). These categories were based on his observation that "the flow of human life characteristically is located either in the actual experience of one of these settings or is in movement from one to another" (p. 19). Each of his categories reflected seasons of human life-- seasons of well-being (orientation), seasons of anguish, hurt, and suffering (disorientation), and seasons when morning dawns after a long night and God enlightens the darkness (new orientation) (Brueggemann, 1984). While Brueggemann's classification did not replace the traditional form-critical categories, his effort was beneficial in demonstrating the "correlation between the gains of critical study (especially Gunkel and Westermann) and the realities of human life (known to those who most use the Psalms in a life of prayer)" (Brueggemann, 1984, p. 19).

The work of these four scholars suggests three important modifications to a form-critical approach to psalm study. First, "the idea that each form had

one and only one *Sitz im Leben* is too rigid" (Longman, 1985, p. 63). The search for the original life settings or cultic uses of the psalms has yielded tenuous results at best. As Gillingham (1994) noted, it is "difficult to establish the life-setting for which a psalm was composed. The specific origins of the psalms are unknown; their later use is usually unclear" (p. 173). Therefore, pursuit of the precise setting seemed to be an unfruitful and unnecessary enterprise. At best, conclusions regarding the setting should be approached skeptically.

Second, because Hebrew poetry employs a variety of poetic devices, approaching Psalms using only one interpretive method (such as the personal-historical, cult-functional, or form-critical approach) can be restrictive and limiting to the exegete. Gillingham (1994) explained,

Like all poetry, Hebrew poetry conceals as much as it reveals, and so creates for the interpreter both possibilities and limitations: and given the absence of explicit narrative contextualization for the psalms, psalmody in particular cannot be constrained by one interpretive method alone. (p. 189)

Each psalm dictates what elements from different interpretive methods can be employed. Psalms identified as liturgies (e.g., Pss 15, 68, 132) certainly give permission for speculation regarding their use in the cult, while national laments (e.g., Pss 79, 137) call for investigation into the psalms' historical background. In addition, some hermeneutical guidelines can yield significant exegetical returns no matter what psalm is being considered, such as identifying parallelism and figures of speech (Osborne, 1991).

Third, identifying the form is the most useful aspect of the form-critical

approach because it can provide interpretive assistance. Understanding the form of a psalm is essential to understanding the meaning of a psalm.

Westermann (1984/1989) warned: "To interpret a particular psalm, without giving attention to the class to which it belongs, is methodologically without justification" (p. 9). Psalms can be categorized according to function, theme, or content, but "content designations provide less exegetical help" (Parker, 1995, p. 163). On the other hand, identifying the form "has the merit of making one conscious of the purpose a particular genre of psalms serves in worship and the mood it expresses" (Anderson, 1970, pp. 159-160). Because form identification aids in understanding a psalm's meaning, mood, and usefulness in contemporary life and worship, a "move toward a positive and constructive form criticism as a hermeneutical tool is a proper one and . . . evangelicals should continue to formulate and apply such a method" (Longman, 1985, pp. 47-48).

Even a lack of agreement among scholars on the precise classification of psalms does not undermine the importance of this interpretive approach. Form-critical commentators such as Gunkel, Mowinckel, Westermann, Anderson, and Gerstenberger (1988) may differ on their classifications, but "form criticism is not an exact science" (Day, 1990, p. 13). And as Gillingham (1994) noted, neither is poetry to which form-critical analysis is applied: "There is little doubt that the creating of poetic images is an art, not a science, and frequently involves a flexibility . . . which results in as many exceptions as there are conventions" (p. 75). Because poetic texts possess an innate flexibility, any



attempt at classifying them according to their internal structure must also be flexible.

Gunkel himself held that "any form-critical classification required a certain amount of flexibility" (Gillingham, 1994, p. 207), and more recently, scholars have underscored this necessity through their discussion on the nature of forms. Forms "are not rigid patterns . . . but rather the forms share in that diversity which marks all living things" (Westermann, 1984/1989, p. 10). Metaphors that illustrate the diversity that marks all living (and non-living) things abound. Allen (1980) compared the forms to snowflakes (p. 6), while Westermann (1984/1989) chose the leaves of a tree (p. 2). Like leaves and snowflakes, forms share a basic structural similarity, but none are identical.

Westermann (1967/1980) repeatedly highlighted the theme of shared similarity and diversity. He expressed:

Just as various species can be discerned in living creation (species which can never be reduced to abstract and dead classifications, but which permit each individual member to retain its uniqueness), likewise the individual psalms belong to forms or genres which permit an unlimited number of unique individual expressions. (p. 24)

Psalms are unique expressions, and yet their uniqueness is expressed within certain parameters. These parameters are shared by all psalms within a certain classification, but these psalms are uniquely similar. A single psalm cannot perfectly illustrate a form, for there is no perfect form. "No single psalm represents the ideal of its 'type' completely. They stand at varying distances from the reconstructed prototype" (Seybold, 1990, p. 112), but they are similar

enough to permit categorization.

Scholars examine many psalms in order to arrive at a classification.

Tucker (1971) explained:

We cannot fully understand a particular example of a genre without comparing it with other examples. This comparison will reveal which elements in the genre are more or less constant . . . and which elements are variable. . . . There are . . . unique elements in each particular biblical passage, but these are created by the individuality of a particular writer. . . . The form critical classification of that passage does not obscure that uniqueness: instead, it helps to make individuality and uniqueness clear by distinguishing them from the stereotyped or conventional aspects of the genre. (p. 14)

While this may complicate identification and classification of forms, it does not diminish its importance. It merely reminds students of the challenge before them--to examine the psalms individually, determine their similarities and differences, and arrive at justifiable meanings and classifications that accurately reflect the content and internal structure of the texts. That is the task of form-critical analysis.

### **Psalm Forms**

The debate over classification is ongoing, but form-critical scholars have displayed a general agreement regarding form categories. The only significant departure has been Brueggemann (1984), but his categories (orientation, disorientation, new orientation) represented psalm function more than form. Generally, the commentators who categorized psalms according to internal structure (i.e., form) have adopted the categories articulated by Gunkel (1930/1967), with slight modifications.

Gunkel (1930/1967) divided psalms into five main types: individual laments, communal laments, hymns, individual thanksgiving, and royal psalms (pp. 30-36). In addition to these five main types, Gunkel acknowledged the existence of several minor types such as communal thanksgiving, liturgies, and wisdom psalms (pp. 36-39). In establishing these categories, the father of form criticism was inconsistent in using his own methodology (Day, 1990, p. 13). The royal psalms (and some of his subcategories such as wisdom psalms) were established on the basis of content, not form. Nevertheless, "in broad terms, the main outline of the psalm types as distinguished by Gunkel has been followed by most subsequent scholarship" (Day, 1990, p. 13).

Westermann (1965/1981, 1967/1980, 1984/1989) arranged the psalms under two general headings, praise and lament, then followed Gunkel's lead and subdivided those categories into communal and individual laments, communal and individual thanksgiving, and hymns. Almost all scholars since Gunkel, Gillingham (1994) being the notable exception,<sup>2</sup> have designated laments, thanksgiving psalms, and hymns as primary form-critical categories.

Laments, also referred to as "pleas" (Parker, 1995, p. 165) and "complaints" (Gerstenberger, 1988, p. 11) are cries to God expressing the need for God's help on behalf of the psalmist (in individual laments) or the faith community (in communal laments). They are cries from the depths of human agony that plead with God to intervene and deliver them from some crisis,

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<sup>1</sup>Gillingham proposed three main categories--hymn, lament, and miscellaneous--and placed individual and communal thanksgiving psalms in his miscellaneous category.

suffering, sickness, death, grief, or oppression. They may contain brutally honest complaints against God for His lack of action, and equally bold petitions for deliverance. Each one ends with an expression of assurance that God will answer. The lament is the most frequent form in Psalms (Westermann, 1967/1980, p. 53). Examples include Pss 13 and 51 (individual) and Pss 79 and 137 (communal).

Thanksgiving psalms, which Westermann (1965/1981) called “declarative praise” (p. 22) and later “narrative praise” (1967/1980, p. 5), tell the story of how God answered the lament’s petition. Together, they form a two-act drama. In the lament’s expression of hope, the psalmist often vows to praise God when He answers. The song of thanksgiving is the fulfillment of that vow. It usually describes the time of need, recounts the cry for help, records how God intervened, and closes with praise or a didactic catalogue of lessons to be learned. Examples include Pss 30 and 118 (individual), and Pss 65 and 124 (communal).

Hymns, also called “descriptive praise” (Westermann, 1965/1981, p. 22), praise God by describing His attributes and His deeds. They do not recount specific stories about His activity like those in the narrative praise psalms, but rather advance a general description of who God is and what He has done. They accentuate God’s majesty and mercy, greatness and grace, describe His worthiness to be worshipped, and call all creation to praise Him. Examples include Pss 95, 103, and 117.

Psalm scholars endorse positioning most psalms within these three categories, but creativity replaces unity when scholars attempt to classify psalms beyond these three categories. As Westermann (1984/1989) commented, "In the case of many psalms a clear-cut categorization into one of these genres is impossible because they are composites of mixed genres" (p. 27). Some manifest mixed forms, a single form, or no discernible form at all. Gunkel (1930/1967) suggested that these psalms be classified separately under minor categories (like liturgies and wisdom psalms), and that psalms such as songs of Zion and enthronement psalms were actually sub-categories of the hymn. Other scholars have chosen to construct additional main categories for wisdom psalms (Bellinger, 1990; Gerstenberger, 1988; Longman, 1988), because they are didactic in nature and tend to address people rather than God (e.g., Ps 1).

Most frequently, however, scholars have assigned these psalm forms to a *miscellaneous* category and clustered them into various subcategories (Anderson, 1970; Gillingham, 1994; Parker, 1995). They include psalms of trust (Ps 23), psalms of remembrance or salvation history (Ps 78), wisdom psalms (Ps 119), royal songs (Ps 45), and liturgies (Ps 15). Gunkel and Westermann chose not to group them at all, and simply referred to them as minor types.

In light of this scholarship, the present study endorsed a modified form-critical approach to psalm study. Following Westermann, psalms were grouped under the two general headings of lament and praise. This was reflected in the title of the seminar in which the curriculum was presented, "Cries of Pain, Songs

of Praise.” Under those two general headings, psalms were arranged into four main categories: *lament-petition*, *narrative praise*, *descriptive praise*, and *miscellaneous*. The miscellaneous category included cries of pain and songs of praise. The curriculum examined psalms from each main category. An individual lament-petition psalm (Ps 13) and a communal lament-petition (Ps 126) were presented, but only an individual narrative praise (Ps 30), due to the low number of communal narrative praise psalms (only Pss 65, 107, 124). In addition, psalms of trust, psalms of exhortation, salvation history psalms, wisdom psalms, liturgies, and royal songs were separated into a miscellaneous category. However, due to the introductory nature of the curriculum, only one example was studied (Ps 1, a wisdom psalm).

Each of the four categories was rooted in the psalm literature, which detailed the definition of the form, its formal elements, its use of language, and its usefulness for the modern faith community. The following description presents the four main categories used in the curriculum developed for this study (lament-petition, narrative praise, descriptive praise, and miscellaneous).

#### Lament-Petition Psalms

Lament-petition psalms, also referred to as laments, dominate the Psalter. Some scholars have positioned over 50 psalms in this category (Gillingham, 1994; Westermann, 1967/1980); others number them greater than 60 (Bellinger, 1990; Parker, 1995). (These numbers combine individual and communal lament-petitions.) The lament-petition is a bold expression of

complaint and an urgent plea for help typically dominated by a “sense of emergency” (Alter, 1987, p. 621). Brueggemann (1984) referred to them as “psalms of darkness” (p. 52), while Anderson (1970) called them “murmurings in the absence of God” (p. 45). They flow out of an experience of distress and disorientation in which the psalmist questions why God has not yet illumined the darkness and resolved personal difficulties.

Lament-petitions “are difficult and haunting; their honesty is brutal” (Bellinger, 1990, p. 71), but they are expressions of faith. They are not merely the ramblings of chronic complainers, but cries of pain brought to God. They are based on “the conviction that God is concerned about His people’s condition” (Anderson, 1970, p. 43), not on the conviction that God does not care. They demand to know when God is going to send visible confirmation of His care, but the belief in God and His goodness is what makes His lack of intervention so perplexing.

Individual lament-petitions often contain elements not found in their communal counterparts, but both share at least three basic ingredients. The psalm usually opens with the introductory address, *O, Lord* or *O, God*. The first major section is called the *complaint* or lament. The complaint reveals what has motivated the psalmist to pray, for it describes his condition (or that of the community) and the situation in which he finds himself. There are typically three dimensions to the complaint: “It is directed toward God (an accusation or complaint against God), toward others (a complaint against an enemy), and

toward the lamenter himself (I-lament or We-lament)" (Westermann, 1965/1981, p. 267). Situations of distress include facing sickness (Ps 6), false accusations (Ps 7), vindictive gossip (Ps 31), injustice (Ps 94), persecution and betrayal (Ps 55), and the need for forgiveness (Ps 51) (Bellinger, 1990, pp. 48-51).

The hyperbole and vivid imagery that are typically found in the complaint section are "a means of *expressing* that tries to match *experience*" (Brueggemann, 1984, p. 53). Although the speech may sound negative, it serves a very positive purpose.

The complaint is something much more . . . positive than what we think of today when we use the word. . . . It will help our understanding if we think of the legal world, where the complaint (the accusation or indictment) still has a necessary and positive function. (Westermann, 1967/1980, p. 37)

In the lament-petition, the complaint honestly expresses to God the psalmist's feelings about his circumstances, for He alone can effect a change in those circumstances. Its "candor is sometimes shocking to the reader, but it is crucial to the honest dialogue of faith" (Bellinger, 1990, p. 71).

The second major section is called the *petition* or plea. (Occasionally, it is preceded or followed by a section in which the psalmist affirms his trust in God.) The petition section is characterized by bold requests. It may be the most emotionally intense section of the psalm. In it the psalmist often uses the imperative form of the verb to plead for help. Typically, the psalmist appeals for God to hear him, deliver him, and judge his enemies. The psalmist wants God's attention and intervention. It is not enough for him to have expressed his feelings about the darkness; he wants God to illumine it, remove him from it, or



grant him perspective in it. This section may also contain a list of reasons why God should answer the petition. They are often introduced with the words *or* or *for* and are followed by a list of consequences that will result if God fails to intervene.

The third major section is called the *praise* or the vow to praise section. It is a hopeful section that may contain an assurance of having been heard, although Anderson (1970) and Parker (1995) list this assurance as a separate section. The praise section is often introduced by *but* or *then* to indicate the shift that occurs in the tone of the psalm. It embodies the vocabulary of praise, using words such as *praise, sing, glorify, tell, and recount*. These words are usually employed in a declaration of praise, or a vow of praise intended to be fulfilled at some future time after God has answered the petition. The language of this section is much more positive than that of the first two sections, indicating that the structure of the lament-petition is a means of identifying with the speaker's darkness, and leading him "through and out of, the darkness" (Brueggemann, 1984, p. 54).

In addition to being honest, bold, and ultimately hopeful, the language of lament-petitions is general and stereotypical. They "do not speak of only one type of crisis; they describe material, mental, physical, and spiritual suffering. . . . In addition, the general language of the psalms often makes it difficult to be specific about the nature of the crisis" (Bellinger, 1990, p. 47). This enables modern readers to identify more readily with them, and guides the interpreter

away from the personal-historical approach that was examined earlier. As

Miller (1986) revealed:

The interpretive task is not tied to the search for a single explanation for a particular lament but can center in opening up, through different stories and moments, examples of the human plight that may be articulated through the richly figurative but stereotypical language of the laments. (p. 63)

While the frankness of the language may startle those reading these psalms for the first time, its ambiguity fosters identification with their circumstances and invites participation in their movement through and out of the darkness.

Scholars have exerted a significant effort to identify the enemies who are frequently mentioned in the lament-petitions. However, as Anderson (1970) wryly stated, "The plain truth is that we really do not know who the enemies were" (p. 60). The general and stereotypical nature of the language is the primary reason that efforts to identify the enemies have been unsuccessful. The descriptions are so general that "they do not permit us to recognize who is meant thereby" (Westermann, 1967/1980, p. 63). Although this might be construed as a hindrance to understanding or application, Miller (1986) saw it differently:

This situation, however, which confounds the best efforts of interpreters of the psalms, has its positive consequence. It leaves an openness for understanding who these enemies are in a way that pinning them down to one particular category, group, or type of person within the community would not. . . . The laments become appropriate for persons who cry out to God in all kinds of situations in which they may encounter various kinds of opposition. (pp. 50-51)

In other words, the general, stereotypical nature of the language may make

them even more useful for the modern community of faith.

These psalms bring all the ugliness of life before God. Life can be filled with pain, incoherence, disequilibrium, heartache, and grief. Sometimes it seems not to make sense. But these psalms model the reality that all of the pain, anguish, frustration, and despair of life can be acknowledged, not ignored, and brought to God in honest, bold, anticipatory prayer. That is one reason these psalms are so valuable. They insist

that the world must be experienced as it really is and not in some pretended way. . . . [They insist] that all such experiences of disorder are a proper subject for discourse with God. There is nothing out of bounds, nothing precluded or inappropriate. Everything properly belongs in this conversation of the heart. To withhold parts of life from that conversation is in fact to withhold part of life from the sovereignty of God. Thus these psalms make the important connection: everything must *be brought to speech*, and everything brought to speech must be *addressed to God*, who is the final reference for all of life. (Brueggemann, 1984, p. 52)

The lament-petitions demand that God, and those who pray them, relate to life as it is, with all its heartache.

The lament-petitions also anchor faith in a real, unromantic view of life. Brueggemann (1984) suggested that one reason these psalms receive minimal attention in the modern church is because embracing negativity is frowned upon (p. 52). He warned:

Much Christian piety and spirituality is romantic and unreal in its positiveness. As children of the Enlightenment, we have censored and selected around the voice of darkness and disorientation, seeking to go from strength to strength, from victory to victory. But such a way not only ignores Psalms; it is a lie in terms of our experience. (p. 11)

Certainly any part of the Scripture that promotes honesty in relationship to God should be useful to the church.

The inclusion of these psalms in the ancient community of faith points not only to their usefulness, but to the necessity of their inclusion today.

Westermann (1965/1981) recognized:

In both the Old and New Testament the lament is a very natural part of human life; in the Psalter it is an important and inescapable component of worship and of the language of worship. In the Old Testament there is not a single line which would forbid lamentation or which would express the idea that lamentation had no place in a healthy and good relationship with God. (p. 264)

Anderson (1970) discovered how these psalms could foster a healthy relationship with God when he compared biblical and Babylonian laments. He suggested: "Babylonian psalms of lament used the same conventional imagery . . . and even left a blank to be filled in with the name of the worshiper who chose to use the psalm!" (p. 60). He concluded that the language of the biblical laments was so general that "they seem to leave a blank, as it were, for the insertion of your own personal name" (p. 60). Those who have inserted their own names in the lament-petition have had the privilege of experiencing God's intervening deliverance, and of telling their story to subsequent generations through the next form to be considered--the psalm of narrative praise.

#### Narrative Praise Psalms

Narrative praise psalms, also called declarative praise, are so named because they declare the story of how the lament-petition was heard by God

who delivered the lamenter from the crisis. They are the fulfillment of the vow of praise made at the end of the lament-petition. Like an ancient version of Paul Harvey's famous vignettes, they tell the rest of the story. "The one who prayed in agony . . . now testifies and praises in trust and joy" (Miller, 1988, p. 184). These psalms are the direct result of God's specific, unique intervention in a specific situation. As with the lament-petition, the language of the narrative praise does not permit the interpreter to identify the specifics of the situation, but its source was a definite deliverance from God (Westermann, 1965/1981, p. 102).

The activity of God provides the psalm with its general structure. As Westermann (1984/1989) observed:

*Narrative or confessing praise is the echo of a specific act of God which has just taken place. It is a liberated, rejoicing sigh of relief by a person who was rescued, who now says "thank God" for that rescue. Its basic structure is always, "God has acted!" (pp. 25-26)*

This theme, God has acted, is the theme of all narrative praise psalms. The entire category is nothing more than the development of this one sentence (Westermann, 1965/1981). In these psalms "God is lauded, praised, exalted by my acknowledging, confessing before men that he has helped me" (p. 107).

Miller (1986) advanced the notion that "thanksgiving and praise have come together so thoroughly in the Old Testament that one cannot really sift out one from the other as a legitimately separate theological subject. . . . Praise and thanksgiving belong together and are to be interpreted together as an aspect of Old Testament theology" (p. 70). Therefore, Miller does not separate the praise

forms into narrative praise and descriptive praise like the curriculum of the present study. Although his point is accurate from the standpoint of theology, it is inaccurate with regard to form. There is such a clear distinction between the two psalm forms that a strong case can be made to treat them separately.

Like the lament-petition psalms, narrative praise psalms are divided into three major sections, usually referred to as the introduction, body or main section, and conclusion (Anderson, 1970; Westermann, 1967/1980). In this curriculum, however, the three main sections were given names that would remind students that the psalms develop a praise narrative: *prologue*, *story*, and *epilogue*.

The prologue section introduces the psalm. It is usually short (Pss 32:1-2; 116:1-2; 138:1-2), but may be longer when it gives a preview of the story that follows (Ps 30:1-5). Like the vow of praise at the end of the lament-petition, the prologue is filled with the vocabulary of praise. Hebrew verbs such as *praise*, *sing*, and *glorify* are often cohortatives (the volitional mood of the first person that expresses an indirect command) and therefore, the translation formulae *I will . . .* and *Let us . . .* are English indicators of the prologue section. The verbs can indicate a proclamation of intent to praise, as in Ps 30:1, "I will exalt you, O Lord," or an indirect call to worship, as in Ps 34:3, "Let us exalt His name together." The introductory praise of the prologue plays an important role in setting a tone of praise for the psalm, but the most important section of the psalm follows it--the story.

The story section looks back to the time of need, recounts the cry for

help, and reports God's intervening deliverance. These three subsections are so common and prominent that they are usually highlighted by commentators (Anderson, 1970; Bellinger, 1990; Parker, 1995). The cry for help mirrors the petition section of the lament by describing the plea using the same bold, imperative petitions. Because this is the storytelling section of the psalm that looks back to the need, cry, and deliverance, the Hebrew verbs used throughout this section are typically perfects (the Hebrew tense representing completed action) that are translated using the past tense. In English, repeated use of the past tense indicates the story section. A change of tense back to the cohortative almost always indicates the beginning of the third and final section--the epilogue.

The epilogue section brings the psalm to its conclusion. When the past tense is no longer used, and the insertion of the word *therefore* makes sense in the English text, the epilogue usually has begun. Like the prologue, it is filled with the vocabulary of praise when it contains a renewed vow of praise, which it often does (Pss 18:46-50; 30:12; 63:3-11; 116:12-19). It may also embody instruction regarding the character of God or lessons learned from the experience. When this occurs, the epilogue may be longer than the story itself, as in Ps 138:4-8. (The story is found in Ps 138:3.)

The epilogue is a necessary part of narrative praise psalms.

Westermann (1965/1981) reported:

Not a single one of these psalms ends with the final part of the report. . . . That praise which arises out of the moment of deliverance does not come

to an end when the deliverance has been reported once. . . . Praise cannot be silent, but must be continually expressed. (p. 110)

The narrative praise psalms give praise to God by “narrating and describing God’s involvement in the world” (Bellinger, 1990, p. 104), but storytelling praise is not intended for a single audience, but for all the audiences that comprise the community of faith in succeeding generations.

Narrative praise psalms can be used to worship God, but also to transmit the religious heritage of God’s people. In the nation of Israel, psalms of narrative praise were a confession of faith--stories that embodied beliefs. As the stories were passed along, so was the fundamental belief that God is an active, caring Participant in the world He created. He is not absent, deaf, or detached. He hears and saves.

This transmitted heritage is also a testifying witness to the reality of God for those outside the community of faith. Anderson (1970) contended:

In modern times the notion has developed . . . that “God” is outside our historical world. Few people who go to church or synagogue today expect God to manifest his activity in the human situation. . . . [But] Israel began her confession of faith by pointing to a historical situation of distress from which, in a wholly unexpected and humanly impossible way, deliverance was granted. In that situation the reality of God was unveiled. (p. 30)

The crowds gathered in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost witnessed the apostles continue in the narrative praise tradition after being filled with the Holy Spirit. They were amazed because they heard in their native languages the apostles “declaring the wonders of God” (Acts 2:11). In psalms of narrative praise, “the one who has been saved declares God’s great deeds. The



messengers of Jesus Christ do the same thing” (Westermann, 1965/1981, p. 115).

Anyone who belongs to the community of faith can participate in this kind of praise, because all have a unique story to tell. Christian congregations often call that story one’s *testimony* because it testifies that God has acted and provided salvation. There was a time in the lives of most believers when they cried out to God, He heard, and He saved. The details may vary, but the story lines share common characteristics—the characteristics of narrative praise.

#### Descriptive Praise Psalms

Where narrative praise ends, descriptive praise begins. In the final section of narrative praise psalms, the epilogue, the psalmist “looks beyond one saving deed to the total activity of God” (Westermann, 1965/1981, p. 111). The epilogue describes God in general terms. A general description of God’s actions and being characterizes psalms of descriptive praise, also called hymns. As psalms of praise, they are similar to narrative praise psalms, yet they are different. For example, they “are not the result of one single deed of God; rather, they praise God in the fulness of His existence and activity. Their basic structure therefore is ‘God is . . . God does . . .’” (Westermann, 1984/1989, p. 26), as opposed to “God has acted.” Simply stated, “these psalms describe God as praiseworthy” (Bellinger, 1990, p. 81). Also, descriptive praise psalms do not possess the strict structure of their narrative counterparts. Instead, “descriptive praise flows and overflows” (Westermann, 1965/1981, p. 133) from section to

section, as seen in Ps 95, where the first two sections are repeated.

The first major section of descriptive praise psalms is known as the *call to praise* and contains exactly what the name implies--a call to worship God. As with the two forms that have preceded it, this first section is filled with the vocabulary of praise. Verbs such as *extol, sing, shout, praise, magnify, and bow down* are sprinkled throughout. In Hebrew, the verbs are imperatives (Pss 103:1, 2; 117:1). Sometimes an imperative is linked with a cohortative, as in Ps 95:1, 6: "Come, let us sing. . . . Come, let us bow down in worship." Thus, this call to praise is an explicit command to praise. It is not a casual invitation, but a moral obligation of the self (Ps 103), others (Ps 95), and all creation (Ps 150). In some examples, the psalm opens by focusing on the majesty of God (Parker, 1995) instead of issuing a call to praise, as in Ps 8, but most of the time the call is explicitly present.

The second major section is the *cause for praise*, often referred to as the ground or reason for praise. This section describes the motivation to praise that preceded it. It is filled with reasons to worship God often introduced by the English word *for*. God is the subject of this section. His attributes and activities are described, so the word *who* (used to introduce relative clauses) may also be prominent and indicative of the section. The cause for praise section contains the theology that grounds the doxology of the first section. "The call and the reasons may move back and forth, be long or short, but the form and logic remain the same" (Miller, 1988, p. 181). God is worthy to be praised.

The final section is called simply, the *conclusion*. It draws the psalm to a close and usually contains concluding praise. In it the call to praise may be repeated (Ps 103), or instruction given (Ps 95). The key to identifying the conclusion is to observe how the subject changes from God to the self or others. Whereas the cause for praise describes God, the conclusion addresses people who were called to worship Him.

The language of these psalms "is speech directed toward God in the sense that it looks away from the unique occurrence of a special deliverance and speaks of God's majesty and grace in a summarizing, recapitulating, and descriptive manner" (Westermann, 1965/1981, p. 118). Especially, the cause for praise section often describes God using the merism of His greatness and His grace. Westermann (1984/1989) asserted:

This basic statement concerning God's majesty and his mercy stands at the center of all of Israel's descriptive praise. If the Psalms wish to tell in summary fashion who God is . . . then in some way these two polar statements are there, two statements which belong together like two poles in one field of magnetic energy. (p. 86)

Narrative praise psalms emphasize the depths into which God reached to rescue the suppliant. Descriptive praise psalms highlight the heights from which He reached to rescue.

Descriptive praise psalms have not suffered the same neglect as the lament-petitions. For centuries they have been featured prominently in the worship of the church. They are used to call the congregation to worship, and many are sung directly from the Psalter or in a slightly modified form. They

demonstrate the relationship between theology and doxology: Doxology is grounded in theology, and theology always leads to doxology (Westermann, 1965/1981, p. 134). In this way, they also demonstrate the proper end in pursuing theological knowledge--worship.

Descriptive praise psalms also testify to the religious community's understanding of the world. Miller (1989) elaborated:

In the midst of the mundane, praise points to the transcendent. Thus one of the most important things that happens when the congregation prays the prayers and sings the hymns of the Psalter . . . is that it gives explicit and clear testimony to the reality of God in a God-denying or God-indifferent world. (p. 13)

Acts of prayer and worship themselves do not make sense in a world where God is not present (Miller, 1989, p. 14). These psalms testify that God is present and lay a foundation for a biblical worldview, for

it is only within a particular understanding of this world and all of reality that praise does make sense. If the world is just here, then praise makes no sense. If the world is created, then all its inhabitants and all the elements of the cosmos should give praise. . . . So in a very real way, praise evokes a world; it suggests a different understanding of reality than everything else we encounter. (Miller, 1989, p. 13)

Descriptive praise psalms will continue to have a place in the community of faith because faith's fundamental beliefs are embodied in these songs of praise.

#### Miscellaneous Psalms

The psalms in the *miscellaneous* category do not share a common form. This places a limitation on the modified form-critical approach utilized in this study. Exegetes are most limited when dealing with psalms that reveal no

common form, but they can still find the approach helpful when interpreting psalms in those sub-categories that display a single or mixed form.

There is significant variety in the way scholars have classified psalms in the miscellaneous category. Common sub-categories included *royal songs*, *psalms of trust*, *liturgies*, and *wisdom psalms* (Anderson, 1970; Gillingham, 1994; Parker, 1995). Gunkel (1930/1967) listed royal songs as a major category, but subsequent scholarship revealed this was a content designation and not a form-critical category (Day, 1990). Psalms of trust or confidence reflect a single form and are considered “expansions of the ‘confession of trust’ found in the lament psalms” (Gillingham, 1994, p. 219).

A modified form-critical approach yields the greatest return when used with the mixed forms of the miscellaneous category. Gillingham (1994) considered liturgies, such as Pss 15 and 24, examples of a mixed form because “they cross various boundaries: they contain the hymnic call to praise, the wisdom-type didactic elements, the lament-type expressions of confidence, and suggestions of oracular materials” (p. 225). Thus, a knowledge of the formal elements of other major form-critical categories can provide exegetical help even with these miscellaneous psalms.

Ps 1 was the miscellaneous psalm included in this introductory curriculum. It is typically classified as a wisdom psalm, along with Pss 37, 49, 119. These psalms do not possess a consistent form. As Limburg (1992) noticed,

one does not hear the tones of either lament or praise in the Wisdom Psalms; for the most part, they are not even addressed to God. Rather, they offer reflections on the possibilities and the problems of life before God and advice on how best to live that life. (p. 533)

However, wisdom psalms do share similar content and style. As Limburg observed, they are addressed to people rather than to God. The content of these "poetic homilies" (Gillingham, 1994, p. 228) centers around addressing the problems of life. Stylistically, they make frequent use of comparison and admonition, and are clearly didactic in nature. Pss 37 and 119 are also acrostic.

This study includes Ps 1 for three reasons. First, studying a psalm without an easily identifiable form revealed the limitations of the modified form-critical approach. Second, including this psalm modeled how to approach other psalms of this type by highlighting the identification and interpretation of parallelism, figures of speech, and other stylistic features. Third, the study of Ps 1 was deemed especially appropriate for an introductory psalm study. There is agreement among scholars that Ps 1 (and possibly Ps 2) was placed strategically at the beginning of the Psalter to serve as an introduction to the Psalms. It encourages meditation on God's *torah*, His law, but not merely the books of the law found in the Pentateuch, but the word of God in Pss 2-150. Thus, it serves as a special "invitation to meditate upon the psalms which follow" (Limburg, 1992, p. 526).

A modified form-critical approach can yield valuable exegetical dividends when used to study Psalms. Form criticism has been defined as a

“method of analyzing and interpreting the literature of the Old Testament through a study of its literary types or genres. In particular, form criticism is a means of identifying the genres of that literature, their structures, intentions, and settings” (Tucker, 1971, p. 1). Because of the subjectivity involved in determining the settings, this modified approach focuses on the nature of the genres (forms), the structures (formal elements), and occasionally the intentions. This approach is limited when studying psalms in the miscellaneous category, but when supplemented by the identification and interpretation of prominent poetic devices such as parallelism and imagery, the “modified form critical approach effectively coaxes a great deal out of many psalms” (Parker, 1995, p. 162). The need to include the identification and interpretation of poetic devices such as parallelism and figures of speech is now demonstrated. The first of these issues has been the subject of much recent debate.

### **Parallelism and Poetry**

Psalms are comprised of several sections, sections of many lines, and lines of some words. Therefore, the interpretation of psalms includes three interpretive tasks: the examination of forms and their sections, lines, and words. Having examined psalm forms and sections, we now turn our attention to lines. Poetic lines reveal the primary poetic device in the Old Testament--parallelism (Parker, 1995). The book of Psalms cannot be interpreted properly without a grasp of this Hebrew poetic technique. It is important in the interpretation of the Hebrew and the English text, because semantic parallelism (parallelism of

thoughts) comes through in both languages. C. S. Lewis (1958) remarked:

It is (according to one's point of view) either a wonderful piece of luck or a wise provision of God's, that poetry which was to be turned into all languages should have as its chief formal characteristic one that does not disappear (as mere metre does) in translation. (pp. 4-5)

Whether reading Psalms in Hebrew or English, "anyone who interprets Hebrew poetry must understand parallelism" (Petersen & Richards, 1992, p. 21).

When Robert Lowth delivered his "Lectures on the Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews" (Lowth, 1787/1971) at Oxford in 1753, he launched parallelism to a prominent place in biblical studies. Lowth was not the first to recognize parallelism, but he popularized it (Berlin, 1985, p. 1). Scholars still use his definition:

The correspondence of one verse or line with another, I call parallelism. When a proposition is delivered, and a second is subjoined to it, or drawn under it, equivalent, or contrasted with it in sense, or similar to it in the form of grammatical construction, these I call parallel lines; and the words or phrases, answering one to another in the corresponding lines, parallel terms. (Lowth, 1837, p. viii)

His key idea was that the whole verse, not the individual lines, communicate the intended meaning, because parallelism is a correspondence of one line with another (or several others). Parallelism "directs the reader to view both parallel lines in light of one another. The various elements work in concert to create a sense of repetition and interdependency between the lines" (Parker, 1995, p. 151).

In addition to defining parallelism, Lowth (1837) classified three



primary types: *synonymous*, *antithetic*, and *synthetic*. Lowth explained that in synonymous parallelism “a proposition is delivered; and is immediately repeated, in whole or in part, the expression being varied, but the sense entirely or nearly the same” (cited in Berlin, 1992, p. 156). An example of synonymous parallelism is Ps 2:4: “The One enthroned in heaven laughs; the Lord scoffs at them.” In antithetic parallelism, “two lines correspond with one another by an opposition of terms and sentiments” (cited in Berlin, 1992, p. 156). An example is Ps 1: 6: “The Lord watches over the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.”

Lowth’s definition of synthetic parallelism was the loosest, and received the greatest criticism:

The parallelism consists only in the similar form of construction; in which word does not answer word, and sentence to sentence as equivalent or opposite; but there is a correspondence and equality between different propositions, in respect of the shape and turn of the whole sentence, and of the constructive parts. (cited in Berlin, 1992, p. 156)

An example is Ps 103:2: “Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits.” Although scholars modified Lowth’s work, “Lowth’s division of parallelism into three basic types remains dominant in virtually every introductory discussion of Hebrew poetry published through the 1980s” (Petersen & Richards, 1992, p. 22).

#### The Debate Over Parallelism and Poetry

Barker (1973) asserted that “far into the next century, successive Professors of Poetry at Oxford remembered that the one basic feature of biblical

Hebrew poetry is parallelism" (p. 431). That may have been true at Oxford, but some biblical scholars who followed Lowth took issue with him on this proposition, and on the validity of his three types. Gray (1915/1972) was among the first to assert that parallelism was "but one of the forms of Hebrew poetry" (p. 123). He believed the other was rhythm. Freedman (1972) supported Gray's notion that "rhythm rather than parallelism . . . [is the] fundamental criterion of Hebrew verse" (p. xxvi). However, most scholars have supported Lowth's original contention (Geller, 1979; Limburg, 1992; Parker, 1995; Watson, 1984).

Scholars who did not consider parallelism the primary feature of Hebrew poetry still acknowledged its importance. Berlin (1985) proposed that "it is not parallelism per se, but the predominance of parallelism, combined with terseness, which marks the poetic expression of the Bible" (p. 5). Instead of terseness, Alter (1985) and Longman (1988) maintained that it was parallelism and the use of imagery that characterized Hebrew poetry. Others took a safer path and insisted that "no single feature exists" (O'Connor, 1980, p. 89) because "Hebrew verse . . . defies neat categories and tidy definitions" (Gillingham, 1994, p. 82). Hebrew verse does defy neat categories and tidy definitions, but it is terse, filled with imagery, and the majority of scholars agree that "parallelism . . . [is] one of its major devices, if not the chief one" (Geller, 1979, p. 31).

Scholars challenged the validity of Lowth's (1787/1971, 1837) classifications of parallelism as they discovered that parallelism was

"multi-faceted . . . [and] operates in different realms--the realms of grammar and sound as well as semantics" (Parker, 1995, p. 150). Watson (1984) employed a mathematical model in studying parallelism, and Geller (1979) and Berlin (1985) analyzed parallelism using linguistic research, but their work is beyond the scope of this study. The present curriculum, designed specifically for readers of the English text, presents semantic parallelism only, because it is preserved in translation and can be appreciated by English readers.

Scholars disputed two of Lowth's classifications in particular. The first category to come under attack was synthetic parallelism (Gray, 1915/1972), which Geller (1979) demeaned as a "useless category" (p. 31). O'Connor (1980) was equally disparaging, calling it "Lowth's garbage can category" (p. 33). Verses that were not synonymous or antithetic were the most difficult to categorize, so synthetic parallelism became "a summary category for everything in Hebrew poetry that did not belong to synonymous or antithetic parallelism" (Petersen & Richards, 1992, p. 26).

Kugel (1981) and Alter (1985) challenged the validity of synonymous parallelism. They shared the view that the second parallel line (the B line) always carried the thought of the first line (the A line) further, and was not simply synonymous. Lowth (1787/1971) proposed a relationship of equivalence between the parallel lines, but Kugel and Alter suggested a relationship of development. Alter (1985) called the function of the parallel lines "intensification" (p. 11), explaining that the parallel line had a heightening effect, like a wave that swells and rolls forward before it breaks. Kugel (1981)

described the function as “seconding” (p. 51), borrowing his analogy from parliamentary procedure:

B, by being connected to A—carrying it further, echoing it, defining it, restating it, contrasting with it, *it does not matter which*—has an emphatic “seconding” character, and it is this, more than any aesthetic of symmetry or paralleling, which is at the heart of biblical parallelism. (p. 51)

Neither scholar found much use for synonymous parallelism. Kugel concluded: “Synonymous’ parallelism is rarely synonymous, and there is no real difference between it and ‘antithetical’ parallelism—the whole approach is wrongheaded. All parallelism is really ‘synthetic’” (p. 57).

In addition to dismissing all of Lowth’s categories, Kugel (1981) concluded that no significant differences existed between poetry and prose. He rejected parallelism as a distinguishing feature of Hebrew poetry. He believed “the same traits that seem to characterize Hebrew ‘poetry’ also crop up in what is clearly not poetry” (p. 63). While this is true, it does not lead necessarily to Kugel’s radical conclusion. “There is no absolute dividing line between poetry and prose in the Bible. But there are differences, to which . . . Kugel pays insufficient attention” (Landy, 1984, p. 67).

Landy (1984) outlined four characteristics that distinguish poetry from prose:

1. *Time*. “Prose presupposes sequential time . . . poetry concerns timelessness” (p. 71).

2. *The writer’s stance*. “Prose preserves an often ironic objective distance between the writer, his audience, and his subject matter. . . . In poetry

there is a communion between the singer and the audience. . . . It is more personal" (p. 71).

3. *Context*. "Prose accordingly represents everyday life, activities, and speech. . . . Poetry is the language of liminal [i.e., threshold] situations, of Job amid dust and ashes, or the enclosed garden of lovers, and, in particular, of ritual speech" (p. 72).

4. *Imagery*. "Prose perceives the world through relations of contiguity, temporal and spatial. . . . Poetry expresses it metaphorically" (p. 72).

Moreover, Gillingham (1994) outlined 12 specific characteristics that define the boundary between Hebrew prose and poetry.

In addition to these lists of intrinsic differences, Landy (1984) and Berlin (1991) asserted that poetry and prose could be distinguished according to their frame of reference. Poetry contained "context-markers" (Landy, 1984, p. 68) that influenced the interpretation of a text and identification of its genre. These context-markers were found even in the midst of prose, as in Exod 15:1-18 where the narrative was interrupted by the "song" (Exod 15:1) of Moses, Miriam, and the Israelites who celebrated deliverance from the Egyptians. Another example was Jonah 2:2-9, a narrative praise psalm that Jonah "prayed to the Lord his God" (Jonah 2:1) from the belly of the sea creature. In both examples, poetry was introduced by a marker ("song" and "prayed") and contrasted with its context. Both examples of poetry occurred in the midst of books that were clearly prose, and could be distinguished by a specific

context-marker that briefly shifted the text's frame of reference.

When Kugel (1981) claimed that the traits characterizing Hebrew poetry were found in what is clearly not poetry (p. 63), he was referring primarily to parallelism. He believed that equating parallelism with poetry led interpreters "to overlook parallelism in 'unpoetic' places—in laws, cultic procedures, and so forth" (p. 70). He was correct, but he carried the implications of his observation too far. He rightly discovered parallelism in many different texts, but then incorrectly argued that parallelism was not a distinctive feature of Hebrew poetry. This led Kugel to the inaccurate conclusion that poetry could not be clearly distinguished from prose.

Scholars convincingly refuted Kugel's conclusion (Berlin, 1991; Gillingham, 1994; Landy, 1984) and his argument that parallelism is not a distinctive feature of Hebrew poetry (Berlin, 1985, 1991; Geller, 1979; Limburg, 1992; Parker, 1995; Watson, 1984). Berlin (1985) summarized their rebuttal: "Poetry uses parallelism as its constitutive or constructive device, while nonpoetry, though it contains parallelism, does not structure its message on a systematic use of parallelism" (p. 16). Parallelism is distinctive of Hebrew poetry, and poetry can be distinguished from prose.

Kugel (1981) and Alter (1985) have been criticized for neglecting "two important characteristics of Hebrew poetry. The first is the presence of recurring patterns in similar types of poems" (Gammie, 1989, p. 32). The second is "the larger units of verse commonly called strophes or stanzas" (Gammie, 1989, p. 33). In other words, Kugel and Alter failed to include form criticism in their

approach to poetry. They did not include "recurring patterns in similar types of poems" (i.e., forms), and they did not divide these forms into "stanzas" or sections. Their work suffered from a significant shortcoming because they neglected form-critical analysis.

#### Four Types of Semantic Parallelism

Lowth's (1837) synthetic and synonymous categories have been disputed, and parallelism has been shown to be more complex than he originally believed, but Lowth's classical method of approaching parallelism is still valid. His contributions "remain seminal in virtually every discussion of Hebrew poetry" (Petersen & Richards, 1992, p. 21). Many scholars continue to utilize his approach as the foundation of their own (Allen, 1983; Bratcher & Reyburn, 1991; Craigie, 1983; Geller, 1979; Mouser, 1983; Parker, 1995; Robinson, 1952; Stuhlmüller, 1983; Tate, 1990; VanGemeren, 1991). Therefore, this curriculum utilized Lowth's approach to parallelism and incorporated recent modifications into its description of how each type of parallelism functions.

Four types of semantic parallelism were presented in this study: *synonymous*, *antithetic*, *synthetic*, and *climactic*. These categories were based on Lowth (1837) and Gordon (1913); definitions were based on Parker (1995). In synonymous parallelism, the parallel line (or lines) strengthens the thought of the first line by repeating similar or complementary terms. The synonyms employed are not absolute, but functional, since true synonyms do not exist in

any language (Alter, 1985; Parker, 1995). This category included parallelism using similar terms (Ps 2:1-5), complementary terms (Ps 19:2), and numbers (Ps 91:7), thus expanding on Lowth's original understanding. The expansion also seemed to answer the objections of Kugel (1981) and Alter (1985) cited earlier.

Some interpreters (Alonso-Schökel, 1988; Parker, 1995) suggested the label *thetic* parallelism in order to avoid the confusion inherent in the term *synonymous*. The term incorporated numerical and complementary terms. Because these terms were not synonyms, they might be better served by a different label. The term *thetic* also complemented the corresponding labels, *antithetic* and *synthetic*. However, the term *synonymous* was adopted for this study because (1) it was assumed that the intended audience would be unfamiliar with the more technical term, *thetic*, and (2) the term *synonymous* conveyed the fundamental function of this type of parallelism--strengthening through repetition.

In *antithetic* parallelism the parallel line contrasts the thoughts of the lines by opposing them. The two lines are usually linked with the English word *but* to indicate the antithesis. *Antithetic* parallelism is the least disputed and most recognizable type of parallelism. Examples abound in Proverbs, but it is also common in Psalms (e.g., Pss 1:6; 20:7; 37:9, 17, 21).

In *synthetic* parallelism, the most maligned of Lowth's categories, the parallel line advances the thought of the first line by completing, adding, explaining, or extending. *Synthetic* parallelism adds something to the first line.



It may add a related thought (Ps 103:6), a new one (Ps 25:13), an explanation of the first thought (Ps 13:6), or an extension of it (Ps 1:1). The word *and* frequently links the two lines (though it is not as common as *but* in antithetic parallelism) and may indicate the presence of synthetic parallelism.

Understood within these parameters, synthetic parallelism is a very useful classification (contra Geller, 1979; O'Connor, 1980). It remains one of the more difficult classifications to make and can be confused with synonymous parallelism, but following the above guidelines can replace confusion with clarity.

In climactic parallelism (Gordon, 1913), the parallel lines build upon the thought of the first line by repeating one part and adding to it. Sometimes the thought expressed in the first line is incomplete without the parallel lines (Pss 29:1-2; 77:16), but this is not always the case (Ps 96:1-2). Commonly referred to as staircase parallelism (Berlin, 1992; Robinson, 1952; Watson, 1984), climactic is actually a variation of synthetic parallelism. It is treated separately in this study because the repeated phrase makes its form distinctive, and because the repetition intensifies the feelings and thoughts being expressed, building them to a climax, as in Ps 93:3: "The seas have lifted up, O Lord, the seas have lifted up their voice; the seas have lifted up their pounding waves."

In the earlier discussion of forms, it was asserted that because poetic texts possess an innate flexibility, any attempt at classifying them according to their internal structure must also be flexible. The same guideline applies when

examining parallelism. As a poetic device, parallelism is

a flexible technique, with a variety of formulations and arrangements according to the different situations. This is where we come across the scholar's determination to divide, subdivide, classify and give a name to each variety. . . . The important thing is to develop sensitivity to be able to appreciate the variations in their poetic function. (Alonso-Schökel, 1988, p. 57)

It is essential to employ this understanding and remain flexible in the interpretation of Hebrew poetry. Parallelism is "a creative art, with many variations, and hence is . . . difficult to classify consistently" (Gillingham, 1994, p. 72). The exegete who can remain flexible and abstain from over-classification will avoid frustration and develop a greater appreciation for the beauty of these exquisitely crafted, artistic texts.

### **Figurative Language in Psalms**

The interpretation of Psalms requires the examination of psalm forms and sections, parallel lines, and individual phrases and words. In Hebrew poetry, the phrases and words are often figurative. To present their reality, psalms employ images liberally. That is how poets see the world—through images. Alter (1985) explained, "Poetry is a special way of imagining the world or, to put this in more cognitive terms, a special mode of thinking" (p. 205). Some considered the presence of imagery as important as parallelism in distinguishing Hebrew poetry (Alter, 1985; Longman, 1988). Others considered it more important than parallelism (Ryken, 1984). Imagery can be appreciated by readers of the English text, because the integrity of most figures is preserved

in translation.

Poetry speaks a foreign language--the language of figures. In order to interpret any foreign language text, one would require some understanding of that language. The same is true of the language of figures--it requires some degree of understanding in order to be interpreted. Detailed guidelines for reading figurative language abound (Fee & Stuart, 1981; Kaiser, 1981; Osborne, 1991; Ryken, 1984; Sproul, 1977; Virkler, 1981), but an understanding of three basic principles can prove beneficial.

First, figurative language is pictorial, not literal (Ryken, 1984). When a phrase is literal, its meaning is contained in the phrase itself. When it is pictorial, its meaning is presented in a picture. In this way, figurative words do not mean what they say, because they say it using an image. As Robert Frost once said, poetry is "saying one thing and meaning another" (cited in Eastman, 1980). This requires readers to think in images, just as the poets do, and to meditate upon what the images convey.

Second, figurative language is concrete, not abstract (Ryken, 1984).

Ryken explained:

Poetry avoids the abstract as much as possible. The poets of the Bible constantly put us into a world of water and sheep and lions and rocks and arrows and grass. Virtually any passage of biblical poetry will illustrate how consistently concrete poetry is. (p. 90)

Figurative language is not about water, sheep, lions, rocks, arrows, and grass, but it describes abstract concepts and ideas through those concrete images.

For example, the theologian says, "God's self-disclosure occurs through nature. Even the celestial bodies reveal something of His existence and His essential being." The poet says, "The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they display knowledge" (Ps 19:1-2).

Third, figurative language is implicit, not explicit. The words of poets are two-sided, like coins. They possess a straightforward, explicit meaning (denotation), and an implied, suggested meaning (connotation) (Ross, n.d.). A word's implied meaning can be expressed through an emotional connotation or a historical allusion. For example, the words used in the opening verses of Ps 23 are intended to evoke feelings of security and comfort: "He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters" (Ps 23:2). Ps 77:16, 19 contain a historical allusion to Israel's exodus from Egypt through the Red Sea: "The waters saw you, O God, the waters saw you and writhed; the very depths were convulsed. Your path led through the sea, your way through the mighty waters, though your footprints were not seen." Therefore, in order to grasp the different layers of meaning in figurative language, the interpreter must look beyond what is said to how it is said.

The ability to identify specific figures of speech can aid in the interpretation of figurative language. Figures of speech are intentional deviations from the literal use of words for special purposes (Kaiser, 1981; Quinn, 1982). They arrest the attention of the reader by attempting "to picture . . . the unfamiliar by means of the familiar" (Brown, 1955, p. 19).

Longman (1988) described the process of recognizing them: "An image compares two things which are similar in some ways but dissimilar in other ways. The dissimilarity is what surprises us and causes us to take notice. Then we search for the similarity" (p. 115).

Scholars have identified over 1,000 figures of speech in the English language (Lanham, 1969), and over 200 are used in the Bible (Bullinger, 1898/1968). However, knowledge of a handful of common figures of speech can produce a wealth of insights for the interpreter. Numbers vary according to individual commentators; Ryken (1984) listed 10 key figures and Parker (1995) described 15. The value of Parker's work was rooted in his four-category classification of figures. Each category (comparison, substitution, addition, omission) identified the different processes used to form the figure, and aided in their identification and interpretation. The eight figures of speech included in this study exemplified Parker's categories: simile, metaphor, personification, anthropomorphism, zoomorphism, (comparison); merism, (substitution); hyperbole, (addition); and rhetorical question (omission).

The same flexibility required in the interpretation of forms and parallelism is necessary when interpreting figures of speech. Quinn (1982) explained:

Learning about the figures of speech should be less like learning about the periodic table of elements than like learning how to model clay. . . . In fact, the very phrase, "figures of speech" is misleading in its static, passive form. It should be the "figurings of speech"--or, better yet, simply "figuring speech." The figurings of speech reveal to us the apparently limitless plasticity of language itself. (p. 2)

The plasticity of poetic language demands flexibility in interpretation. Biblical scholars frequently have recommended this flexibility by describing biblical interpretation as more of an art than a science when it comes to poetry (Alonso-Schökel, 1988; Alter, 1985; Day, 1990; Gillingham, 1994; Quinn, 1982). This does not justify an allegorical approach to interpretation—an approach that looks for hidden, spiritual meanings behind the text—it merely alerts the interpreter to the special care needed when interpreting the genre.

Because figures of speech are conveyors of information and emotion that communicate explicitly and implicitly, studying them can be an interpretive minefield. “Biblical figures of speech create interpretive problems when they are missed (by taking literally what is figurative), mistaken (by taking figuratively what is literal), or misinterpreted (by mis-taking the point of the figure)” (Parker, 1995, p. 94). Scholarly works are available to help the exegete avoid these problems (Bullinger, 1898/1968; Caird, 1980; Parker, 1995; Watson, 1984), but even an understanding of some basic figures can be helpful. Therefore, an introduction to figures was incorporated into the Psalms curriculum developed in this study.

The identification and interpretation of specific figures of speech, types of semantic parallelism, and psalm forms are three essential ingredients in the modified form-critical approach to Psalms employed in this study. Because figures, parallelism, and forms are not lost in translation, they can help the English reader glean exegetical insights from the English text. The nature of

poetry demands flexibility when analyzing these features, but analyzing them is essential to the effectiveness of this approach:

The Bible, since it is after all literature, cannot properly be read except as literature; and the different parts of it as the different sorts of literature they are. Most emphatically the Psalms must be read as poems; as lyrics, with all the licenses and all the formalities, the hyperboles, the emotional rather than the logical connections, which are proper to lyric poetry. They must be read as poems if they are to be understood; no less than French must be read as French and English as English. Otherwise we shall miss what is in them and think we see what is not. (Lewis, 1958, p. 3)

A modified form-critical approach to Psalms helps the exegete discover treasures in the psalms that lay buried beneath the poets' artistry--an artistry comprised of forms, parallelism, and figures of speech.

### **Psalm Commentaries**

Psalm commentaries reflect the concerns of Old Testament scholars and advances in scholarship over the last century. It cannot be assumed that older commentaries are of little value because Gunkel's groundbreaking work on forms was not published until 1930. Commentaries from all periods frequently offer timeless linguistic and exegetical insights. Although older may mean dated, it does not necessarily mean outdated. Given the parameters of the modified form-critical approach presented in this study, the following commentaries are evaluated in light of (1) their approach to Psalms, (2) their attention to forms, parallelism, and figures of speech, and (3) their usefulness to the reader of the English text.

Commentaries of the 19th and early 20th centuries followed one of two

approaches: the personal-historical approach of focusing on the life of the psalmist and attempting to reconstruct the historical event behind the psalm (Buttenweiser, 1938; Delitzsch & Keil, 1867/1986; McLaren, 1893; Perowne, 1878/1989), or the literary-analytical-historical approach of attempting to associate psalms with the persons and politics of the Maccabean era (Briggs & Briggs, 1907/1987). Although many of the early commentaries shared this shortcoming, they also offered valuable linguistic insights. For example, the strength of Delitzsch and Keil (1867/1986) and Perowne (1878/1989) was embodied in their insights into the Hebrew text. Neither deal with parallelism or figures of speech. Both characteristics limit their value for readers of the English text. Briggs and Briggs (1907/1987) did include Lowth's three categories, plus staircase and emblematic parallelism (where the thought of one line is illustrated by the other line) in their comments, but they focused primarily on the Hebrew text also.

Oesterley (1939) furnished one of the earliest commentaries implementing a form-critical approach. He attempted to present a parallel layout of psalms according to meter, not semantics. In addition, he suggested a significant number of emendations to the Hebrew text. His work's usefulness is limited for English readers, but the works of Buttrick (1955/1983) and Leupold (1959) are less technical. These commentaries mentioned Gunkel, Mowinckel, and Lowth directly (Buttrick, 1955/1983), or made reference to form criticism and parallelism in general (Leupold, 1959). However, neither utilized parallelism in their exegetical comments, and only Buttrick mentioned forms.



The form-critical approach of Gunkel (1930/1967) and the cult-functional approach of Mowinckel (1951/1962) influenced the commentaries of the 1960s (Kraus, 1961/1987, 1961/1989; Weiser, 1962) and early 1970s (Anderson, 1972a, 1972b). Kraus (1961/1987) called Gunkel's work "a decisive event in the history of interpretation" (p. 38), but then proposed a revision of Gunkel's categories based on theme-oriented form groups (like Gunkel's royal songs category) rather than internal structure. Kraus, along with Dahood (Dahood, 1966, 1968, 1970), also exhibited the tendency to rewrite the Hebrew text based on alleged Ugaritic parallels.

Dahood (1966, 1968, 1970) utilized comparative studies, and approached Psalms based on poetry from the ancient city of Ugarit. Ugaritic has close linguistic affinities to biblical Hebrew, but Dahood repeatedly chose Ugaritic over Massoretic vocalization. This profoundly affected his translation and interpretation of Psalms. It is difficult to determine the extent to which Ugaritic poetry, composed between the 15th and the 13th century, influenced the Hebrew Psalms, which were composed between the 10th and 6th century. Therefore, although the work of Dahood may be "the greatest and most influential since the work of Gunkel" (Craigie, 1983, p. 51), his insights must be approached cautiously.

Weiser (1962) was influenced by Gunkel (1930/1967) and Mowinckel (1951/1962), yet critical of both. Weiser viewed many psalms in light of a covenant renewal festival (contra Mowinckel's enthronement festival), and like Kraus (1961/1987, 1961/1989), tended to incorporate ancient Near Eastern

rituals into the Psalms. The works of Dahood (1966, 1968, 1970), Kraus, and Weiser are highly technical and are not recommended for students restricted to reading the English text.

Mowinckel's influence, and consequently the subjectivity of his approach, was also apparent in Anderson (Anderson, 1972a, 1972b). Like Mowinckel (1951/1962), he viewed the psalms as cultic in origin and usage, and contended that the Old Testament festivals provided the background for most of them. English readers may find his work useful even with this limitation, because he paid attention to parallelism and classified each psalm according to form.

Kidner's work (1973, 1975) provided one of the best starting points for the lay person. Although his comments were brief and he paid little attention to form, his commentary contained much to commend it. He proposed a tentative setting for each psalm, focused on its universal relevance, and supplied a semantic field for many key words. His principal contribution for the English reader probably was his analysis of the meaning of important Hebrew words.

Recent commentaries are the most thorough in covering the three aspects of psalm study proposed in the present curriculum: form, parallelism, and figures of speech. Each of the following works attempted to weave together a study of words and phrases, lines, sections, and form in their approach. All contained helpful bibliographies (except where specified) and could be useful to exegetes dealing with the Hebrew or the English text. Their main emphasis

is highlighted, but without exception, each work underscored the importance of all three areas of study included in this curriculum.

StuhlmueLLer (1983) and Bratcher and Reyburn (1991) identified the form of each psalm and incorporated form-critical insights into their commentary. Bratcher and Reyburn alerted the reader to issues in the current debate surrounding parallelism, and employed a slightly modified version of Lowth's categories. Although their work is a translator's handbook, no knowledge of Hebrew is required. Roman Catholic theologian Carroll StuhlmueLLer (1983) also highlighted parallelism. In addition, he notified the reader at the outset of his commentary exactly how Psalms would be approached. He detailed four specific considerations. Psalms were scrutinized according to (1) origin and later modifications, (2) literary form and structure, (3) key words and phrases, and (4) the impact of the psalm today (p. 56).

VanGemeren (1991) and Mays (1994) also emphasized the importance of forms in their comments, but they highlighted figures of speech especially. Mays did not mention parallelism often, but his expository essays provided insightful analysis of the text. VanGemeren furnished an introduction that covered psalm forms, types of parallelism, various literary devices used in Psalms, and 12 specific figures of speech. Because his comments transliterated Hebrew words (*Hebrew words appeared only in the "Notes" section*), his commentary is user-friendly for the English reader.

The Word Biblical Commentaries on Psalms (Allen, 1983; Craigie, 1983; Tate, 1990) are arguably the most thorough commentaries available for

the lay person or scholar. Although they were written by different authors, each of the three commentaries covered psalm forms, parallelism, and figures of speech. They were divided into four sections: Notes, Form/Structure/Setting, Comments, and Explanation. The Notes dealt with textual problems and translation. Because most of the Hebrew words referred to in the commentary were mentioned under this section, English readers can choose to skip it entirely. The Form/Structure/Setting section identified the genre, the form-critical category, the outline and divisions, and the possible *Sitz im Leben* of each psalm. The Comments supplied the reader with an exegesis of the psalm, and the Explanation unpacked its relevance for the contemporary believer, the church, or Christian thought. All 150 psalms are listed with their own bibliography.

This literature review demonstrates that the modified form-critical approach used in this study is consistent with recent approaches to Psalms, and employs recent scholarship. The majority of commentaries written since 1970 incorporate form criticism into their analysis. Psalm settings continue to be controversial and subjective, but form criticism's emphasis on internal structure has been adopted by many scholars. Therefore, a modified form-critical approach that incorporates an analysis of psalm forms, sections, parallelism, and figures of speech can make the study of the Psalter a productive enterprise for readers of the Hebrew and English text.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY

#### Introduction

The experience of ineffective instruction is a common ingredient in the educational process. Motivation deteriorates when the classroom becomes a numbing test of endurance instead of a spark that ignites the fire of learning. Mager (1984) contended: "Instruction is effective to the degree that it succeeds in changing students in desired directions. . . . If instruction doesn't change anyone, it has no effect, no power" (p. 1). Many reasons for powerless instruction exist in any given situation. One reason related to the present study is fragmentation in the curriculum. Pratt (1994) noted: "There is always too much material for teachers to cover, too many disparate elements for students to master" (p. 70). Hence, a need exists for a "unifying theme . . . to enhance the conceptual integrity and structural unity of the curriculum" (p. 70).

A carefully designed curriculum can provide a solid foundation for effective instruction. It cannot solve all instructional problems, but an effective curriculum increases the probability that effective instruction will occur. Tyler (1949) constructed a model of curriculum development that called for specificity, organization, and evaluation as means for assessing effectiveness. He asked

four primary questions:

1. What should be the educational objectives of the curriculum?
2. What learning experiences should be developed to enable the students to obtain the objectives?
3. How should the learning experiences be organized to increase their cumulative effect?
4. How should the effectiveness of the curriculum be evaluated? (p. 1).

Tyler's approach (1949) focused on the formation of instructional objectives based on the needs of the learners, society (which included religion, vocation, family, health, and recreation), and subject specialists. He explained: "We are devoting much time to the setting up and formulation of objectives because they are the most critical criteria for guiding all the other activities of the curriculum-maker" (p. 62). Tyler's four questions highlighted the importance of evaluation and learning activities in addition to objectives, but objectives were the most important component. Objectives determined what learning experiences were utilized and how they were evaluated. Tyler's model provided the pattern upon which curriculum developers continue to build.

Educators who followed Tyler highlighted the importance of other aspects of curriculum development. Whereas Tyler emphasized the significance of instructional objectives, Deterline (1971) stressed the need to rely on empirical data when developing curriculum (p. 19). He maintained that a strict reliance upon data obtained through evaluation could assist in identifying the weaknesses of students and curricula. He theorized that reliance

upon evaluation data provided built-in accountability for instructors when students failed to achieve the intended objectives.

Carter (1969) and Kaufman (1971) continued to build on this foundation by developing step-by-step systems of curriculum development. They maintained that a systems approach was a means of achieving accountability and improving curriculum and instruction. Carter (1969) claimed that his approach underscored "the problem of implementation, evaluation, feedback, and revision--an emphasis which should be highly welcome in today's complex educational milieu" (p. 31). While these educators were developing their systems, Baker and Schutz (1971) were refining their own.

The developmental model of Baker and Schutz (1971) made all the components of a curriculum dependent upon a small number of specific goals. These goals were of paramount importance and expressed through specific, detailed instructional objectives. This provided accountability for curriculum designers and instructors. As Glaser argued:

If we do not attempt to specify the complex processes we want to see in the student, then we are in danger of omitting them and following the path of least effort toward teaching more easily observable and trivial behavior. (cited in Pratt, 1994, p. 77)

Baker and Schutz built on the work of Tyler (1949) in emphasizing the important role of objectives.

Baker and Schutz (1971) also conceptualized curriculum as "developed" rather than "dispensed" (p. xv). The process of development

contained three crucial elements:

1. A cycle of trial and revision that continued until defined performance criteria were attained.

2. A developmental process that utilized a team rather than an individual.

3. A trial and revision cycle that was based on feedback from the designated learners.

This occurred through demonstrating mastery of the objectives, and through verbal, behavioral, and affective cues during the process of development. This developmental process resulted in an instructional product that was user-friendly and of demonstrated utility.

After using and supervising the utilization of the Baker and Schutz (1971) method for over 15 years, Naden (1993) revised the method. He incorporated all the original elements and attempted to enhance their clarity. He also sought to strengthen the method by: (1) using a manageable number of comprehensive-scope behavioral objectives, (2) utilizing a variety of cognitive educational objectives from Bloom's taxonomy in the cognitive domain (knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation) (Bloom, Max, Furst, Hill, & Krathwohl, 1956), and (3) measuring change in the affective domain. The instructional product in this study was developed according to the empirical method of Baker and Schutz, and the revisions of Naden because "the most potent evidence for the effectiveness of a given instructional product comes from the testing of the product with a



representative sample of subjects, hence the willingness to expose [the product] to empirical validation" (Howse, 1982, p. 75).

### **Population and Sample**

The target audience for this study was conservative Christian lay people of both genders that regularly attended a local church. They had completed high school. They were from a variety of ethnic backgrounds, but familiar with American culture. They were both single and married adults, age 18 and older.

### **Steps in Empirical Product Development**

The methodology employed in this study is defined in Instructional Product Development by Robert Baker and Richard Schutz (1971) and Empirical Development of Curriculum by Roy C. Naden (1993). It is an empirical approach to the development of a curriculum that ensures a high degree of mastery on the part of learners. The 80/80 level of mastery was chosen for this study (80% of the learners scoring at least 80% on the post-test).

This project developed a user-friendly curriculum ready for presentation by ministers to selected congregational members that was demonstrated effective by the end of the empirical process. The product consisted of 10 lessons on Psalms, each designed for a 50-minute instructional period. Four introductory lessons explained the nature of poetic language, eight figures of speech, four types of semantic parallelism, four psalm forms,

and the personal value of studying Psalms. The remaining six sessions consisted of one summary session and five expositions of each of the four psalm forms (two laments were presented--one individual and one communal) that modeled to participants how to study the Psalms. Objectives and lessons were based on the researcher's theological and educational training, experience as a pastor and teacher, consultation with experts on Psalms, and a review of related literature. The curriculum was designed for readers of the English text of Scripture. Development took place between February 1994 and December 1995 in Berrien Springs, MI, Colorado Springs, CO, Blacksburg, VA, and San Diego, CA.

The product was developed using the basic instructional product development method formulated by Baker and Schutz (1971) and modified by Naden (1993). The 10 steps used in this study were derived from their work.

The first step involved assessing the need for the product, which was accomplished primarily through a literature review. Second, the specific learners for whom the instructional product was designed were described. This was necessary in order to illustrate the content in ways that were meaningful to the learners, and to ensure that the level of instruction corresponded with the audience's background and capacity to master it.

Third, behavioral objectives were constructed that included the subjects, or specified learners, a measurable verb describing the learner's post-instructional performance, the given conditions in which the behavior occurred, and a precise standard of acceptable performance. Measurable verbs are

specific, unambiguous, and testable. The most frequently used verbs include *name, identify, describe, order, construct*, and their synonyms. Conditions are the specific parameters under which testing of the behavioral objectives occurred, such as “given a map” or “using a Bible.” The 18 behavioral objectives for this study were:

1. The learner will name all three characteristics of figurative words as presented in class, both in terms of what they are and what they are not.

2. The learner will identify all eight figures of speech used in Psalms that were presented in class, given their names and examples of each.

3. The learner will identify all four major types of parallelism presented in class, given examples of each.

4. The learner will describe the interpretive function of each of the four major types of parallelism, as presented in class.

5. The learner will identify all four major psalm forms presented in class, given examples of each.

6. The learner will describe three of five ways to use Psalms to promote personal spiritual growth, as presented in class.

7. The learner will name the three main sections of the lament-petition psalm and the corresponding ways that they guide our prayers, in the order given in class.

8. The learner will identify the three main sections of the lament-petition psalm, given an example of a lament-petition psalm.

9. The learner will describe the historical context of Ps 126 from memory, as presented in class.
10. The learner will explain the meaning of all three primary images contained in Ps 126, given the verse references of each.
11. The learner will identify all three sections of the narrative praise psalm as presented in class, given an example of a narrative praise psalm.
12. The learner will identify three themes in Ps 30 using the phrases given in class, given the text of Ps 30.
13. The learner will identify all three sections of the psalm of descriptive praise, as presented in class, given an example of a psalm of descriptive praise.
14. The learner will name the three ways that Ps 95 instructs believers to respond to knowledge about God, given the corresponding verse sections presented in class.
15. The learner will describe four contrasts found in Ps 1, as presented in class, given the text of Ps 1.
16. The learner will explain one reason Ps 1 introduces the Psalter, as presented in class, given the text of Ps 1.
17. The learner will construct a chart that demonstrates the relationship between the formal elements of psalms and personal elements of life, as presented in class, given the number of formal elements.
18. The learner will explain two ways the book of Psalms impacts the practice of the Christian faith, as presented in class.

Each of the instructional objectives was evaluated using Bloom's taxonomy (Bloom et al., 1956). Results are recorded in Table 1.

TABLE 1  
CLASSIFICATION OF EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES ACCORDING TO  
BLOOM'S TAXONOMY IN THE COGNITIVE DOMAIN

Taxonomy Level	# of Objectives	Objective #
1. Knowledge	8	1, 4, 6, 7, 9, 12, 14, 18
2. Comprehension	3	10, 15, 16
3. Application	1	5
4. Analysis	5	2, 3, 8, 11, 13
5. Synthesis	1	17
6. Evaluation	0	-

Objectives representing all levels except the most complex (evaluation) were included in this study. Because the material covered in this curriculum was introductory, 11 of 18 objectives exemplified the first two levels of the taxonomy (knowledge and comprehension). These lessons laid an informational foundation on which subsequent lessons built. One-third of the objectives demanded the more complex educational behaviors identified in the upper levels of the taxonomy (analysis and synthesis).

Fourth, an identical pre-test and post-test was prepared. The pre-test measured the learner's level of knowledge immediately prior to the instruction. The post-test was given after the instruction in order to test the effectiveness of

the instructional product. The type of test used was dictated by the specific verb used in the behavioral objective. For example, matching questions were used to test the learner's ability to identify, while essay questions tested the learner's ability to describe.

The fifth step involved detailing the criteria for each of the test questions. The best possible answer to each question was given in detail, and this answer reduced to a set of criteria by which learners' responses were evaluated. This was another step that removed the ambiguity from the product development process. Detailing the criteria revealed exactly what the instructor expected the student to master and, therefore, exactly what the instructor taught.

Since the criteria provided the basis for the development of an instructional outline, the sixth step was to develop the instructional outline. The major headings of the outline corresponded with each group of test question criteria. The outline did not contain illustrations or introductory material at this stage of development. It was simply an organized explanation of the criteria listed in step 5.

The seventh step involved the initial trial of the product with a very small group drawn from the target population. During this phase, the instructor received feedback from the learners that was incorporated into future modified versions of the product.

In the eighth step, the results of the initial trial were reviewed and the instructional product modified. This led to the development of the first full draft of the instructor's manual and the learner's workbook. The instructor's manual

was a verbatim presentation of the instruction, complete with illustrations and exercises that familiarized the learners with the material. The manual also contained a set of guidelines that would enable any other instructor to replicate the instruction under similar conditions and obtain similar results. The learner's workbook contained note-taking outlines and other materials that aided the learner in mastering the material.

Ninth, the revised product was tested under replicable conditions with a larger group from the target audience (usually 2-6 people) who took the pre-test and post-test. The goal was that a minimum of 80% of the learners achieve mastery of at least 80% of the test items. When the 80/80 standard was achieved, the product was deemed ready for the tenth step. The ninth step was occasionally repeated with a larger group in order to reach the 80/80 standard.

After incorporation of the feedback and necessary revisions, the final step was to present the completed product to a larger group (27) that provided a set of data that was statistically analyzed. The means of the pre-test and post-test were evaluated using a t-test for correlated samples with the level of significance set at .05. When the difference was statistically significant and 80/80 mastery was achieved by this group, the development of the instructional product was deemed complete.

The empirical process exhibits several strengths. First, the design allows the researcher to measure the usefulness of the instructional product before it is used by instructors. Therefore, such instructors who use it can have

a high degree of assurance regarding its effectiveness. Second, successful completion of the instructional experience can reasonably be expected to lead to mastery of the content by learners at the 80/80 level. Third, multiple pilot tests of the product enable the researcher to continue to develop all parts of the product until all are effective in communicating the content. Fourth, the learners' feedback is incorporated directly into the product's development. Fifth, the anxiety of the learners at the prospect of test-taking is addressed during the development process through an explanation that their scores do not reflect on their ability to master the content as much as the product's ability to teach it. It is really the product and not the learner that is being tested by comparing the pre-test and post-test scores.

Since this was a product development study, one of the weaknesses and limitations found in some experimental designs was a strength here. In other situations, the pre-test may lead to an unintended heightened awareness on the part of the subject that adversely affects the post-test score. However, that was exactly what this design intended. The goal was to make students aware of what was important to know and allow them to practice for mastery of this knowledge.

Several potential deficiencies were also anticipated. To counter the influence of learning outside the seminar, the pre-test and post-test were administered immediately before and after the instruction. To maintain a representative sample, new subjects from the target audience were used for each of the pilot tests and for the final tryout of the product. To assist in ensuring



the product's effectiveness when used by others, student note-taking outlines, instructional outlines, and a verbatim instructor's manual for each session can be found in the appendices of this document.

### **Modification of Affect**

Baker and Schutz (1971) and Naden (1993) insisted on evaluating the instructional product's ability to prompt change in the affective domain. In the present study, modification of affect was assessed by means of a 1-hour focus-group interview conducted immediately following the seminar. The interview was tape recorded and transcribed. The transcription and a list of predetermined interview questions are included in appendix H. In order to reduce the probability of receiving positively biased feedback, the interview was conducted by a professional facilitator, not the instructor. A qualitative analysis of the interview transcript was performed and the facilitator's personal feedback was incorporated into the analysis. Using this approach, the effectiveness of the instructional product at modifying affect was evaluated.

Worthen and Sanders (1987) contended that evaluation occurs through "disciplined inquiry" (p. 24). The focus-group interview (FGI) is a form of disciplined inquiry. Krueger (1994) defined an FGI as "a carefully planned discussion to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest in a permissive, non-threatening environment" (p. 6), and suggested including 7 to 10 people. This study included 9 people. Archer (1991) emphasized the need to meet three conditions in order for the FGI to be effective: (1) the

moderator-interviewer should be skilled and neutral; (2) questions should be predetermined; and (3) interviews should be tape recorded for later analysis.

The present study met all three conditions.

Asking for individual feedback in the presence of others appears to be a potential deficiency of this approach. But in reality, it is one of its greatest strengths. Krueger (1994) detailed three reasons for this phenomenon. First, the purpose of the FGI is not to come to consensus, but to gather perceptions, feelings, opinions, and thoughts about the seminar's effectiveness and the participants' interest in the book of Psalms. This was explained by the interviewer at the outset in order to relieve pressure to conform that group participants may have been experiencing. Second, group members do influence one another by responding to each other during the FGI, but this is a strength of the approach, not a weakness. People develop attitudes "in part by interaction with other people" (p. 10). They formulate their opinions and identify their feelings as they listen to the opinions and feelings of others. The FGI capitalizes on this human tendency. It was assumed that a person's affect was not modified in a relational vacuum, but in the social context of the seminar and the group interview. Third, when conducted by a skilled facilitator, the group environment is one of safety and permission. This "gives individuals license to divulge emotions that often do not emerge in other forms of questioning" (p. 11). Therefore, the FGI was employed in this study to evaluate the instructional product's effectiveness at modifying affect.

### **Statistical Analysis**

A  $t$ -test for correlated means was used to measure the significance of the difference between the group means on the two tests. Significance was measured at the .05 level. In addition, the acceptable level of performance on the post-test was set at 80/80. At least 80% of the participants were required to score 80% or higher on each of the 10 post-tests (one per session) to achieve mastery for the instructional objectives.

## CHAPTER 4

### FINDINGS

#### **Instructional Product Development**

The instructional product in this research was empirically developed according to the method formulated by Baker and Schutz (1971) and modified by Naden (1993). The 10 steps used in this study were derived from their work:

1. The selection of the topic and assessment of the need for a curriculum on Psalms through a review of the literature
2. Description of the audience for whom the product was designed
3. Construction of non-ambiguous behavioral objectives
4. Preparation of pre/post-tests to measure the learner's level of knowledge immediately prior to and following the instruction
5. Development of the criteria by which learners' answers to the test questions would be evaluated
6. Formulation of instructional outlines that corresponded to the test question criteria
7. Testing of the product through a series of tryouts using learners from the target audience
8. Revision of the product based on learner feedback and a review of

the tryout results

9. Retesting the revised product with larger groups from the target audience

10. A final tryout with a group of 27 people from the target audience that included operations analysis to measure modification of cognitive and affective behaviors. Details of these 10 steps are reported below.

### Topic Selection

The first step in the development process was to select the topic of the curriculum. The topic for this study was selected based on three criteria: interest, expertise, and need for the product. I developed an interest in Hebrew poetry after being exposed to it during graduate study in seminary. Exegetical studies of Psalms and serving as a senior pastor challenged me to augment my expertise in Hebrew poetry and to communicate the message of Psalms to lay readers who were equipped to study the English text only. A review of the Psalms literature revealed that an empirically developed curriculum on the Psalms did not exist. The topic was selected because the need for an empirically developed instructional product on Psalms corresponded with my own interest and expertise.

### Leamer Description

The second step was to describe the specific learners for whom the instructional product was designed. This was necessary in order to illustrate the content in ways that were meaningful to the learners, and to ensure that the

level of instruction corresponded with the audience's background and capacity to master it. The target audience for this study was conservative Christian lay people of both genders who regularly attended a local church. They had completed high school. They were from a variety of ethnic backgrounds, but familiar with American culture. They were both single and married adults, age 18 and older.

### Behavioral Objectives

The third step was to construct non-ambiguous behavioral objectives that included the subjects, or specified learners, a measurable verb describing the learner's post-instructional performance, the given conditions in which the behavior occurred, and a precise standard of acceptable performance. The 18 behavioral objectives developed for this study are listed in chapter 3.

Each of these objectives was evaluated using Bloom's taxonomy (Bloom et al., 1956) to ensure a wide range of learning behaviors. All levels of learning except the most complex (evaluation) were included in the behavioral objectives employed in this study. See Table 1 for classification of each objective according to Bloom's taxonomy in the cognitive domain.

### Pre- and Post-test Design

The fourth step was to prepare an identical pre-test and post-test. The pre-test measured the learner's level of knowledge immediately prior to the instruction. The post-test was given after the instruction in order to test the

effectiveness of the instructional product. The type of test items used was dictated by the specific verb used in the behavioral objective. For example, matching questions were used in test 2 to measure the learner's ability to identify (objective 2), while essay questions were used in test 9 to measure the learner's ability to describe (objective 15). All tests are listed in appendix B.

Each cognitive instrument was based on the instructional objectives constructed in step 3. Tests 1 and 2 were based on one objective each. Tests 3 through 8 incorporated two objectives each. Cognitive instruments and their corresponding objectives and subjects are listed in Table 2 below.

TABLE 2  
EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES CONTAINED  
IN COGNITIVE INSTRUMENTS

Test #	Objective #	Subject
1	1	Figurative language
2	2	Figures of speech
3	3, 4	Types of parallelism
4	5, 6	Psalm forms
5	7, 8	Ps 13: Communal lament-petition
6	9, 10	Ps 126: Individual lament-petition
7	11, 12	Ps 30: Narrative praise
8	13, 14	Ps 95: Descriptive praise
9	15, 16	Ps 1: Miscellaneous psalm
10	17, 18	Songs for the journey of life

The 80/80 level of mastery was chosen for this study; that is, at least 80% of the learners needed to score 80% or better on each of the 10 post-tests in order to

achieve mastery of the 18 behavioral objectives.

#### Criteria for Evaluation

The fifth step was to detail the criteria for each of the test questions. The best possible answer to each question was given in detail, and this answer was reduced to a set of criteria by which learners' responses were evaluated. This was another step that removed ambiguity from the product development process. Detailing the criteria revealed precisely what the instructor expected the student to master and dictated what the instructor needed to teach. All criteria for test items are listed in appendix C.

#### Instructional Outlines

Since the criteria provided the basis for the development of the curriculum, the sixth step was to develop instructional outlines. The major headings of the outline corresponded with each group of test question criteria. In the earliest stage of development, the outline did not contain illustrations or introductory material. It was simply an organization of the criteria listed in step 5. Illustrations, introductory material, and exercises were added later in the development process, mostly after the initial tryout. The 10 verbatim transcripts of the final instructional lectures are listed in appendix D.

#### Product Tryouts

The seventh step was to conduct an initial trial of the product with a very small group drawn from the target population (1-6 people). During this phase,



the instructor received feedback from the learners that was incorporated into future modified versions of the product. As a result, this step was repeated as step 9 after product revisions (step 8) with a larger group from the target population (usually 4-9 people). To avoid repetition, the results of steps 7 and 9 are reported together here.

The number of people participating in lesson tryouts varied, as did the number of tryouts for each lesson. Table 3 contains the number of people who participated in the lesson tryouts and the tryout sequence per lesson. The number of participants was gradually increased with each tryout. Four lesson tryouts started with one person, two started with two people, one started with four, and three started with six. The most helpful input was received when the lesson tryout contained the fewest number of people (see the Product Development Journal in appendix A). In each of the 10 cases, one to two carefully selected people gave more helpful feedback than the larger groups of four to six.

The number of people attending the tryouts was inconsistent because tryouts were conducted over a period of 2 years in four different locations: Berrien Springs, MI, Colorado Springs, CO, Blacksburg, VA, and San Diego, CA. The number of known contacts able to participate in each tryout varied. In addition, circumstances surrounding the product tryouts influenced the number of participants. For example, 34 people attended the tryout of lessons 1 and 4 because these lessons were developed for a doctoral class at Andrews University. The class required a tryout of greater than 15 people after a

TABLE 3

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS  
IN LESSON TRYOUTS

Lesson	Tryout Sequence per Lesson				
	First	Second	Third	Fourth	Fifth
1	6	34	27		
2	6	5	27		
3	1	5	4	9	27
4	6	34	27		
5	2	6	27		
6	2	6	27		
7	4	9	27		
8	1	5	4	27	
9	1	4	7	27	
10	1	4	7	27	

**Note.** Two or three lessons were tested in each tryout. The complete instructional product (10 lessons) was not tested until the final tryout of 27 participants.

successful tryout with 4-6 people. In this case, the tryout was conducted at an evening church service attended by 34 people. Varying numbers did not appear to mar the effectiveness of the developmental process. The pattern of gradually increasing the group size was followed as each lesson was developed. Therefore, there was no need to test the entire product with a fixed number of people until the final tryout.

The number of tryouts varied according to the difficulty of the material presented. The level of difficulty was ascertained through test scores and learner feedback. The more difficult the material, the greater the number of revisions and tryouts. Lessons 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, and 7 required three tryouts. Lessons 8, 9, and 10 required four tryouts. Lesson 3 on parallelism (arguably the most difficult content to master) required five tryouts.

### Product Revisions

The eighth step was to revise the product according to the learner feedback and test results received in step 7. All revisions to the product are reported in the Product Development Journal in appendix A. Six major revision topics are woven throughout the journal: the revision of behavioral objectives, test instructions, test items, lectures, note-taking outlines and overhead transparencies, and the revisions associated with trying to cover too much material.

Revisions were made to the behavioral objectives on two occasions. Although changing the objective is rare in the development process, it was

necessary in both cases. The first case involved objective 12 in lesson 7. The original objective stated, "The learner will construct a theme for Ps 30, given the sub-themes of Ps 30." However, the phrase "construct a theme for Ps 30" assumed that the learners had the skill to construct a theme. The post-test revealed that this was an ungrounded assumption. Therefore, the objective was changed to "The learners will *describe* the three themes in the psalm identified in class, given the text of Ps 30." This accomplished the intent of the original objective without assuming that the learners possessed a skill that was not taught in the instruction.

The second case involved objective 17 in lesson 10. The original objective proposed, "The learner will construct a personal time-line that reflects the relationship between life events and psalm forms, as presented in class, given the number of formal elements to include." However, learner feedback revealed that it was possible to have more than one of the formal elements reflected in the events of life at a given time. There was a relationship between the psalm elements and life events, but "time" was an artificially imposed constraint that seemed to flatten human experience. For example, people often experience joy and celebration in the midst of grieving a loss.

In addition, it was decided that the phrase "life events" was too limiting. It was replaced with the parallel term "life elements," since events are a type of element. The new objective as clarified stated, "The learner will construct a chart that demonstrates the relationship between the formal elements of Psalms

and the personal elements of life, as presented in class, given the number of formal elements." This accomplished the intent of the original objective without imposing time on the constructed chart.

On five occasions, revisions were made to the test instructions (tests 1, 3, 4, 6, 8). Changes were made based on learner feedback that expressed a lack of clarity in the instructions. What was clear in the mind of the instructor was not always clearly communicated to the learners. The addition of a word or the change of a phrase usually cleared up the problem.

The most frequently revised parts of the tests were the test items. Each test contained test items that were revised for one of four reasons. First, test items needed to be changed when an objective was changed (lessons 7 and 10). Second, test items were changed when answer options were poorly worded or misleading. Third, test items were changed when questions were poorly worded. Fourth, test items were changed when questions were too difficult for the learners.

Test item difficulty was an issue in lessons 3 and 4, which dealt with parallelism and psalm forms, respectively. These two notions were new to the learners, so the examples that required identification needed to be simple and clear. In addition, examples of parallelism and psalm forms can be complex and subject to significant internal variations that can be discerned only by the experienced student. Given the time constraints placed on the learning process in this study, examples that demonstrated complexity and internal variation were avoided.

Lecture outline revisions were the most extensive revisions made to the instructional product. There was no way to avoid these revisions because the need for them was not apparent until after the tryout, which revealed the lectures' weaknesses. Revisions were based on test results, learner feedback, and a very subjective ingredient--the "feel" of the lecture. The instructor endeavored to be sensitive to student response during the instruction by taking mental and written notes of non-verbal cues indicating interest or a lack of it. When student interest waned, illustrations were changed, deleted, or updated, and explanations were shortened or made more explicit. It was subjective feedback, but the feedback was empirically justified in subsequent tryouts.

The most helpful source of feedback on the lecture outlines came from the learners. Students knew when they were bored or confused. They knew when they lost track of the lecture's logical flow. They were able to articulate what was unclear and, occasionally, how it could be revised to make it clearer. Incorporating their feedback into the lectures resulted in improved organization, more memorable wording of themes, deletion of minor, less important points ("rabbit trails"), and increased learner interest.

When the lecture outlines underwent revision, the note-taking outlines and overhead transparencies had to be revised. Repeated tryouts revealed that overhead transparencies were useful in representing visually the major points of the lecture, long quotations, and scriptural examples of psalm forms and poetic techniques such as figures of speech and parallelism. Placing these

examples on overhead transparencies required a considerable amount of extra preparation, but having the transparencies shortened the lecture time because learners did not have to search through their own Bibles to find verses in Psalms. The transparencies also reinforced the clarity of the presentation because the learners followed the same translation of Scripture (the New International Version) rather than having multiple translations from which to examine the examples employed. Likewise, note-taking outlines forecast the direction of the instruction and made the lectures easier to follow. There is a complete set of overhead transparencies in appendix E, and a complete set of note-taking outlines in appendix F.

A final revision surfaced repeatedly in the Product Development Journal: The product was revised regularly due to the instructor's tendency to include too much information in the lessons. This topic was mentioned 11 times in the journal. It was a challenge in 7 of the 10 lessons. For example, only two introductory sessions were planned, but when the first lecture lasted 90 minutes instead of 40 minutes, two additional sessions were required in order to cover the material.

As a result of this experience, four principles helped guide the development of the lectures. First, less is more. Learners did not remember more when more information was included; they remembered less. When less material was presented, learners were able to retain more. Second, 40 will not go into 40. In other words, it is impossible to squeeze all the results of 40 hours of study into 40 minutes of instruction. Third, the learners provided the most

valuable feedback. The learners were aware of what material was unnecessary, sometimes more aware than the instructor. Fourth, continually evaluate the lecture content in light of the educational objectives. The objectives are the educational targets of the lectures. Therefore, deleting material that failed to direct learners toward the target helped them achieve mastery of the objectives. Following these four principles helped reduce the amount of editing in the tryout revision process.

#### Final Tryout

The final tryout of the complete instructional product was conducted in San Diego, CA, with a group of 27 people drawn from the target audience. The seminar entitled, "Cries of Pain, Songs of Praise--A Seminar on Psalms" was advertised in local churches during the fall of 1995 and conducted in a local church classroom on December 1-2, 1995. Sessions 1-3 were conducted on Friday night between 7:00-10:00 p.m. Sessions 4-7 were conducted between 8:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m. on Saturday morning. Lunch was provided for participants between 12:00-1:30 p.m. Sessions 8-10 were conducted between 1:30-4:30 p.m. on Saturday afternoon. The classroom was equipped with an overhead projector. All participants were supplied with a packet containing 10 note-taking outlines (see appendix F) and miscellaneous handouts on Psalm resources and suggestions for follow-up study (see appendix G).



### **Operations Analysis**

The acceptable level of performance on the post-test was set at 80/80. At least 80% of the participants were required to score 80% or higher on each of the 10 post-tests (one per session) in order to demonstrate mastery of the content of the 10 lectures. In addition, a t-test for correlated means was used to measure the significance of the difference between the group means on the pre-test and post-test. Significance was measured at the .05 level.

Modification of affect was assessed by means of a 1-hour focus-group interview conducted immediately following the seminar. The interview was tape recorded and transcribed. The transcription and a list of predetermined interview questions are included in appendix H. In order to reduce the probability of receiving positively biased feedback, the interview was conducted by a professional facilitator, not the instructor. A qualitative analysis of the interview transcript was performed and the facilitator's personal feedback was incorporated into the analysis.

### **Cognitive Behavior**

The acceptable level of performance on the post-test was set at 80/80. At least 80% of the participants were required to score 80% or higher on each of the 10 post-tests (one per session) to achieve mastery for the instructional objectives. Table 4 demonstrates that the 80/80 level was achieved on each of the 10 post-tests. The percentage of participants achieving mastery ranged between 81% (tests 2 and 8) and 100% (test 7). Sixteen of the 27 participants

achieved mastery on each of the 10 post-tests (4, 6, 7, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 23). Eleven of the 27 participants failed to achieve mastery on at least one of the 10 post-tests (1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 9, 22, 24, 25, 26, 27).

The pre-test and post-test means and the scores of the 27 participants are listed in Table 5. The pre- and post-test means were statistically analyzed using a  $t$ -test, which included the following formula:

$$t = \frac{\sum d}{\frac{N \times \sum d^2 - (\sum d)^2}{N - 1}}$$

In this formula,  $\sum d$  = the sum of the difference between pre-test and post-test scores,  $(\sum d)^2$  = the sum of the difference between pre-test and post-test squared,  $\sum d^2$  = the sum of the squared differences between pre-test and post-test scores, and  $N$  = the total number of participants. The differences between the pre-test and post-test means is considered significant if  $t$  exceeds the critical value of  $t$ . In this study, the critical value of  $t$  at the .05 level and 26 degrees of freedom ( $N-1$ ) was 1.71.

The mean of pre-test 1 was 3.7. The post-test mean was 18.7;  $t = 28.39$  and critical  $t = 1.71$ . Thus the post-test mean represented a significant improvement over the pre-test mean. This was the third highest pre-test mean because the test contained multiple choice questions, which meant there was

TABLE 4

PERCENTAGE OF CORRECT ANSWERS  
ON POST-TEST BY PARTICIPANT

Participant	Post-test									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1	100	<b>63</b>	85	80	100	100	100	100	80	80
2	80	100	85	90	100	100	100	<b>60</b>	100	100
3	<b>70</b>	100	80	80	100	90	100	<b>73</b>	80	80
4	90	100	85	100	100	100	85	80	100	100
5	100	<b>50</b>	90	<b>60</b>	100	100	95	100	80	100
6	100	100	85	80	100	100	100	87	100	100
7	100	100	90	100	100	100	100	80	100	100
8	100	<b>50</b>	80	80	83	<b>70</b>	85	<b>67</b>	100	100
9	100	100	<b>50</b>	90	100	100	100	100	90	100
10	100	100	95	80	100	100	100	100	95	100
11	90	100	80	90	100	100	100	100	100	100
12	100	100	100	80	100	100	100	93	100	100
13	100	100	95	100	100	100	95	80	100	100
14	80	100	90	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
15	100	100	80	90	100	100	90	87	100	100
16	90	100	90	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
17	100	100	95	90	100	100	100	100	100	100
18	90	88	95	100	100	100	85	100	80	100
19	100	100	80	100	100	100	95	100	100	100
20	100	100	95	100	100	100	100	80	100	100
21	100	100	100	90	100	100	100	100	80	100
22	<b>70</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>10</b>	83	80	95	<b>47</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>60</b>
23	100	88	100	80	100	100	95	100	100	100
24	100	<b>50</b>	<b>70</b>	100	100	90	100	<b>20</b>	90	100
25	100	100	80	90	83	<b>70</b>	100	87	90	100
26	<b>60</b>	88	90	100	<b>75</b>	100	90	100	100	100
27	100	100	<b>75</b>	100	92	100	100	93	100	100
<b>% Achieving Mastery</b>	89	81	85	93	96	93	100	81	96	96

Note. Failure to achieve mastery indicated by bold numbers; mastery  $\geq$  80%.

the possibility the learner might guess the correct answer.

The mean of pre-test 2 was 5.0. The post-test mean was 14.2;  $t = 16.13$  and critical  $t = 1.71$ . Thus the post-test mean represented a significant improvement over the pre-test mean. This was the second highest pre-test mean because the test was comprised of eight matching questions, which meant there was the possibility the learner might guess the correct answer. In addition, many of the learners possessed some degree of familiarity with the subject matter (figures of speech).

The mean of pre-test 3 was 8.0. The post-test mean was 34.1;  $t = 16.20$  and critical  $t = 1.71$ . Thus the post-test mean represented a significant improvement over the pre-test mean. This was the highest pre-test mean because the test contained 14 multiple choice questions, which allowed the learner to attempt to guess the correct answer.

The mean of pre-test 4 was 0.3. The post-test mean was 17.6;  $t = 16.38$  and critical  $t = 1.71$ . Thus the post-test mean represented a significant improvement over the pre-test mean.

The mean of pre-test 5 was 0.0. The post-test mean was 23.3;  $t = 72.04$  and critical  $t = 1.71$ . Thus the post-test mean represented a significant improvement over the pre-test mean. This was the second highest  $t$  score. The top two  $t$  scores were related to the learners' ability to discern psalm forms. This score indicates that the learners progressed from a complete inability to discern the form of a lament-petition psalm to mastery of the skill.

TABLE 5

PRE- AND POST-TEST SCORES FOR  
PARTICIPANTS IN FINAL TRYOUT

Participant	Test (Pre/Post)									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1	8/20	2/10	0/34	0/16	0/24	0/20	0/40	0/30	0/16	0/16
2	4/16	12/16	2/34	0/18	0/24	0/20	0/40	0/18	0/20	0/20
3	2/14	4/16	14/32	0/16	0/24	0/18	0/40	0/22	0/16	0/16
4	2/18	0/16	0/34	0/20	0/24	0/20	0/34	0/24	0/20	0/20
5	2/20	8/8	8/36	0/12	0/24	0/20	0/38	0/30	0/16	0/20
6	6/20	0/16	0/34	0/16	0/24	0/20	0/40	0/26	0/20	0/20
7	2/20	6/16	0/36	0/20	0/24	0/20	0/40	0/24	0/20	0/20
8	2/20	4/8	10/32	0/16	0/20	0/14	0/34	0/20	0/20	0/20
9	4/20	4/16	8/20	0/18	0/24	0/20	0/40	0/30	0/18	0/20
10	2/20	8/16	12/38	0/16	0/24	0/20	0/40	0/30	8/19	0/20
11	4/18	4/16	18/32	0/18	0/24	0/20	0/40	0/30	8/20	0/20
12	4/20	12/16	18/40	0/16	0/24	0/20	0/40	0/28	4/20	0/20
13	2/20	8/16	4/38	0/20	0/24	0/20	0/38	0/24	0/20	0/20
14	0/16	4/16	12/36	0/20	0/24	0/20	0/40	0/30	0/20	0/20
15	8/20	12/16	22/32	0/18	0/24	0/20	0/36	8/26	8/20	0/20
16	4/18	4/16	12/36	0/20	0/24	0/20	0/40	2/30	0/20	0/20
17	4/20	8/16	12/38	0/18	0/24	0/20	0/40	0/30	0/20	0/20
18	6/18	6/14	4/38	0/20	0/24	0/20	0/34	0/30	0/16	0/20
19	4/20	2/16	6/32	0/20	0/24	0/20	0/38	0/30	0/20	0/20
20	0/20	8/16	20/38	0/20	0/24	0/20	0/40	0/24	0/20	0/20
21	4/20	6/16	2/40	0/18	0/24	0/20	0/40	0/30	0/16	0/20
22	2/14	0/4	6/26	0/2	0/20	0/16	0/38	0/14	0/14	0/12
23	4/20	0/14	2/40	6/16	0/24	0/20	0/38	0/30	0/20	0/20
24	4/20	0/8	6/28	2/20	0/24	0/18	0/40	0/6	0/18	0/20
25	8/20	2/16	4/32	0/18	0/20	0/14	0/40	0/26	0/18	0/20
26	4/12	4/14	14/36	0/20	0/18	0/20	0/36	2/30	10/20	0/20
27	4/20	8/16	0/30	0/18	0/22	0/20	0/40	0/28	0/20	0/20
<b>Test Value</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Pre-Mean</b>	<b>3.7</b>	<b>5.0</b>	<b>8.0</b>	<b>0.3</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.1</b>	<b>0.6</b>	<b>1.7</b>	<b>0.1</b>
<b>Post-Mean</b>	<b>18.7</b>	<b>14.2</b>	<b>34.1</b>	<b>17.6</b>	<b>23.3</b>	<b>19.3</b>	<b>38.7</b>	<b>25.9</b>	<b>18.8</b>	<b>19.4</b>

The mean of pre-test 6 was 0.0. The post-test mean was 19.3;  $t = 56.64$  and critical  $t = 1.71$ . Thus the post-test mean represented a significant improvement over the pre-test mean. This was the third highest  $t$  score. It indicates that the learners progressed from a complete inability to interpret the three primary images found in Ps 126 to mastery of the skill.

The mean of pre-test 7 was 0.1. The post-test mean was 38.7;  $t = 96.80$  and critical  $t = 1.71$ . Thus the post-test mean represented a significant improvement over the pre-test mean. This was the highest  $t$  score. The top two  $t$  scores were related to the learners' ability to discern psalm forms. This score indicates that the learners progressed from a complete inability to discern the form of a narrative praise psalm to mastery of the skill.

The mean of pre-test 8 was 0.6. The post-test mean was 25.9;  $t = 22.20$  and critical  $t = 1.71$ . Thus the post-test mean represented a significant improvement over the pre-test mean. Test 8 was another test that measured the learners' ability to discern the form of a psalm, in this case the descriptive praise psalm. However, the  $t$  score was not as high as tests 5 and 7 because the test asked for additional information unrelated to mastery of the form discernment skill.

The mean of pre-test 9 was 1.7. The post-test mean was 18.8;  $t = 28.20$  and critical  $t = 1.71$ . Thus the post-test mean represented a significant improvement over the pre-test mean.

The mean of pre-test 10 was 0.1. The post-test mean was 19.4;  $t =$

55.28 and critical  $t = 1.71$ . Thus the post-test mean represented a significant improvement over the pre-test mean.

### Affective Behavior

The instructional product's effectiveness in modifying affect was measured by means of a focus-group interview immediately following the final lecture. Dr. Kurt Johns conducted the focus-group interview. It included nine people: five females and four males. Six of the nine respondents were former members of the church where I had been the senior pastor in San Diego, CA. I resigned reluctantly in the midst of a controversy in November of 1993 and some church members were hurt by other church members in the process. Many comments from the interview reflect the feelings and events of this painful period. Two of the remaining three participants were from my former church in Redlands, CA, where I served as youth pastor and associate pastor. I had no prior relationship with one of the respondents. The focus-group interview guide and transcript are listed in appendix H. Pseudonyms are used to protect the identity of the respondents.

Several themes were repeated throughout the interview that indicated positive modification of affect. There was enthusiastic feedback about the activity of studying. Respondents expressed gratitude, appreciation, and excitement about being prompted to study during the seminar. They found the study stimulating and expressed regrets regarding the lack of in-depth teaching they normally experience. Reflecting back to a time when I taught regularly as

his pastor, Matt commented, "I don't feel I get the depth of teaching sometimes that I experienced under his leadership, and that I experienced once again at this seminar. . . . I want to seek that more than I have." Respondents enjoyed the instruction and recognized its continuing value. As Jen expressed, "It's something you're going to keep."

Learners were also excited about studying on their own. The seminar "sparked an interest in studying the Psalms further." Many expressed a desire to study in-depth. As Dirk said, "This really, really showed me how little I know on just any passage, and how deep you can get into it." The seminar provided "incentive" to go deeper. Mark verbalized, "I'm looking forward to the next six months. . . . If I'm going to learn something it's going to come to me through a long-term study. . . . I'm looking forward to that."

Motivation for individual study seemed to come from the realization that studying the Bible was different from and more rewarding than simply reading the Bible. Karen asserted, "Attending this made me realize how little actual study I do versus just reading. And it made me get excited. . . . I want to study again." Mark echoed, "There's a lot of difference in studying like this and reading the Bible. . . . It takes a lot of work and energy, but it's extremely challenging and extremely rewarding, and very stimulating to . . . your whole life."

There was also an appreciation for the sense of community that was built through studying together. Mark appreciated "the encouragement of being together, and having fun together, and enjoying one another's company around



a similar topic that we're all interested in." The seminar also prompted a desire to replicate the experience: "It would be fun to get some of these people together for a Bible study. Collect responses from people. Take this thing on and go with it . . . have some fun with it for a while."

In addition to the enjoyment of community, respondents linked their appreciation for studying to the way in which the material was presented. They believed that the format or structure they were given would result in continuing study, even for non-students. Jill stated, "The structure will help a person like me that's non-scholarly." The structure was helpful and motivational because "if you understand . . . the structure, the form, there is much more meaning behind it." Jill believed she would find the modified form-critical approach to Psalm study presented in the seminar very useful. She stated, "The next time I get into the Psalms, I'm going to look at it from a different perspective." Learners also appreciated having the structured notes and thought they would use them in the future. They expressed: "I'm going to keep the notes." "Having the notes . . . I can go ahead and pull them out to help guide me." "I think it will help me a lot."

Respondents also experienced a strong sense of identification with the psalmists' experience of difficulty (articulated in the lament-petitions) and with all the emotions associated with those difficulties. Respondents identified with experiences of loss, depression, questioning God, and praising God, and with the emotions of sadness, grief, relief, and gratitude. They felt an emotional connection with others who endured difficulty--"It just makes me feel so good

that somebody else has been there"--and were drawn to the Psalms because of this identification. "Everybody has hard times in their life, really, really deep, deep valleys in their life, and I think that's why people go to the Psalms."

Individuals who were former members of the San Diego church that experienced a split in the fall of 1993 seemed to relate most intimately to the experiences of pain and anguish captured in the lament-petitions. They also related to the illustrations I used in the lament-petition instruction. As their former pastor, I drew heavily from my own experiences of difficulty and lament during that time. These illustrations surfaced emotions within them that had been dormant for 3 years. The experience was positive because it led to an appreciation of the study of Psalms as a means of emotional expression and self-understanding. A former elder of the church expressed:

What was coming out of me was this feeling, these emotions of, "Gee, there's a lot of emotion still tucked under." Whether it be bitterness, anger, frustration, all these emotions start coming up. And then you start wondering why and I started thinking, "Well, it's because the study of the Psalms," which is so much of what we were doing, "is the study of yourself so much," which we have a tendency to ignore. So, in doing a study of this nature and . . . hearing Ted with his illustrations, going into his emotions to bring out what was actually happening in those psalms--of course, that's why you go to the Psalms, because you want that crying out, or whatever is going on your life--well then, consequently, when you're in it, and you're studying it, well, you're studying yourself. You can't get around that. Whatever is going on in your life is right there in front of you and it brings it out. It's going to stir up whatever feelings are there.

Non-church members found the illustrations helpful, too. Jen and Joe, who were not a part of the church, expressed appreciation for the way in which they were drawn into the content by the illustrations: "It's helpful when

somebody is going to speak and they tell a small, little story about their life that you can relate to when they begin, before they start talking. That kind of makes it helpful." Others expressed appreciation for the personal nature of the illustrations: "It makes it so it's not some abstract thing he's trying to teach. He's teaching about a personal thing and then each one of us can relate to that." What made the illustrations so effective was that they functioned as means to an end--they led learners into the Scripture. As Karen voiced, "His illustrations brought out those emotions that we could all, or so many of us could relate to . . . and that helped us relate . . . to the Psalms."

Participants experienced a variety of spiritual benefits as a direct result of attending the seminar. For example, the instruction prompted personal reflection and self-examination. Reflecting on the metaphor of the tree planted by streams of water from Ps 1, Dirk explained:

What it really made me realize is, and it made me question: Are my roots deep enough? When drought comes, am I still going to have nourishment, am I still going to have that water down deep? It really made me question and look in my life. . . . I don't have the relationship with God that I used to have. . . . It makes me want that again because I know how much it's needed.

It also prompted a renewal of interest in the Psalms, and a desire for a deeper relationship with God. Mark felt drawn to God because of

the interest that you see God has in this. . . . He's interested in these kind of emotions that are coming up inside of you. The problems, the struggles, the trials, the jubilation you have at times--you forget how interested God is in those things.

Bolstered by this assurance, many respondents expressed a change in their

perspective on difficulties.

Respondents described a changed perspective, a renewed hope, and a revitalized desire to persevere in the face of difficulties. Jill maintained that attending the seminar “changed my perspective on life and where hope is. There’s hope. . . . I think that’s the perspective I’ll have, not only when I read the Psalms in the future, but also in my perspective on life.” Others expressed that their hope was fortified by the reminder, “Darkness always gives way to the light.” Still others identified with the tree planted by streams of water in Ps 1. Karen recounted:

The tree that’s firmly planted is scorched by the sun, but it’s established and so it’s not going to wither up and die. . . . That’s good to remember. It’s something that I will remember as I go through rough times down the road. You can still be established.

These comments indicate that a positive modification of affect resulted in those who attended the seminar. Respondents were excited about studying the Psalms. They felt equipped to proceed on their own. They appreciated the experience of studying in community. They related to the Psalms emotionally, and identified with the difficulties others experienced. They felt their emotions stirred by meaningful illustrations. They were drawn closer to God and planned to pursue a deeper relationship with Him in the future, and they were encouraged to face difficulties with a new perspective and a renewed hope.

Although the majority of the feedback was positive, respondents also offered three constructive criticisms. They saw the need for more activity, more

application, and less material. Regarding the need for more activity, Matt suggested, "There could have been a little more activity related to the use of Psalms, and song, and worship or something, as we did the study." Most of the respondents expressed the desire to sing the Psalms after each lesson. Dan expressed, "I was thinking, 'Ted! Where's your guitar? How dare you show up without your guitar!'" Others expressed the need for more practical application and less emphasis on the academic aspects of psalm study. Regarding the need for less material, Karen reflected, "This was so condensed that it was hard to take it all in in such a short period of time." Dan agreed and added, "It was a little overwhelming to get it all at one time. I was kind of brain-dead towards the end."

Although he felt overwhelmed and brain-dead, Dan acknowledged in his next sentence, "I've read the Psalms all my life and thought I was pretty familiar with them, but I saw a lot of things I haven't seen before." The seminar was a somewhat exhausting experience for the participants, but it also seemed to leave them illumined and energized. Mark concluded:

I'm going to take on the challenge of going through these lessons and working my way all the way through those psalms--all of them, whatever length of time it takes. And I think it will be a fun thing to do.

Although weary, most respondents expressed similar intentions.

### Summary

The empirical development of a curriculum on Psalms, "Cries of Pain, Songs of Praise," required systematic development, testing, data collection,

feedback, and revision. The 10 lessons were developed individually with groups of increasing size drawn from the target audience with results that were statistically significant. Product revisions were based on learner feedback, post-test results, and instructor observations. The number of tryouts for each of the lessons that comprised the instructional product varied according to circumstances and the material's level of difficulty, but each lesson was subject to a minimum of three tryouts (see Table 3) and followed a pattern of gradually increasing the tryout group size.

The final tryout group consisted of 27 participants. They provided the main indicator of the success of the empirical development of the instructional product. Mastery of the content was achieved at the predetermined 80/80 level (80% of the learners scored at least 80% or better on each of the 10 post-tests) and measured through 10 cognitive instruments (see appendix B). Ten *t*-tests indicated a significant difference between each of the 10 pre-tests and their corresponding post-tests. Positive modification of affect was determined through a qualitative analysis of the focus-group interview conducted immediately following the instruction (see appendix H). It included one-third of the participants. The results of the 10 post-tests are shown in Tables 4 and 5. The conclusions and recommendations stemming from this research are presented in chapter 5.

## CHAPTER 5

## SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The book of Psalms has had a significant influence on both Jews and Christians, liturgically, devotionally, and pastorally. The book has provided comfort and inspiration for generations. Despite this undisputed reality, prior to this study an empirically developed curriculum on Psalms did not exist. The nature of psalms indicates the need for a curriculum that bridges history, theology, culture, and linguistics, and the literary challenges associated with the artistry inherent in Hebrew poetry. This study attempted to provide such a curriculum. The empirically developed curriculum invited participants to attempt a methodical approach to the understanding of the biblical text through the identification of the poetic devices employed by the book of Psalms including figures of speech and parallelism.

The study is considered important for two reasons. First, it demonstrated again the value of the empirical developmental model. This was significant because historically only about 5% of curriculum has been empirically developed. Second, the content itself equipped the learners to study the English text of Psalms on their own by imparting the skills necessary to *identify and interpret figures of speech, parallelism, and psalm forms.*

A review of the literature revealed that scholars have approached the study of Psalms in at least six major ways in the last 2 millennia. They have utilized the eschatological-Messianic approach, the personal-historical approach, the literary-analytical-historical approach, the form-critical approach, the cult-functional approach, and the canonical approach. However, none of these approaches has been adequate in providing students with a comprehensive analysis of psalms and their parts. This study proposed a modified form-critical approach to Psalms that incorporated an analysis of psalm forms, sections, parallelism, and figures of speech. Because forms, semantic parallelism, and figures are not lost in translation, examining them can help students glean rich exegetical insights from the English text.

The modified form-critical approach to Psalms is based on the work of form-critical scholars Hermann Gunkel and Claus Westermann. Gunkel (1930/1967) sought to categorize psalms according to form or internal structure, and according to the setting in life (*Sitz im Leben*) out of which those forms arose. Sigmund Mowinckel (1961/1962) focused his attention on the setting-in-life and concluded that the Psalms were cultic songs that corresponded to specific acts within the organized worship of Israel. The approach utilized in this study builds on Gunkel's form classifications, but avoids any attempt to identify a psalm's setting-in-life unless it is described explicitly in the biblical text due to the tenuous nature of this enterprise.

Westermann (1965/1981, 1967/1980, 1984/1989) modified and augmented the work of Gunkel and Mowinckel by asserting that prayer was the



situation out of which the psalms arose. Westermann asserted that speaking to God in praise or petition was the real setting of Psalms. All psalms could be grouped according to form, or the setting out of which they arose, under these two general headings. Thus Westermann preserved Gunkel's major types, but further bracketed them under the two general categories of praise and lament. Psalms of praise contained prayers of praise and thanks; psalms of lament contained fervent pleas. In addition, by contending that the psalms were modes of prayer that could be utilized by the community of faith in every generation, he helped take the psalms out of the ancient past and into the experiential present for modern readers.

The modified form-critical approach utilized in this study builds on the work of these scholars with three important modifications. First, because the search for the original life settings or cultic uses of the psalms has yielded tenuous results, the pursuit of the precise setting seems to be an unfruitful and unnecessary enterprise. At best, conclusions regarding the setting should be approached skeptically.

Second, because Hebrew poetry employs a variety of poetic devices, approaching Psalms using only one interpretive method (such as the form-critical or cult-functional approach) can be restrictive and limiting to the exegete. A more comprehensive approach is an eclectic one that examines historical backgrounds when available, literary form, and poetic devices.

Third, identifying the form is the most useful aspect of the form-critical

approach because it can provide interpretive assistance in understanding the meaning of a psalm. Psalms can be categorized according to function, theme, or content, but identifying the form can heighten the exegete's awareness of the purpose a particular form of psalms serves in worship and the mood it expresses. Because form identification aids in understanding a psalm's meaning, mood, and usefulness in contemporary life and worship, it is a useful part of an effective interpretive approach to Psalms.

Four psalm-form categories were presented in this curriculum: lament-petition, narrative praise, declarative praise, and miscellaneous. Lament-petitions are cries to God expressing the need for God's help on behalf of the psalmist (in individual laments) or the faith community (in communal laments). They plead with God to intervene and deliver from some crisis, suffering, sickness, death, grief, or oppression. They may contain brutally honest complaints against God for His lack of action, and equally bold petitions for deliverance. Each one ends with an expression of assurance that God will answer. The lament-petition is the most frequent form in Psalms.

Narrative praise psalms tell the story of how God answered the lament's petition. Together, they form a two-act drama. In the lament's expression of hope, the psalmist often vows to praise God when He answers. The narrative praise psalm is the fulfillment of that vow. It usually describes the time of need, recounts the cry for help, records how God intervened, and closes with praise or a didactic catalogue of lessons to be learned.

Descriptive praise psalms praise God by describing His attributes and

His deeds. They do not recount specific stories about His activity like those in the narrative praise psalms, but rather advance a general description of who God is and what He has done. They accentuate God's majesty and mercy, greatness and grace, describe His worthiness to be worshipped, and call all creation to praise Him.

Miscellaneous psalms manifest mixed forms, a single form, or no discernible form at all. They include psalms of trust (Ps 23), psalms of remembrance or salvation history (Ps 78), wisdom psalms (Ps 119), royal songs (Ps 45), and liturgies (Ps 15).

The modified form-critical approach is strengthened by steps that include the identification and interpretation of two prominent poetic devices: parallelism and imagery. Robert Lowth (1787/1971) popularized the term parallelism and launched it to a prominent place in biblical studies. His key idea was that the whole verse, not the individual lines, communicates the intended meaning, because parallelism is a correspondence of one line with another (or several others).

In addition to defining parallelism, Lowth (1837) classified three primary types: synonymous, antithetic, and synthetic. These categories came under attack in the 20th century. For example, Gray (1915/1972), Geller (1979), and O'Connor (1980) disputed the validity of synthetic parallelism. Kugel (1981) and Alter (1985) challenged the validity of synonymous parallelism. Kugel even went so far as to claim that poetry could not be distinguished from

prose, but scholars convincingly refuted his conclusion (Berlin, 1991; Gillingham, 1994; Landy, 1984). Although subsequent scholarship modified Lowth's work, his classical method of approaching parallelism is a valid approach to studying Hebrew poetry.

This curriculum utilized Lowth's approach to parallelism and incorporated recent modifications into its description of how each type of parallelism functions. Four types of semantic parallelism were presented in this study: synonymous, antithetic, synthetic, and climactic. These categories were based on Lowth (1837) and Gordon (1913); definitions were based on Parker (1995).

In synonymous parallelism, the parallel line (or lines) strengthens the thought of the first line by repeating similar or complementary terms. The synonyms employed are not absolute, but functional. This category included parallelism using similar terms, complementary terms, and numbers, thus expanding on Lowth's original understanding.

In antithetic parallelism the parallel line contrasts the thoughts of the lines by opposing them. The two lines are usually linked with the English word *but* to indicate the antithesis. Antithetic parallelism is the least disputed and most recognizable type of parallelism.

In synthetic parallelism, the most maligned of Lowth's categories, the parallel line advances the thought of the first line by completing, adding, explaining, or extending. Synthetic parallelism adds something to the first line. It may add a related thought, a new one, an explanation of the first thought, or

an extension of it. Understood within these parameters, synthetic parallelism is a very useful classification (contra Geller, 1979; O'Connor, 1980). It remains one of the more difficult classifications to make and can be confused with synonymous parallelism, but following the above guidelines can replace confusion with clarity.

In climactic parallelism (Gordon, 1913), the parallel lines build upon the thought of the first line by repeating one part and adding to it. Commonly referred to as staircase parallelism (Berlin, 1992; Robinson, 1952; Watson, 1984), climactic is actually a variation of synthetic parallelism. It is treated separately in this study because the repeated phrase makes its form distinctive, and because the repetition intensifies the feelings and thoughts being expressed, building them to a climax.

Some scholars considered the presence of imagery as important as parallelism in distinguishing Hebrew poetry (Alter, 1985; Longman, 1988). Others considered it more important than parallelism (Ryken, 1984). Imagery can be appreciated by readers of the English text because the integrity of most figures is preserved in translation. The ability to identify specific figures of speech can aid in the interpretation of figurative language. Eight figures of speech were included in this study: simile, metaphor, personification, anthropomorphism, zoomorphism, merism, hyperbole, and rhetorical question.

It was hypothesized that an effective Psalms curriculum would arrest the attention of the learners, result in the positive modification of affect, equip

and motivate learners to study Psalms on their own, and produce cognitive mastery of the material presented at the 80/80 level. In order to achieve these results, the instructional product of this study was developed using the empirical development method of Baker and Schutz (1971) and Naden (1993).

The process of development contained three crucial elements: a cycle of trial and revision that continued until defined performance criteria were attained, a developmental process that utilized a team rather than an individual, and a trial and revision cycle that was based on feedback from the designated learners. This occurred through demonstrating mastery of the objectives, and through verbal, behavioral, and affective cues during the process of development. This developmental process resulted in an instructional product that was empirically validated, user-friendly, and of demonstrated utility.

The first step involved assessing the need for the product, which was accomplished primarily through a literature review. Second, the specific learners for whom the instructional product would be designed were described. This was necessary in order to illustrate the content in ways that were meaningful to the learners, and to ensure that the level of instruction corresponded with the audience's background and capacity to master it. In this study the learners were conservative Christian lay people of both genders that regularly attended a local church. They had completed high school. They were from a variety of ethnic backgrounds, but familiar with American culture. They were both single and married adults, age 18 and older.

Third, behavioral objectives were constructed that included the

subjects, or specified learners, a measurable verb describing the learner's post-instructional performance, the given conditions in which the behavior occurred, and a precise standard of acceptable performance (see pp. 74-75).

Fourth, an identical pre-test and post-test was prepared. The pre-test measured the learner's level of knowledge immediately prior to the instruction. The post-test was given after the instruction in order to test the effectiveness of the instructional product. The type of test used was dictated by the specific verb used in the behavioral objective (see appendix C).

The fifth step involved detailing the criteria for each of the test questions. The best possible answer to each question was given in detail, and this answer reduced to a set of criteria by which learners' responses were evaluated. This was another step that removed the ambiguity from the product development process. Detailing the criteria revealed exactly what the instructor expected the student to master and, therefore, exactly what the instructor must teach (see appendix D).

Since the criteria provided the basis for the development of an instructional outline, the sixth step was to develop the instructional outline. The major headings of the outline corresponded with each group of test question criteria. The outline did not contain illustrations or introductory material at this stage of development. It was simply an organized explanation of the criteria listed in step 5.

The seventh step involved the initial trial of the product with a small

group drawn from the target population. During this phase, the instructor received feedback from the learners that was incorporated into modified versions of the product (see appendix A).

In the eighth step, the results of the initial trial were reviewed and the instructional product modified. This led to the development of the first full draft of the instructor's manual and the learner's workbook. The instructor's manual was a verbatim presentation of the instruction, complete with illustrations and exercises that familiarized the learners with the material (see appendix D). The learner's workbook contained note-taking outlines and other materials that aided the learner in mastering the material (see appendix F).

Ninth, the revised product was tested under replicable conditions with a larger group from the target audience (usually 2-6 people) that took the pre-test and post-test. The goal was that a minimum of 80% of the learners achieve mastery of at least 80% of the criteria of the test items in each session. When the 80/80 standard was achieved, the product was deemed ready for the tenth step. The ninth step was occasionally repeated with a larger group in order to reach the 80/80 standard (see Table 3).

After incorporation of the feedback and necessary revisions, the final step was to present the completed product to a larger group (27) that provided data that were statistically analyzed. The means of the pre-test and post-test were evaluated using a  $t$ -test for correlated samples with the level of significance set at .05. When the difference was statistically significant (see pp. 97-102) and 80/80 mastery was achieved by this group (see Table 4), the



development of the instructional product was deemed complete.

The 10-step developmental process was an effective means of curriculum development. It was more demanding on the developer/instructor than most regular education in that it required the learners to achieve mastery on the post-tests without any additional study. Classroom instruction alone prepared learners for the post-test. This placed the burden of mastery squarely on the instructor and the instructional product without a student's post-instructional study. Failure to achieve mastery was assumed to be a reflection on the instructor and the instructional product more than on the students. It was assumed that if the instructor could help the students gain cognitive mastery and succeed in modifying student affect, then students would be motivated to research and master additional content outside the classroom.

The product consisted of 10 lessons on Psalms, each designed for a 50-minute instructional period. Four introductory lessons explained the nature of poetic language, eight figures of speech, four types of semantic parallelism, four psalm forms, and the personal value of studying Psalms. The remaining six sessions consisted of one summary session and five expositions of each of the four psalm forms (two laments were presented--one individual and one communal) that modeled to participants how to study the Psalms.

It can be concluded that the objectives of the 10 sessions were achieved by examining the post-test data and the feedback provided during the focus-group interview. First, the post-test data revealed that the 80/80 level of

mastery was achieved. It was concluded that this was a reasonable standard. It is interesting to note that only 59% of the learners achieved mastery on all of the 10 post-tests (41% of the learners failed to achieve mastery on at least one post-test). In addition, *t*-tests established that each of the 10 post-test means represented a significant increase over the 10 pre-test means.

Second, the focus-group interview disclosed that positive modification of affect was achieved. Learners were excited about studying Psalms, felt equipped to study on their own, related to Psalms emotionally, identified with the difficulties described in them, were stirred by meaningful illustrations, drawn closer to God, and encouraged to face life with renewed perspective and hope.

Learners participating in the focus-group interview suggested that this modification was due to several factors. First, they learned new skills for studying Psalms, and because they were given time to practice them, they were able to see how these skills could be utilized in future study. Some learners mentioned that even taking the post-test was an affirming experience because it provided immediate positive reinforcement. Second, their interest in Psalms was aroused and captivated by the emotive nature of Psalms and by the meaningful illustrations used in the instruction. Third, they appreciated the modified form-critical approach to Psalm study. They considered the approach valuable, practical, and motivational.

The focus-group interview was an effective means of receiving feedback from the learners. As hypothesized, it was a valid means of gathering perceptions, feelings, thoughts, and opinions. Learners seemed able to

articulate their thoughts and feelings more clearly as they listened to the opinions of others. The group expressed agreement around many themes, but also articulated dissenting views. A professional researcher and facilitator helped produce an atmosphere of safety and permission, and participants seemed to respond with openness and candor.

### **Recommendations**

If the product is presented in seminar form with similar time constraints, it is recommended that the instructor add to the sessions several activities that promote reflection, and model the practical use of *Psalms*. Activities such as praying psalms, singing psalms, and examining the scriptural foundation of popular hymns could be included. It is assumed that the instructor would not utilize the pre-tests and post-tests, thus allowing time for the learners to engage in these additional learning activities.

If the product is presented in a class, a small group, or any extended format that allows for a greater amount of time to be utilized, it is recommended that the instructor build additional learning on the foundation of the original 10 sessions. For instance, in a 2-hour small group session, it is recommended that 1 hour be used for lecture and the second hour for discussion, singing, prayer, and sharing. The sharing could focus on personal discoveries made during the week as group members studied the *Psalms*, or to review assignments that were completed during the week.

It is recommended that assignments be utilized (especially in a

classroom format) in between sessions in order to help the students practice skills they are learning, keep the material fresh, and expose them to other examples of figures of speech, parallelism, and psalms that contain greater variation than the examples used in the lectures. It is hypothesized that learners would benefit more from a small group or classroom format that occurred over a longer period of time than from an intense seminar. Those formats would provide more time for the learners to grasp these new ideas, for reflection, and for practice through assignments such as those recommended in appendix G.

In addition, an extended learning format would allow the instructor to increase the number of sessions to include other figures of speech common to Psalms such as metonymy and synecdoche, other forms of semantic parallelism such as emblematic parallelism, and an examination of miscellaneous psalm forms such as liturgies and salvation history psalms. The extended learning format would also allow the instructor to explore topics in greater depth such as the function of parallelism and the nature of the correspondences in figures of speech. However, in any extended format, the original 10 sessions could be utilized as the foundation for the additional instruction.

### **Product Development**

There are many lessons to be learned from the developmental process. Many of the lessons learned during the process of this study are contained in appendix A. It is hypothesized that the following recommendations would lead

to even more effective development of further products.

First, it is recommended that the developer beware of trying to cover too much material in a single session. The objectives govern what material should be included. When in doubt, leave it out. It is usually safe to assume that there is too much material rather than too little.

Second, it is recommended that the developer keep a product development journal and read it often. Re-reading the journal entries reveals what mistakes have been made in the past and how to avoid repeating them.

Third, it is recommended that the developer continually ask for learner feedback. This feedback can then be incorporated into future product revisions. The most valuable feedback can be gleaned from a small group (1-4) of carefully selected individuals. It is recommended that the same individuals be included in multiple tryouts. If the instructor is receptive and succeeds in building an atmosphere of trust during the discourse, feedback can be invaluable.

Fourth, it is recommended that the developer include colleagues who are teachers or curriculum developers in the development process in order to receive feedback from those familiar with the research or teaching methodology. When this is impossible, it is recommended that the developer attend a variety of instructional situations in order to be exposed to the strengths and weaknesses of other curricula.

Fifth, it is recommended that the developer make liberal use of visual aids in the instruction. Overhead transparencies can be utilized for examples,

quotations, and to help the learners follow the instructional outline. Structured notes are also a useful learning aid.

Finally, it is recommended that the developer choose illustrations that are appropriate to the target audience. Illustrations can be an aid to arousing student interest, capturing and maintaining attention, and motivating personal inquiry. In this study, illustrations were a key factor in the modification of learner affect.

### **For Further Study**

This research raised several questions that could provide the basis for significant research in the future. First, given the effectiveness of the empirical development process, Why is so little curriculum empirically developed? Is it because of the time required? Does it place too great a burden on the instructor because of its built-in accountability? To research the effectiveness of empirically developed curricula compared with non-empirically developed curricula would be of great significance to educators.

Second, given that some non-empirically developed curriculum can also be effective, What ingredients of non-empirically developed curriculum reflect the ingredients of the empirical process? For example, do effective instructors revise their curricula over the years to increase their effectiveness? Are their revisions based on learner feedback, test data, and instructor observation? Understanding what makes curricula effective would be a valuable finding for developers and instructors.

Finally, given that there are a number of variables involved in effective instruction, What is the role that presentation style and personality play in the retention of material presented in the classroom? This question could take the research in several directions. What is the role that presentation style and personality play in the effectiveness of a curriculum compared to the organization of the product itself? How much of an instructional product's effectiveness is due to presentation, how much is due to organization, and how much to content?

Knowing the answers to these questions could make a valuable contribution to future teacher training, curriculum development, and educational strategy. Effectively trained teachers can kindle the students' passion for learning as new products are developed and new strategies are employed in the classroom.

**APPENDIX A**

**PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT JOURNAL**



**February/March 1994**

I am learning the Instructional Product Development methodology. The challenge for me will be to be specific and focused. I try to cram too much material into each session. It is exciting to see how the verbs used in the objectives determine the kind of questions asked on the test, which in turn determines the outline of the instruction. When the step-by-step process is followed religiously, all the pieces should fit together.

**March 6, 1994**

I tested the first two Introduction To Psalms sessions with a group of six at Andrews University--Lydia Chong, Jan Ewing, Samir Selmanovic, Vesna Selmanovic, Kurt Johns, and Rik Bailey. What a learning experience! The first session, containing "Figurative Words" and "Figures of Speech" took one hour and fifteen minutes, and I deleted the final section! It is too much material and must be divided into two sessions. I should have known. After all, I did have two objectives for that session. The session on the types of psalms went well. I should be able to cover that material in one session.

I also received very helpful criticism from the group regarding the pace of instruction (too fast in session #1, but fine in session #2), and the number of examples (too many for the figures of speech and the types of psalms). They said the instruction was very clear, but there was a lot of information. I also received a suggestion from Samir regarding the need to cover parallelism in the introductory sessions. After some thought and reflection, I think I will. It is a

distinguishing mark of Hebrew poetry.

At this point, I am thinking of expanding the introduction section from two to four sessions and covering the following content:

Session 1 - Figurative Language

Session 2 - Figures of Speech

Session 3 - Types of Parallelism

Session 4 - Types of Psalms

**March 13, 1994**

I field tested sessions #1 and #4 at Grace Presbyterian Church in Colorado Springs, CO. Thirty-four people attended a special evening service and received the pre-test and post-test. 80/80 mastery was achieved, but I did make some changes after calculating the test results. I noticed on test #1 that each person who received an incorrect answer had test item #2 or #3 incorrect. After consulting with three people who attended the instruction, I concluded that the test item responses were poorly worded and needed to be reworded for the sake of clarity. The questions were retained, but the answer options were changed. In addition, two minor points under types of connotation were dropped from the instruction. After examining the confusing test items and receiving feedback from Jan Ewing, Roberta Harbison, and John Harbison, I concluded that they were not necessary to fulfill the instructional objective listed at the outset. The instructions on the first section of test #4 were also changed.

**June 19, 1994**

As part of the requirements for EDCI 885 Applied Research-- Instructional Product Development, I developed three more sessions to be used in the dissertation. On Sunday night, June 19, 1994 I tested the first three expositions of actual psalms: Ps 13, Ps 79, and Ps 126. The instruction was developed after consultation with two people, then tested with Jan Ewing, David McClintock, Rik Bailey, Raja Farah, Samir Selmanovic, and Vesna Selmanovic in attendance. Since these were the first of the actual psalms, I was anxious to see how sermon preparation and delivery differed from preparing and delivering teaching lectures in this empirical process. I found some significant differences in each area of the lecture--explanation, illustration and application.

First, the teaching setting requires more explanation than I would normally include in a sermon. In a sermon, people tend to be listening without taking notes and they cannot retain as much without writing things down. In the teaching setting, people are predisposed towards note-taking and want to write as much as they can. I found that at a minimum I needed to double the amount of explanation I would normally include in a sermon. In a sermon, I usually only include enough explanation to make the point. In the lecture, more detail is required, especially because they are going to be tested on the material.

Second, the teaching setting is much less dependent on good illustrations. My sermons rely much more on illustrations. The illustrations that I included in the teaching seemed to detract from the content at times. Although they illustrated the content well, people seemed less tolerant of the illustrations

since they know that they  
get back to the content  
to entertain, at least  
more frequently.

The first set of  
applications in the book  
included, but were  
resistant to a discussion  
focus on the content  
used to listen for or  
motivated, or even  
thinking about later  
when they are in a  
listening to a lecture?

I suspect that  
would be the case  
material I will not cover.  
cover. For the purpose

I made main  
presenting the message  
feedback and suggest  
the post-test essay

to  
re  
sed  
c  
to  
are  
fr  
we  
d  
on  
s:

since they knew that they would not be on the exam! They seemed anxious to get back to the content so we could move on. In sermons, I often feel pressure to entertain or at least keep everyone's attention, so illustrations tend to be used more frequently.

Third, in sermons I spend significantly more time developing specific applications for the principles. In the instruction, application needs to be included, but emphasized to a lesser degree. I felt that people were more resistant to application at different points. (I am not sure why people tended to focus on the content more than the application and illustrations. Maybe they are used to listening for content in a classroom, and listening to be inspired, motivated, or entertained in a sermon. That's just a hunch, but it is worth thinking about later. The question I would ask is, Do people listen differently when they are in a classroom hearing a lecture than they do when in a church listening to a sermon? If so, how, and why?).

I suspect that if I tried to include it all in one hybrid communication, we would be there forever. Full explanation, illustration and application of the material I want to cover in 40 minutes would seriously limit the amount I could cover. For the purpose of this study, I need to strike a balance.

I made major changes to all three messages based on a) actually presenting the messages and seeing how they "felt" to me, b) the critical feedback and suggestions of the participants and, c) the answers they gave on the post-test essay questions (Ps 126). A summary of those changes follows:

Psalm 13

1. I renumbered the exam questions to make clearer their order.
2. I made a new overhead transparency that accurately reflects the way the structured notes are set up.
3. I restructured the note-taking outlines to give the learner a place to write the characteristics of each of the lament sections.
4. I deleted the three sections in my notes that defined the purpose of each section of the lament.
5. I deleted the closing illustration and the closing application sections of the message. Time did not allow their inclusion in the lecture.

Psalm 79

1. I renumbered the exam questions to make clearer their order.
2. I changed test questions 2, 3, & 4 by giving the student the preposition in the phrase. The test value was reduced from 30 to 24 points.
3. I expanded the criteria for the last two test questions since I expanded the amount of material presented in the lecture.
4. I made a new overhead transparency that placed the three main points alongside the text sections from which they were derived.

Psalm 126

1. I renumbered the exam questions to make clearer their order.
2. I reworded the structured notes so the learner could have the psalm on a separate page and have more room to take notes on the outline page.

3. I also added structural clues on the note-taking outlines that helped the learner record the image and meaning under each of the three verse sections considered.

4. I changed the theme of the message from "Dreams enlighten the darkness" to "Darkness doesn't last forever." What I realized as I gave this message was that the theme I had chosen came more from my hook (opening illustration) than from the text! The new theme reflects the content of the passage and helps transition out of the psalms of lament, which I have referred to as "psalms of darkness."

5. I also added the idea of past, present, and future to my three main points since the three images used in the psalm have those three corresponding time references. It also helps to clarify the theme and the meaning of the images.

6. I replaced my opening illustration. The reason I discarded the "dream" hook is because the way I used the idea of a "dream" in the illustration was different from the way the author of the psalm uses it in verses 1-4! Consequently, when I asked the learners about the meaning of the dream image in the passage, I received a mixture of what the psalmist meant and what I meant. They were very different!

7. I made changes in the way I presented the meaning of *wadi*. It was unclear to the students because they were not sure whether a wadi was the dry stream bed itself or the river that ran through it in the winter. It is the former!

8. I made an overhead of Psalm 126 that included my outline of the psalm.

Obviously, the last message required more work than the other two, but the process of having to present it in its “ready or not” condition was very instructive. That’s why this process is so valuable. There are so many things that can be wrong with your presentation that you can’t anticipate until you present it and experience the problems first hand. Remarkably, the solutions become apparent at the same time, if you pay attention to the critical feedback, suggestions, test answers, and your own sense of how things are going. This was another very valuable experience!

### **July 1995**

I’m back working on the sessions after having been away from it for almost a year. I’ve changed both the number and the content of the sessions as a result of my ongoing review of the literature. The content of the four introductory sessions will remain the same. The only minor adjustment I have made is changing the name of #4 to “Forms of Psalms” instead of “types” of psalms. This title is more accurate and reflects the emphasis on the structure of the psalm and the influence of form criticism in the approach. In addition, type is a broad and ambiguous term. Psalms can be categorized according to content, theme, poetic devices (like acrostics), or form.

I also have changed the name of the lament form to “lament-petition.” This name reflects the fact that the lament is a plea, a prayer request, and it



takes into account Westermann's emphasis on praise and lament as the two primary means of addressing God in prayer. It also reveals two of three main sections of the form, and is a somewhat parallel term to "narrative praise" and "descriptive praise" since all three contain two words.

I reduced the number of sessions from twelve to ten because I saw no need to exegete two of each psalm form. One example is sufficient, so I've dropped Psalm 79, even though this session was fully developed. The psalms I will exegete are Ps 13 (individual lament-petition), Ps 126 (community lament-petition), Ps 30 (narrative praise), Ps 95 (descriptive praise), and Ps 1 (miscellaneous--song of torah). The final session (#10) will look at Psalms as songs for the journey of faith and show how the ingredients of the different psalm forms reflect the ingredients of life as we experience it. This schedule seems much better. The amount of revision that takes place during the development of these sessions continues to astound me. It seems like the content and form of the instruction can always be improved.

### **July 30, 1995**

I tested my newly developed session #3 (Types of Parallelism) with Jan Ewing and made the following changes based on her feedback and my own observations:

1. I placed the greatest amount of emphasis on synonymous and synthetic parallelism, since they are the most difficult to identify.
2. I noted the difficulty of test questions #1 and #11 on the "parallelism

identification” section. Jan missed both of them and they are tricky. They may need to be replaced with easier examples.

3. I mustn't overemphasize *ellipsis* under synonymous parallelism.

Jan said it was helpful, but didn't need any further explanation.

4. I dropped “emblematic parallelism.” There simply isn't enough time to cover it, and it runs the risk of being confused with a simple simile in the minds of the learners.

5. I shouldn't practice what I won't be testing, that is, content not directly related to the objectives. This includes numerical synonymous parallelism.

6. I need to reorganize the introduction so that it flows better into the function of parallelism. The instruction needs to emphasize this because the objectives focus on its importance.

7. I will place on an overhead all of the parallelism examples that will be used in the instruction. This will save time during instruction (since I won't have to wait for everyone to turn to the passage), and it will help avoid unnecessary confusion by ensuring that everyone is looking at the same version of the Bible.

The initial test was encouraging, but an old problem continues to surface: trying to cover too much material in the time available. I'm not sure how this will work out with a larger group, but I'll know in the next few weeks when I present this session two more times. In addition, I wonder how well someone who is not as educated as Jan will be able to follow the instruction.

**August 9, 1995**

I tested my newly developed session #8 (Psalm 95--Descriptive Praise Psalms) with Jan Ewing and made the following changes based on her feedback and my own observations:

1. I changed the instructions for the identification test question in order to make them clearer to the learners. I changed "use 1-3 words" to "using the terms given in class."

2. The instructor's notes, the Ps 95 overhead, and the learner's notes had a different translation of Ps 95! I corrected this oversight.

3. I added a summary section at the end of the instruction.

This was a fairly successful initial test, and changes were minor, probably because I have already developed my Ps 13 session, which also has learning the characteristics of a psalm form (lament-petition) as its objective. That made writing these objectives easier, and should help when the time comes to develop Ps 30, the psalm of narrative praise. As with Ps 13, illustrations must be kept to a minimum in order to fit within the self-imposed 40-minute instructional time frame, and practice and revision are essential. I have included two psalms of descriptive praise (Pss 117, 103) for practice at the end of the Ps 95 session, but I will have a third available (Ps 135) if the learners appear to need it. Looking forward to testing Sessions #2, #3, and #8 next week in California with a group of four to six.

**August 21, 1995**

I tested sessions #2, #3, and #8 in Redlands, CA, with Erin Mahoney, Sean Tubbs, Jordana Gruttsis, Sheli Harmeier, and Cheri Whitlock. Session #2 (Figures of Speech) went quite well. No changes are necessary. Session #3 (Parallelism) still needs some adjustments. Test questions #1 and #11 are still posing problems (2/5 learners failed to answer each of them correctly). So I have chosen clearer examples. Other changes included:

1. I underlined "describe the function" on part two of the test.

2. I dropped Ps 37:11 as a practice example of synonymous parallelism since it looks very much like synthetic parallelism.

3. I gave clearer examples of synonymous and synthetic parallelism in test questions #1 and #11. I did not use a synonymous example with ellipsis.

Session #8 (Ps 95--Descriptive Praise) was the session that needed the greatest revision. Three of five participants failed to correctly identify the three sections of Ps 113. Part of the problem was that my instruction was unclear, but part of it may have been that the example is a tricky one. Therefore, I made the following changes:

1. I changed the test psalm to Ps 103 instead of Ps 113.

2. I made Ps 113 one of the practice psalms.

3. I made an overhead transparency for the practice psalms. (This can be expensive, but having a transparency saves so much time.)

4. I deleted some notes under the last section of explanation that were not helping the lesson achieve the objectives.

I'll retest these last two sessions next week in Michigan to assess how the changes worked.

### **September 11, 1995**

I performed my final preparatory test on sessions #3 (Parallelism) and #8 (Psalm 95) in Berrien Springs, MI with Samir Selmanovic, Raja Farah, Rik Bailey, and David McClintock. I also developed and performed an initial test of session #7 (Psalm 30) since I had a willing audience. The Psalm 30 session was understandably rough, while the others went quite well and should be ready for the final test with minor revisions.

Session #3 (Parallelism) had the fewest revisions. I need to change the wording in the instructor's notes under the sections, "What is semantic parallelism?" and "How does it impact interpretation?" in order to clarify the content. Samir also suggested that I allow more space under these two questions on my note-taking outlines. The new examples and test questions that I added after the last test worked well. No one was confused by them, however, 3/4 learners marked question #3 incorrectly. I believe this was due to my *failure to emphasize repetition as a critical element of climactic parallelism* in the lecture. The question is fine, but I noted that I need to emphasize the point in the final instruction. This is probably the most difficult of the lectures I've prepared so far, but all participants said that it was clearly explained and contained a manageable amount of content. Developing the skill of identifying

parallelism simply takes time and practice.

Session #8 (Psalm 95) also went very smoothly. All participants had a perfect score on the post-test. Therefore, the final revisions are minor. Here's what I need to do. First, clarify the directions on the test by changing the word "terms" to "phrase" in the first section. Learners continue to respond using one word instead of the entire phrase given in class. Second, clarify the directions by adding the phrase "in each answer" to the instructions in the short answer section. Third, remove the indentation in the repeated "call to praise" and "cause for praise" so learners do not think they should be under point number two. Finally, make an overhead transparency of the two J. I. Packer quotes used in the lecture. It aids the learners in following the train of thought. This is actually something I learned from sitting in on Samir Selmanovic's lectures during the week I was at Andrews University.

Session #7 (Psalm 30) was ready to be tested, but still needed major revisions. In addition to editing significant portions of the instructor's notes, the primary revisions were as follows:

1. Rewrite the second lesson objective. Although this is an unusual step, it is necessary. My second lesson objective, "Construct a theme," assumes that the learners will have the skill to construct a theme given the sub-themes of Psalm 30. The post-test revealed that this is an ungrounded assumption. Therefore, I changed the objective to "The learners will *describe* the three themes in the psalm identified in class, given the text of Psalm 30.

This accomplishes the intent of the original objective without assuming that the learners possess a skill that I haven't taught them in class.

2. Change the second part of the test to reflect the new objective.

3. Replace Psalm 116 with Psalm 32 in the first part of the test. All the learners correctly identified the narrative praise section on this practice example, but 3/4 failed to identify the sections correctly in Psalm 116 because of a difficult and tricky transition between the Story and the Epilogue sections.

4. Add the word "section" after each blank in the note-taking outlines.

5. Separate the "Story" section into three parts and include the names "Need," "Cry," and "Deliverance" next to each portion of text.

6. Condense the descriptions of the three sections in the instructor's notes and on the overhead transparency.

7. During the instruction, move quickly through the narrative praise characteristics and into the text. It provides a clear illustration of the characteristics. Note them while explaining the passage.

### **September 29, 1995**

Field tested a significantly revised session #7 (Psalm 30) and session #3 (Parallelism) with a group of nine at Virginia Tech. Participants included Sue Eaglesham, Karen Wilcox, Jan Ewing, John Dawson, Bert Fox, Krissy Mather, and Saliha Bava. Session #7 (Psalm 30) went extremely well. Everyone achieved mastery and no changes were necessary, so development is complete. Development is complete with session #3 (Parallelism) as well, with one minor change. I am replacing question #11 on the test with a clearer

example of synthetic parallelism since 4/7 learners marked the question incorrectly, giving three different answers. That is the only change. All learners achieved mastery. I must develop the final two sessions: Psalm 1, a wisdom psalm, and the wrap-up session that brings closure to the experience.

### **November 9, 1995**

Field tested sessions #9 (Psalm 1) and #10 (Songs for the Journey) with Jan Ewing. These are the final two sessions that will be developed. Finally, the development process is becoming easier. For Session #9 (Psalm 1), Jan scored 0% on the pre-test and 100% on the post-test, and suggested several minor changes. First, the four major contrasts should be numbered on the note-taking outlines to make them easier to follow. Second, the text of Psalm 1 should be placed before all four points, not after the first one. Jan thought it was misleading that way. Third, I will drop one of my minor contrasts (from my notes and the overhead) because it was confusing and not that essential to the meaning of the psalm. The contrast is between what the righteous person does and doesn't do. Jan found it confusing because each of the other six contrasts are between the righteous and the wicked. Showing a contrast within one of those two categories was a confusing way to start when the rest of the contrasts are between the two categories.

Jan also suggested clarifying a point about the similes of the tree and the chaff. They illustrate that the righteous are grounded in the torah, and the wicked are not grounded at all. I had mentioned they illustrate that the



righteous are grounded in the torah and the wicked are grounded within themselves. Being grounded within yourself is a clumsy way of saying that you have no grounding at all. This explanation also clarifies the meaning of the simile. In addition to incorporating Jan's suggestions, I made minor changes in the instructor's notes.

Session #10 (Songs for the Journey) required major revisions. For only the second time in this empirical process, I had to go back and revise an objective. The original objective was "The learner will construct a personal time-line that reflects the relationship between life events and psalm forms, as presented in class, given the number of formal elements to include." I realized that it needed to be revised when Jan pointed out that it was possible to have more than one of the formal elements reflected in the events of your life at a given time. There was a relationship between the formal elements and life events, but time was an artificially imposed constraint that seemed to "flatten" human experience. For example, people can experience joy and celebration even in the midst of grieving a loss.

In addition, Jan felt that life "events" was too limiting and that I should use the parallel term life "elements." Since events are a type of element, this seemed like a good idea. The objective was rewritten: "The learner will construct a chart that demonstrates the relationship between the formal elements of Psalms and the personal elements of life, as presented in class, given the number of formal elements." This accomplishes the same thing

without the inaccurate ingredient of time imposed on the constructed chart. The test, criteria, note-taking outlines, and instructor's manual were altered to reflect the change in this objective.

Those were the major revisions. Minor revisions included adding a closing illustration, changing some of the wording on the note-taking outlines to make it more memorable, and adding a quote to "The Importance of Praise" section of the instructor's manual.

### **November 10, 1995**

I field tested sessions #9 (Psalm 1) and #10 (Songs for the Journey) with Bert Fox, Karen Wilcox, April Hamby, and Krissy Mather in Blacksburg, Virginia. All four participants scored 0% on the pre-test and 100% on the post-test. Their only recommendation was to shorten the four major points on the note-taking outlines and make them parallel so they are easier to follow. They were occasionally lost during the transition from one section to another. The old points were: (1) The life path of the "righteous/wicked", (2) Their life-journey map, (3) Their life journey's quality, and (4) Their life journey's destiny. The new points are: (1) The life path of the "righteous/wicked", (2) The map of the "righteous/wicked", (3) The characteristics of the "righteous/wicked", and (4) The destiny of the "righteous/wicked."

Session #10 was too long. The lecture lasted 45 minutes and I moved too quickly through the third section of my notes. As a result, two of the four participants did not complete one of the last two test questions. All participants

scored 0% on the pre-test. On the post-test, two participants scored 100%; the other two scored 90%. After a lengthy discussion with participants, I decided to drop the second section of notes. Three factors led to this decision.

First, and most importantly, the two objectives were reflected in sections one and three of the instructor's notes. They were on the note-taking outlines and the test. Section two was related, but it was really nothing more than a well-disguised rabbit trail. (I am amazed at how I continue to wrestle with the problem of trying to teach too much material in the allotted time. For some strange reason, I am convinced that I can teach in 30 minutes what it has taken me 30 hours to learn!)

Second, section one was very concrete material, but section two was very abstract. I received negative feedback from learners about the difficulty of making a mental shift so quickly.

Third, the section required ten minutes to complete, and it will require more time with a larger group, because it involves discussion. Removing it would put the instruction at 35 minutes. All other feedback was very positive. One more test should confirm the product's readiness for the final test.

#### **November 15, 1995**

I field tested sessions #9 (Psalm 1) and #10 (Songs for the Journey) with John Dawson, Alison Galway, Mark Eaglesham, Roxanne Thayne, Tim Thayne, Dick Dierckins, and Doris Dierckins in Blacksburg, Virginia. In session #9, the pre-test scores of the above participants were 0%, 32%, 32%, 32%,

20%, 20%, and 20%. Corresponding post-test scores were 85%, 100%, 100%, 100%, 100%, 100%, and 90%. All achieved mastery.

Feedback was positive and major revisions were unnecessary, but one minor change would help. The second section, the "map of the righteous/wicked," needs to be reorganized and edited. As I was teaching, I felt that it was dragging and I was losing the attention of the participants. All answered this test question accurately, but the content requires reorganization. My only other concern was that the lecture was long. It required 45 minutes. Since it only took 40 minutes when tested last Wednesday, I'm assuming that it went longer because of extras that I added for this larger, more diverse group. I should be able to keep the time within 40 minutes during the final test. This session is ready for the final test.

Session #10 went very smoothly without any problems. Because I removed the two long quotations after the last tryout, the session lasted 35 minutes. All participants scored 0% on the pre-test and 100% on the post-test. Feedback was very positive and no revisions were necessary. The entire product is ready for the final test in San Diego. My Psalms seminar, "Cries of Pain, Songs of Praise," is two weeks from tomorrow.

## APPENDIX B

### COGNITIVE INSTRUMENTS

.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

PRE/POST TEST

**PSALMS TEST #1**

**Short answer** - Fill in each of the six blanks with the appropriate word from the lesson describing characteristics of figurative words.

1. They are not \_\_\_\_\_, but \_\_\_\_\_.
2. They are not \_\_\_\_\_, but \_\_\_\_\_.
3. They are not \_\_\_\_\_, but \_\_\_\_\_.

Actual score: \_\_\_\_\_  
Maximum score: 12

**Multiple choice** - Circle the letter of the best answer.

1. The words in the statement, "You are all white washed tombs filled with dead men's bones" contain:
  - a) an historical allusion
  - b) an emotional connotation
  - c) an abstract conjecture
  
2. The words in the statement, "Sing unto the Lord for He is highly exalted. The horse and its rider He has hurled into the sea" contain:
  - a) an emotional connotation
  - b) an abstract conjecture
  - c) an historical allusion

**PSALMS TEST #1 - p. 2**

3. The words in the statement, "For forty years I was angry with that generation" contain:

- a) an historical allusion
- b) an abstract conjecture
- c) an emotional connotation

4) The words in the statement, "I will spit you out of my mouth" contain

- a) an emotional connotation:
- b) an abstract conjecture
- c) an historical allusion

Actual score: \_\_\_\_\_

Maximum score: 8

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

PRE/POST TEST

**PSALMS TEST #2****Matching**

Match the correct example with the figures of speech listed at the right by placing the letter (A, B, C, etc.) in the space provided next to the number.

- |                                                                   |                        |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------|
| ___1. Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard his spots? | A. Simile              |
| ___2. In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.    | B. Metaphor            |
| ___3. The heavens are telling the glory of God.                   | C. Personification     |
| ___4. He will be like a bush in the desert.                       | D. Hypocatastasis      |
| ___5. Under His wings you shall find peace.                       | E. Rhetorical question |
| ___6. The Lord's hand is not so short that it cannot save.        | F. Anthropomorphism    |
| ___7. The Lord is my shepherd.                                    | G. Zoomorphism         |
| ___8. All night long I flood my bed with weeping.                 | H. Merism              |
|                                                                   | I. Synecdoche          |
|                                                                   | J. Hyperbole           |

Actual score: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Maximum score: 16



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

PRE/POST TEST

**PSALMS TEST #3****Matching**

Match the correct example with the type of parallelism listed below by placing the letter (A, B, C, or D) in the space provided next to the number.

A. SYNONYMOUS      B. ANTIITHETIC      C. SYNTHETIC      D. CLIMACTIC

- \_\_\_ 1. Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean;  
Wash me, and I will be whiter than snow. (Ps 51:7)
- \_\_\_ 2. The days of the blameless are known to the Lord,  
and their inheritance will endure forever. (Ps 37:18)
- \_\_\_ 3. For surely your enemies, O Lord,  
surely your enemies will perish; all evildoers will be scattered. (Ps 92:9)
- \_\_\_ 4. Search me, O God, and know my heart;  
test me and know my anxious thoughts. (Ps 139:23)
- \_\_\_ 5. The wicked borrow and do not repay,  
but the righteous give generously; (Ps 37:21)
- \_\_\_ 6. Wake up, wake up, Deborah!  
Wake up, wake up, break out in song! (Judg 5:12)
- \_\_\_ 7. For the power of the wicked will be broken,  
but the Lord upholds the righteous. (Ps 37:17)
- \_\_\_ 8. Do not cast me from your presence  
or take your Holy Spirit from me. (Ps 51:11)
- \_\_\_ 9. For evil men will be cut off,  
but those who hope in the Lord will inherit the land. (Ps 37:9)
- \_\_\_ 10. The waters saw you, O God,  
the waters saw you and writhed;  
the very depths were convulsed. (Ps 77:16)
- \_\_\_ 11. Hear, O Lord, and answer me,  
for I am poor and needy. (Ps 86:1)

## PSALMS TEST #3 - p. 2

**Matching**

Match the correct example with the type of parallelism listed below by placing the letter (A, B, C, or D) in the space provided next to the number.

A. SYNONYMOUS

B. ANTITHETIC

C. SYNTHETIC

D. CLIMACTIC

\_\_\_ 12. The Lord's curse is on the house of the wicked,  
but he blesses the home of the righteous. (Pr 3:33)

\_\_\_ 13. Ascribe to the Lord, O families of nations,  
ascribe to the Lord glory and strength. (Ps 96:7)

\_\_\_ 14. What is man that you are mindful of him,  
the son of man that you care for him? (Ps 8:4)

Actual score: \_\_\_\_\_  
Maximum score: 28

**Short answer.**

In a phrase of 4-12 words, describe the function of the parallel lines in each of the four types of parallelism listed below.

1. SYNONYMOUS -

2. ANTITHETIC -

3. SYNTHETIC -

4. CLIMACTIC -

Actual score: \_\_\_\_\_  
Maximum score: 12

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

PRE/POST TEST

**PSALMS TEST #4****Identification**

Read the psalms listed below from the handout you were given. After reading each psalm, write the name of the psalm form in the space provided. Use the exact name given in class.

1. Psalm 1 -
2. Psalm 117 -
3. Psalm 13 -
4. Psalm 30 -
5. Psalm 33 -
6. Psalm 116 -
7. Psalm 79 -

Actual score: \_\_\_\_\_  
Maximum score: 14

**Short answer**

In a sentence no longer than 10 words, describe three of the five ways presented in the lesson the Psalms can help you grow spiritually.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Actual score: \_\_\_\_\_  
Maximum score: 6

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

PRE/POST TEST

**PSALMS TEST #5**

**Short answer** - List the three main sections of the lament-petition and the ways that they guide our prayers by filling in each of the six blanks below. (12 pts.)

1. The \_\_\_\_\_ section helps us pray \_\_\_\_\_.
2. The \_\_\_\_\_ section helps us pray \_\_\_\_\_.
3. The \_\_\_\_\_ section helps us pray \_\_\_\_\_.

**Identification** - Read *Psalm 79* below and assign each section of verses (e.g. 1-3, 4-7, etc.) to the proper section of the lament-petition. (12 pts.)

4. The \_\_\_\_\_ section is found in verse(s) \_\_\_\_\_.
5. The \_\_\_\_\_ section is found in verse(s) \_\_\_\_\_.
6. The \_\_\_\_\_ section is found in verse(s) \_\_\_\_\_.

**Psalm 79**

1) O God, the nations have invaded Your inheritance; they have defiled Your holy temple, they have reduced Jerusalem to rubble. 2) They have given the dead bodies of Your servants as food to the birds of the air, the flesh of Your saints to the beasts of the earth. 3) They have poured out blood like water all around Jerusalem, and there is no one to bury the dead. 4) We are objects of reproach to our neighbors, of scorn and derision to those around us. 5) How long, O Lord? Will You be angry forever? How long will Your jealousy burn like fire? 6) Pour out Your wrath on the nations that do not acknowledge You, on the kingdoms that do not call on Your name; 7) for they have devoured Jacob and destroyed his homeland. 8) Do not hold against us the sins of the fathers; may Your mercy come quickly to meet us, for we are in desperate need. 9) Help us, O God our Savior, for the glory of Your name; deliver us and forgive our sins for Your name's sake. 10) Why should the nations say, "Where is their God?" Before our eyes, make known among the nations that You avenge the outpoured blood of Your servants. 11) May the groans of the prisoners come before You; by the strength of Your arm preserve those condemned to die. 12) Pay back into the laps of our neighbors seven times the reproach they have hurled at You, O Lord. 13) Then we Your people, the sheep of Your pasture, will praise You forever; from generation to generation we will recount Your praise.

Actual score: \_\_\_\_\_  
Maximum score: 24

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

PRE/POST TEST

**PSALMS TEST #6**

1. **Short answer** - In a phrase of no more than 10 words, describe the historical context of Psalm 126. (2 pts.)

Identify the primary image of the following sections and in 2-4 sentences, explain its meaning in the space provided. (6 pts. each)

2. Verses 1-3 image:

Meaning:

3. Verse 4 image:

Meaning:

4. Verses 5, 6 image:

Meaning:

Actual score: \_\_\_\_\_  
Maximum score: 20

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

PRE/POST TEST

**PSALMS TEST #7**

**Identification** - Read *Psalm 32* below and assign each section of verses (e.g. 1-5, 6-7, etc.) to the proper section of the narrative praise psalm. Name each section using the terms given in class (12 points).

**Psalm 32**

- 1) Blessed is he whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered.
- 2) Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord does not count against him and in whose spirit is no deceit.
- 3) When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long.
- 4) For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer. Selah
- 5) Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the Lord"-- and you forgave the guilt of my sin. Selah
- 6) Therefore let everyone who is godly pray to you while you may be found; surely when the mighty waters rise, they will not reach him.
- 7) You are my hiding place; you will protect me from trouble and surround me with songs of deliverance. Selah
- 8) I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you and watch over you.
- 9) Do not be like the horse or the mule, which have no understanding but must be controlled by bit and bridle or they will not come to you.
- 10) Many are the woes of the wicked, but the Lord's unfailing love surrounds the man who trusts in him.
- 11) Rejoice in the Lord and be glad, you righteous; sing, all you who are upright in heart!

1. The \_\_\_\_\_ section is found in verse(s) \_\_\_\_\_.
2. The \_\_\_\_\_ section is found in verse(s) \_\_\_\_\_.
3. The \_\_\_\_\_ section is found in verse(s) \_\_\_\_\_.

## PSALMS TEST #7 - p. 2

**Identification.** Identify three main themes in Psalm 30 using the phrases given in class and assign at least two (2) verses to each of the three themes that show where those themes are contained. The text of Psalm 30 is listed below. (28 pts)

- 1) I will exalt you, O Lord, for you lifted me out of the depths and did not let my enemies gloat over me.
- 2) O Lord my God, I called to you for help and you healed me.
- 3) O Lord, you brought me up from the grave; you spared me from going down into the pit.
- 4) Sing to the Lord, you saints of his; praise his holy name.
- 5) For his anger lasts only a moment, but his favor lasts a lifetime; weeping may remain for a night, but rejoicing comes in the morning.
- 6) When I felt secure, I said, "I will never be shaken."
- 7) O Lord, when you favored me, you made my mountain stand firm; but when you hid your face, I was dismayed.
- 8) To you, O Lord, I called; to the Lord I cried for mercy:
- 9) "What gain is there in my destruction, in my going down into the pit? Will the dust praise you? Will it proclaim your faithfulness?"
- 10) Hear, O Lord, and be merciful to me; O Lord, be my help."
- 11) You turned my wailing into dancing; you removed my sackcloth and clothed me with joy,
- 12) that my heart may sing to you and not be silent. O Lord my God, I will give you thanks forever.

*Themes and two (2) verses:*

1. \_\_\_\_\_ from \_\_\_\_\_.

In verses \_\_\_\_\_.

2. \_\_\_\_\_ turned into \_\_\_\_\_.

In verses \_\_\_\_\_.

3. \_\_\_\_\_ because "\_\_\_\_\_."

In verses \_\_\_\_\_.

Actual score: \_\_\_\_\_  
Maximum score: 40

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

PRE/POST TEST

**PSALMS TEST #8**

**Identification** - Read *Psalm 103* below and assign each section of verses (e.g. 1-5a, 5b-7, etc.) to the proper section of the descriptive praise psalm. Name each section using the phrase given in class. (12 points)

**Psalm 103**

- 1) Praise the Lord, O my soul; all my inmost being, praise his holy name.
- 2) Praise the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits--
- 3) who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases,
- 4) who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion,
- 5) who satisfies your desires with good things so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.
- 6) The Lord works righteousness and justice for all the oppressed.
- 7) He made known his ways to Moses, his deeds to the people of Israel:
- 8) The Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love.
- 9) He will not always accuse, nor will he harbor his anger forever;
- 10) he does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities.
- 11) For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him;
- 12) as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us.
- 13) As a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear him;
- 14) for he knows how we are formed, he remembers that we are dust.
- 15) As for man, his days are like grass, he flourishes like a flower of the field;
- 16) the wind blows over it and it is gone, and its place remembers it no more.
- 17) But from everlasting to everlasting the Lord's love is with those who fear him, and his righteousness with their children's children--
- 18) with those who keep his covenant and remember to obey his precepts.
- 19) The Lord has established his throne in heaven, and his kingdom rules over all.
- 20) Praise the Lord, you his angels, you mighty ones who do his bidding, who obey his word.
- 21) Praise the Lord, all his heavenly hosts, you his servants who do his will.
- 22) Praise the Lord, all his works everywhere in his dominion. Praise the Lord, O my soul.

1. The \_\_\_\_\_ section is found in verse(s) \_\_\_\_\_.

2. The \_\_\_\_\_ section is found in verse(s) \_\_\_\_\_.

3. The \_\_\_\_\_ section is found in verse(s) \_\_\_\_\_.



PSALMS TEST #8 - p. 2

**Short answer.**

Answer the following question using exactly three words in each answer: According to Psalm 95, what should we do with our knowledge about God? (18 points.)

4. According to vs. 1-5, \_\_\_\_\_.

5. According to vs. 6-7a, \_\_\_\_\_.

6. According to vs. 7b-11, \_\_\_\_\_.

Actual score: \_\_\_\_\_

Maximum score: 30

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

PRE/POST TEST

**PSALMS TEST #9****Psalm 1**

- 1) *Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers.*
- 2) *But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on His law he meditates day and night.*
- 3) *He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers.*
- 4) *Not so the wicked! They are like chaff that the wind blows away.*
- 5) *Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous.*
- 6) *For the Lord watches over the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.*

**Short answer.** Explain the meaning of four (4) contrasts used in Psalm 1, using 10-15 words per description. List the verse(s) in which each contrast is contained. Do not copy the verses. Describe the nature of the contrast presented in them. (4 pts. each)

1. Verse(s):  
Contrast:

2. Verse(s):  
Contrast:

3. Verse(s):  
Contrast:

4. Verse(s):  
Contrast:

**PSALMS TEST #9 - p. 2**

**Short answer.** Using 6-13 words, explain why Psalm 1 was an excellent choice to introduce the Psalter. (4 pts)

Actual score: \_\_\_\_\_  
Maximum score: 20

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

PRE/POST TEST

**PSALMS TEST #10**

**Short answer.** Fill out the chart below by listing four (4) primary formal elements of Psalms on the left, using 1-2 words for each answer. On the right, describe the personal elements to which the formal elements correspond, using 3-10 words for each answer. (2 pts. each)

**FORMAL elements:**  
(in PSALMS)

**Personal elements:**  
(in life)

1.

5.

2.

6.

3.

7.

4.

8.

**Short essay.** Explain two (2) ways that the book of Psalms impacts the practice of the Christian faith, using 10-20 words in each answer. (2 pts. each)

9.

10.

Actual score: \_\_\_\_\_  
Maximum score: 20

## APPENDIX C

### CRITERIA FOR COGNITIVE INSTRUMENTS

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

PRE/POST TEST

**PSALMS TEST #1 - CRITERIA**

**Short answer** - Fill in each of the six blanks with the appropriate word from the lesson describing characteristics of figurative words.

1. They are not **LITERAL**, but **PICTORIAL**.
2. They are not **ABSTRACT**, but **CONCRETE**.
3. They are not **EXPLICIT**, but **IMPLICIT**.

Actual score: \_\_\_\_\_  
Maximum score: 12

**Multiple choice** - Circle the letter of the best answer.

1. The words in the statement, "You are all white washed tombs filled with dead men's bones" contain:
  - a) an historical allusion
  - b) an emotional connotation
  - c) an abstract conjecture
2. The words in the statement, "Sing unto the Lord for He is highly exalted. The horse and its rider He has hurled into the sea" contain:
  - a) an emotional connotation
  - b) an abstract conjecture
  - c) an historical allusion

**PSALMS TEST #1 - CRITERIA - p. 2**

3. The words in the statement, "For forty years I was angry with that generation" contain:
- a) an historical allusion
  - b) an abstract conjecture
  - c) an emotional connotation
- 4) The words in the statement, "I will spit you out of my mouth" contain
- a) an emotional connotation:
  - b) an abstract conjecture
  - c) an historical allusion

Actual score: \_\_\_\_\_  
Maximum score: 8

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

PRE/POST TEST

**PSALMS TEST #2 - CRITERIA****Matching**

Match the correct example with the figures of speech listed at the right by placing the letter (A, B, C, etc.) in the space provided next to the number.

- |                                                                         |                        |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------|
| <u>E</u> 1. Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard his spots? | A. Simile              |
| <u>H</u> 2. In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.    | B. Metaphor            |
| <u>C</u> 3. The heavens are telling the glory of God.                   | C. Personification     |
| <u>A</u> 4. He will be like a bush in the desert.                       | D. Hypocatastasis      |
| <u>G</u> 5. Under His wings you shall find peace.                       | E. Rhetorical question |
| <u>F</u> 6. The Lord's hand is not so short that it cannot save.        | F. Anthropomorphism    |
| <u>B</u> 7. The Lord is my shepherd.                                    | G. Zoomorphism         |
| <u>J</u> 8. All night long I flood my bed with weeping.                 | H. Merism              |
|                                                                         | I. Synecdoche          |
|                                                                         | J. Hyperbole           |

Actual score: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Maximum score: 16



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

PRE/POST TEST

**PSALMS TEST #3 - CRITERIA****Matching**

Match the correct example with the type of parallelism listed below by placing the letter (A, B, C, or D) in the space provided next to the number.

A. SYNONYMOUS      B. ANTTITHETIC      C. SYNTHETIC      D. CLIMACTIC

- A 1. Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean;  
Wash me, and I will be whiter than snow. (Ps 51:7)
- C 2. The days of the blameless are known to the Lord,  
and their inheritance will endure forever. (Ps 37:18)
- D 3. For surely your enemies, O Lord,  
surely your enemies will perish; all evildoers will be scattered. (Ps 92:9)
- A 4. Search me, O God, and know my heart;  
test me and know my anxious thoughts. (Ps 139:23)
- B 5. The wicked borrow and do not repay,  
but the righteous give generously; (Ps 37:21)
- D 6. Wake up, wake up, Deborah!  
Wake up, wake up, break out in song! (Judg 5:12)
- B 7. For the power of the wicked will be broken,  
but the Lord upholds the righteous. (Ps 37:17)
- C 8. Do not cast me from your presence  
or take your Holy Spirit from me. (Ps 51:11)
- B 9. For evil men will be cut off,  
but those who hope in the Lord will inherit the land. (Ps 37:9)
- D 10. The waters saw you, O God,  
the waters saw you and writhed;  
the very depths were convulsed. (Ps 77:16)
- C 11. Hear, O Lord, and answer me,  
for I am poor and needy. (Ps 86:1)

## PSALMS TEST #3 - CRITERIA - p. 2

**Matching**

Match the correct example with the type of parallelism listed below by placing the letter (A, B, C, or D) in the space provided next to the number.

A. SYNONYMOUS      B. ANTTHTETIC      C. SYNTHETIC      D. CLIMACTIC

B 12. The Lord's curse is on the house of the wicked,  
but he blesses the home of the righteous. (Pr 3:33)

D 13. Ascribe to the Lord, O families of nations,  
ascribe to the Lord glory and strength. (Ps 96:7)

A 14. What is man that you are mindful of him,  
the son of man that you care for him? (Ps 8:4)

Actual score: \_\_\_\_\_  
Maximum score: 28

**Short answer.**

In a phrase of 4-12 words, describe the function of the parallel lines in each of the four types of parallelism listed below.

1. SYNONYMOUS - strengthens the thought by repeating similar or complementary terms
2. ANTTHTETIC - contrasts thoughts by opposing terms
3. SYNTHETIC - advances the thought by completing, adding, explaining, or extending
4. CLIMACTIC - builds upon the thought by repeating one part and adding to it

Actual score: \_\_\_\_\_  
Maximum score: 12

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

PRE/POST TEST

**PSALMS TEST #4 - CRITERIA****Identification**

Read the psalms listed below from the handout you were given. After reading each psalm, write the name of the psalm form in the space provided. Use the exact name given in class.

1. Psalm 1 - MISCELLANEOUS (or Wisdom psalm, song of torah)
2. Psalm 117 - DESCRIPTIVE PRAISE
3. Psalm 13 - LAMENT-PETITION (or Individual Lament-Petition)
4. Psalm 30 - NARRATIVE PRAISE
5. Psalm 33 - DESCRIPTIVE PRAISE
6. Psalm 116 - NARRATIVE PRAISE
7. Psalm 79 - LAMENT-PETITION (or Community Lament-Petition)

Actual score: \_\_\_\_\_  
Maximum score: 14

**Short answer**

In a sentence no longer than 10 words, describe three of the five ways presented in the lesson the Psalms can help you grow spiritually.

1. THEY CAN INSTRUCT YOU.
2. THEY CAN HELP YOU PRAY.
3. THEY CAN HELP YOU PRAISE.
4. THEY CAN HELP YOU PROCESS THE PAIN OF LIFE.
5. THEY CAN HELP YOU HONESTLY RELATE TO GOD.

Actual score: \_\_\_\_\_  
Maximum score: 6

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

PRE/POST TEST

**PSALMS TEST #5 - CRITERIA**

**Short answer** - List the three main sections of the lament-petition and the ways that they guide our prayers by filling in each of the six blanks below. (12 pts.)

1. The **COMPLAINT** section helps us pray **HONESTLY**.
2. The **PETITION** section helps us pray **BOLDLY**.
3. The **PRAISE** section helps us pray **HOPEFULLY**.

**Identification** - Read *Psalm 79* below and assign each section of verses (e.g. 1-3, 4-7, etc.) to the proper section of the lament-petition. (12 pts.)

4. The **COMPLAINT** section is found in verse(s) **1 - 5**.
5. The **PETITION** section is found in verse(s) **6 - 12**.
6. The **PRAISE** section is found in verse(s) **13**.

**Psalm 79**

1) O God, the nations have invaded Your inheritance; they have defiled Your holy temple, they have reduced Jerusalem to rubble. 2) They have given the dead bodies of Your servants as food to the birds of the air, the flesh of Your saints to the beasts of the earth. 3) They have poured out blood like water all around Jerusalem, and there is no one to bury the dead. 4) We are objects of reproach to our neighbors, of scorn and derision to those around us. 5) How long, O Lord? Will You be angry forever? How long will Your jealousy burn like fire? 6) Pour out Your wrath on the nations that do not acknowledge You, on the kingdoms that do not call on Your name; 7) for they have devoured Jacob and destroyed his homeland. 8) Do not hold against us the sins of the fathers; may Your mercy come quickly to meet us, for we are in desperate need. 9) Help us, O God our Savior, for the glory of Your name; deliver us and forgive our sins for Your name's sake. 10) Why should the nations say, "Where is their God?" Before our eyes, make known among the nations that You avenge the outpoured blood of Your servants. 11) May the groans of the prisoners come before You; by the strength of Your arm preserve those condemned to die. 12) Pay back into the laps of our neighbors seven times the reproach they have hurled at You, O Lord. 13) Then we Your people, the sheep of Your pasture, will praise You forever; from generation to generation we will recount Your praise.

Actual score: \_\_\_\_\_  
Maximum score: 24

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

PRE/POST TEST

**PSALMS TEST #6 - CRITERIA**

1. **Short answer** - In a phrase of no more than 10 words, describe the historical context of Psalm 126. (2 pts.)

**After the Jewish exiles returned to Jerusalem from Babylon.**

Identify the primary image of the following sections and in 2-4 sentences, explain its meaning in the space provided. (6 pts. each)

2. Verses 1-3 image: **Dream (we were like men who dreamed)**

**Meaning:** This image looks back into the past to the way God's people felt when they heard they no longer had to live in exile. Their return home to Jerusalem was an event so wonderful and unbelievable that it appeared to be unreal, like a dream. This image communicates that God did something so amazing, the people could hardly believe it.

3. Verse 4 image: **Stream (like the streams in the Negev)**

**Meaning:** This image reflects what God's people need in the present--life-sustaining refreshment in the midst of barrenness. God can provide life-giving energy and refreshment as quickly as the winter rains fill the wadis. The image communicates God's ability to refresh His people and the people's present need for this activity on God's part.

4. Verses 5, 6 image: **Sowing & Reaping**

**Meaning:** This image encourages God's people to persevere and look forward with hope to the future. The temporary nature of sowing points to the temporary nature of sorrow. Like sowing, pain, darkness and sorrow (tears, crying) end--they don't last forever. The sower eventually becomes the singer as he reaps the joyful fruit of his labor.

Actual score: \_\_\_\_\_  
Maximum score: 20

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

PRE/POST TEST

**PSALMS TEST #7 - CRITERIA**

**Identification** - Read *Psalm 32* below and assign each section of verses (e.g. 1-5, 6-7, etc.) to the proper section of the narrative praise psalm. Name each section using the terms given in class (12 points).

**Psalm 32**

- 1) Blessed is he whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered.
- 2) Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord does not count against him and in whose spirit is no deceit.
- 3) When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long.
- 4) For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer. Selah
- 5) Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the Lord"-- and you forgave the guilt of my sin. Selah
- 6) Therefore let everyone who is godly pray to you while you may be found; surely when the mighty waters rise, they will not reach him.
- 7) You are my hiding place; you will protect me from trouble and surround me with songs of deliverance. Selah
- 8) I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you and watch over you.
- 9) Do not be like the horse or the mule, which have no understanding but must be controlled by bit and bridle or they will not come to you.
- 10) Many are the woes of the wicked, but the Lord's unfailing love surrounds the man who trusts in him.
- 11) Rejoice in the Lord and be glad, you righteous; sing, all you who are upright in heart!

1. The **PROLOGUE** section is found in verse(s) 1-2.
2. The **STORY** section is found in verse(s) 3-5.
3. The **EPILOGUE** section is found in verse(s) 6-11.

## PSALMS TEST #7 - CRITERIA - p. 2

**Identification.** Identify three main themes in Psalm 30 using the phrases given in class and assign at least two (2) verses to each of the three themes that show where those themes are contained. The text of Psalm 30 is listed below. (28 pts)

- 1) I will exalt you, O Lord, for you lifted me out of the depths and did not let my enemies gloat over me.
- 2) O Lord my God, I called to you for help and you healed me.
- 3) O Lord, you brought me up from the grave; you spared me from going down into the pit.
- 4) Sing to the Lord, you saints of his; praise his holy name.
- 5) For his anger lasts only a moment, but his favor lasts a lifetime; weeping may remain for a night, but rejoicing comes in the morning.
- 6) When I felt secure, I said, "I will never be shaken."
- 7) O Lord, when you favored me, you made my mountain stand firm; but when you hid your face, I was dismayed.
- 8) To you, O Lord, I called; to the Lord I cried for mercy:
- 9) "What gain is there in my destruction, in my going down into the pit? Will the dust praise you? Will it proclaim your faithfulness?"
- 10) Hear, O Lord, and be merciful to me; O Lord, be my help."
- 11) You turned my wailing into dancing; you removed my sackcloth and clothed me with joy.
- 12) that my heart may sing to you and not be silent. O Lord my God, I will give you thanks forever.

*Themes and two (2) verses:*

1. **DELIVERANCE** from **DEATH**. In verses 1, 3, 9.
2. **SORROW** turned into **JOY**. In verses 5, 11.
3. **PRAISE** because "**GOD HAS ACTED**." In verses 1, 4, 5, 9, 12.

Actual score: \_\_\_\_\_  
Maximum score: 40

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

PRE/POST TEST

**PSALMS TEST #8 - CRITERIA**

**Identification** - Read *Psalm 103* below and assign each section of verses (e.g. 1-5a, 5b-7, etc.) to the proper section of the descriptive praise psalm. Name each section using the phrase given in class. (12 points)

**Psalm 103**

- 1) Praise the Lord, O my soul; all my inmost being, praise his holy name.
- 2) Praise the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits--
- 3) who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases,
- 4) who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion,
- 5) who satisfies your desires with good things so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.
- 6) The Lord works righteousness and justice for all the oppressed.
- 7) He made known his ways to Moses, his deeds to the people of Israel:
- 8) The Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love.
- 9) He will not always accuse, nor will he harbor his anger forever;
- 10) he does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities.
- 11) For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him;
- 12) as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us.
- 13) As a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear him;
- 14) for he knows how we are formed, he remembers that we are dust.
- 15) As for man, his days are like grass, he flourishes like a flower of the field;
- 16) the wind blows over it and it is gone, and its place remembers it no more.
- 17) But from everlasting to everlasting the Lord's love is with those who fear him, and his righteousness with their children's children--
- 18) with those who keep his covenant and remember to obey his precepts.
- 19) The Lord has established his throne in heaven, and his kingdom rules over all.
- 20) Praise the Lord, you his angels, you mighty ones who do his bidding, who obey his word.
- 21) Praise the Lord, all his heavenly hosts, you his servants who do his will.
- 22) Praise the Lord, all his works everywhere in his dominion. Praise the Lord, O my soul.

1. The **CALL TO PRAISE (or worship)** section is found in verse(s) **1-2.**
2. The **CAUSE FOR PRAISE (or reason)** section is found in verse(s) **3-19.**
3. The **CONCLUSION** section is found in verse(s) **20-22.**



**PSALMS TEST #8 - CRITERIA - p. 2****Short answer.**

Answer the following question using exactly three words in each answer: According to Psalm 95, what should we do with our knowledge about God? (18 points.)

4. According to vs. 1-5, WORSHIP GOD EXUBERANTLY.
5. According to vs. 6-7a, WORSHIP GOD REVERENTLY.
6. According to vs. 7b-11, OBEY GOD FAITHFULLY.

Actual score: \_\_\_\_\_

Maximum score: 30

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

PRE/POST TEST

**PSALMS TEST #9 - CRITERIA**

**Short answer.** Explain the meaning of four (4) contrasts used in Psalm 1, using 10-15 words per description. List the verse(s) in which each contrast is contained. Do not copy the verses. Describe the nature of the contrast presented in them. (4 pts. each)

1. Verse(s): **Entire psalm (1-3, 6a; 4-5, 6b).**

**Contrast: The psalm contrasts the lifestyles of two groups of people, the righteous and the wicked, and the consequences of the paths they choose.**

2. Verse(s): **1-2**

**Contrast: This is a contrast of of their MAP--what they use for guidance. The righteous use God's instruction; the wicked guide themselves.**

3. Verse(s): **3-4**

**Contrast: This is a contrast of their CHARACTERISTICS using the simile of the tree (prosperity, stability, endurance) and the chaff (impermanence).**

4. Verse(s): **5-6**

**Contrast: This is a contrast of their DESTINY. The wicked are judged and perish, but the Lord protects and cares for the righteous.**

**Others:**

- Verses 1 & 5. The use of the word "stand" is used to contrast what the righteous do not do and what the wicked will not do.

- Verses 1 & 2. The attitude of the two groups toward the instruction is contrasted. The wicked scoff at it; the righteous delight in it.

**Short answer.** Using 6-13 words, explain why Psalm 1 was an excellent choice to introduce the Psalter. (4 pts)

**It encourages meditation on the Torah, the Psalter, and all of God's instruction.**

Actual score: \_\_\_\_\_

Maximum score: 20

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

PRE/POST TEST

**PSALMS TEST #10 - CRITERIA**

**Short answer.** Fill out the chart below by listing four (4) primary formal elements of Psalms on the left, using 1-2 words for each answer. On the right, describe the personal elements to which the formal elements correspond, using 3-10 words for each answer. (2 pts. each)

FORMAL elements:  
(in PSALMS)

Personal elements:  
(in life)

1. LAMENT

5. Experiences like sickness, grief, loss, death, confusion, oppression. Emotions that accompany them such as sadness, hurt, frustration, hopelessness, anger.

2. PETITION

6. Questioning; crying to God for help; asking others for help.

3. NARRATIVE PRAISE

7. Feeling of relief because of a change in your circumstances or in you; awareness of the change; verbal expression of gratitude.

4. DESCRIPTIVE PRAISE

8. Feeling of security, confidence; positive optimistic outlook; verbal expressions of excitement or contentment.

**Short essay.** Explain two (2) ways that the book of Psalms impacts the practice of the Christian faith, using 10-20 words in each answer. (2 pts. each)

9. & 10. Two of the following three:

- They guide Christian prayers and encourage the honesty displayed by Jesus, especially the Lament-Petition psalms. Jesus prayed in this tradition.

- They shape Christian salvation stories and point to Jesus as the One who saves, especially the Narrative Praise psalms. Jesus is the Savior in these psalms.

- They facilitate Christian worship and call the church to exalt Jesus, especially the Descriptive Praise psalms. Jesus is the King, Creator, Rock, and Good Shepherd mentioned in these psalms.

Actual score: \_\_\_\_\_  
Maximum score: 20

**APPENDIX D**

**INSTRUCTOR'S MANUAL LECTURE NOTES**

**CRIES OF PAIN, SONGS OF PRAISE**  
Session Schedule

- #1 How Poems Speak: The Figurative Language of Psalms**
- #2 Figuring out Figures of Speech**
- #3 Communicating in Stereo: Four Types of Parallelism**
- #4 Psalms That Look Alike: Four Psalm Forms**
- #5 When You're Feeling the Darkness**  
(Psalm 13: Individual Lament-Petition)
- #6 When Darkness Ends**  
(Psalm 126: Community Lament-Petition)
- #7 Storytelling Praise**  
(Psalm 30: Narrative Praise)
- #8 A Call to Worship**  
(Psalm 95: Descriptive Praise)
- #9 Two Paths: A Study in Contrasts**  
(Psalm 1: Miscellaneous--Wisdom)
- #10 Songs for the Journey of Life**

**Session #1**

**How Poems Speak: The Figurative Language of Psalms**

This lesson introduces the seminar on Psalms by describing the importance of studying Psalms, examining three characteristics of figurative language and the meaning of emotional connotation and historical allusion, and providing introductory guidance on the interpretation of figurative language.

Content was based on the following objective:

1. The learner will name all three characteristics of figurative words as presented in class, both in terms of what they are and what they are not.

## Session #1

### How Poems Speak: The Figurative Language of Psalms

It was February of 1979. I was in a hospital in Philadelphia, PA, and feeling very lonely, very afraid, and very discouraged. I was nineteen years old, and I had just been diagnosed with diabetes. I was wondering, What now? I was a senior in college, recently engaged; I felt absolutely awful.

People had tried to encourage me, cheer me up, explain it would be okay, reaffirm God's sovereignty, and quoted Romans 8:28. But my single greatest encouragement came from another source: a poem. I had been reading Joni Eareckson's book, A Step Further. I found a poem in that book by an anonymous author that gave me new hope, new life, and new perspective. I wrote in on a card, I had the card laminated, and I carried it everywhere. To this day, though I no longer have the card, I still have the poem. It says:

When God wants to drill a man and thrill a man and skill a man,  
 When God wants to mold a man to play the noblest part,  
 When He yearns with all His heart to build so great and bold a man  
 That all the world shall be amazed, then watch His methods, watch His ways!  
 How He ruthlessly perfects whom He royally elects,  
 How He hammers him and hurts him and with mighty blows converts him  
 Into shapes and forms of clay which only God can understand,  
 While man's tortured heart is crying and he lifts beseeching hands. . . .  
 Yet God bends but never breaks when man's good He undertakes;  
 How He uses whom He chooses and with mighty power infuses him,  
 With every act induces him to try His splendor out,  
 God knows what He's about!

That's what stayed with me and gave me the strength to endure that difficulty:

the fact that God knew what He was about; God knew what He was up to in my life. Such is the power of poetry.

This weekend, I want to introduce you to Hebrew poetry as it is found in Psalms, and that may or may not sound very attractive to you. Why spend so much time trying to understand poetry? In other words, let's begin with the question, "Why study Psalms?"

### Why Study Psalms?

Why study Psalms? Why are they worthy of special attention? Let me suggest three reasons. First, 25% of Scripture is written in high poetic language, and 33% of the Old Testament is written in poetic form. In fact, 77% of Scripture is in the Old Testament, and most of the Old Testament poetry is found in Psalms. Psalms is also the most quoted book in the New Testament. So, that is one reason the psalms are significant--because they comprise a significant portion of the Scripture.

The second reason that the Psalms are worthy of special attention is that poetry has its own "rules for reading" because it is a different genre, or type of literature than most of what we normally read. Psalms are poetry. Hebrew poetry. You can't read poetry like you read the newspaper. Well, you can, but it wouldn't make sense! Imagine reading a poem by Robert Frost like you read an editorial in the evening paper or reading Andy Rooney like you read a legal contract!

For some reason we automatically distinguish between different types



of literature in our daily activities at a subconscious level. We must do the same when we read the Bible, too. There's a difference between historical narrative, epistolary literature, poetry, proverbs, prophetic literature, apocalyptic literature, etc.

The third reason the Psalms are worthy of special attention is because they remind us that we are not alone in our experience of life. Life can be difficult. When we read the Psalms, we find people thinking things we think, feeling things we feel, and saying things that we wouldn't dare say when they experience things we experience. We can identify with them.

The Psalms remind us not only of God's presence in life, but of our presence in the human community. People have a lot in common. We all experience the mountain peaks of ecstasy, the dark valley of despair and everything in between. The thrill of victory and the agony of defeat, and all the different levels of experience in between are common human experiences for both Christians and non-Christians alike!

Do you remember that line from the recent movie on the life of C.S. Lewis, "Shadowlands" spoken by the father of one of C. S. Lewis' students? He said, "We read to know we're not alone." When we read the Psalms, they remind us we're not alone. As they describe our life experiences, both our heads and hearts can be touched. We can find it validating and comforting, motivational and inspirational to know we're not alone in times of sadness or celebration. We have the recorded experience of people who have shared in

both! Those are a few reasons why studying Psalms is important.

### How Do Psalms Speak?

How do Psalms speak? You may think that an odd question, but it conveys the idea that the meaning of a psalm is communicated through its form and its content. What it says is important, but so is how it says it. So, how do Psalms speak? In one word, they speak figuratively. Figurative words and figures of speech characterize psalms. In the next two sessions, we'll look at both. In this session, we'll look at three characteristics of figurative language that are important to remember as you read the Psalms. First,

#### **1. They are not literal, but pictorial. (\*Use Transparency #2.)**

In a sense, the words don't mean what they say, because they say it using a word picture. When a word or phrase is literal, the meaning is contained in the word itself. What it says is what it means. When it is pictorial, what it says presents a picture of what it means. For example, the Bible says, "The trees of the field clap their hands." Do we take that literally or pictorially? Obviously, that's a word picture of celebration and praise. Here's another: "The eyes of the Lord move to and fro throughout the earth." What is that? Right, it's pictorial. And what does the picture communicate? It communicates God's awareness of what is happening in His world. Awareness is the idea, but that literal word is not used. A picture is used instead. Here's one more: "Under His wings you shall find your peace." If you take that literally, is God a bird? The language is pictorial, not literal. The picture of a bird protecting and nurturing

her young communicates what God does for His people.

Poetry is a language of images; it paints mental pictures. Therefore, readers need to think in images, and meditate upon what those images convey. Understanding them takes time, just like walking through an art gallery. You must stop, look, listen, meditate, reflect, and feel. The poet is a painter. He paints pictures using words. So, you cannot rush through the psalms. They are like the British Museum, not Disneyland. You can't run from psalm to psalm to psalm. You have to stroll through them, pausing a long time to reflect and drink them in. The words are not literal, but pictorial. The second characteristic of figurative words is,

**2. They are not abstract, but concrete. (\*Use Transparency #2.)**

The book of Psalms is not filled with abstract, theoretical ideas, but concrete images. They are not theoretical, they are poetic. Poetic is almost the opposite of the theoretical, as I'm using them. The theoretical is the realm of the abstract. The poetic is the realm of concrete images. Compare these examples: "Ontologically, God is the ground of being from which all that exists proceeds." That is a true, but abstract statement. Here is the same statement in concrete, poetic terms: "We are the clay, fashioned by the Potter's hands." That's a statement we can feel and touch--a statement that is rooted in our concrete experience of the world, not just the world of ideas.

Likewise, the theologian says, "God's self-disclosure occurs through

nature. Even the constellations reveal something of His existence and His essential being." True, but boring! The poet says, "The heavens declare the glory of God, the skies proclaim the work of His hands! Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they display knowledge." Because you can see stars and experience the night, the poetic version suggests the concrete.

If figurative language is pictorial and concrete, it is legitimate to ask, "Where do the pictures come from?" Where would you guess they come from? They usually come from nature and the poet's reservoir of human experience. Its pictures and comparisons are usually rooted in the reality around us. For example, the poet uses stars (what we can see), thunder (what we can hear), water (what we can touch), blossoms (what we can smell), and sitting in the shade (what we can experience). So, when we say the Psalms speak figuratively, we mean they are not literal, but pictorial, and they are not abstract, but concrete. Third,

### **3. They are not explicit, but implicit. (\*Use Transparency #2.)**

The words of the poet are two-sided, like coins. (Hold up a coin.) The meaning is usually not explained up front. It is implied. It is important to understand how a poet uses words. He has two sides to words he selects: the straight-forward explicit meaning of the word (its denotation), and the implied, suggested meaning (its connotation). Again, the explicit meaning is its denotation, or the dictionary meaning of the word. The implicit meaning, its connotation, involves the associations called up by a word.

Connotation of a word may involve the following elements:

First, an emotional connotation--our feelings about a word. Does it arouse fear, delight, disgust? For example, compare the phrases, "Soft" to "Soft as a feather" to "Soft as a baby's behind." The phrase gets softer each time you change it! Madison Avenue capitalizes on emotional connotations, and so does the Bible.

In Jeremiah 17:5-6, the Lord says,

*Cursed is the one who trusts in man, who depends on flesh for his strength and whose heart turns away from the Lord. He will be like a bush in the wastelands; he will not see prosperity when it comes. He will dwell in the parched places of the desert, in a salt land where no one lives.*

If you were living in the Middle East, how do you think you might feel about being associated with "a bush in the wastelands," "the parched places of the desert," and "a salt land where no one lives?" Those images probably carried some pretty negative emotional connotations for Jeremiah's listeners.

In the New Testament, Jesus also used words that were loaded with negative emotional connotations. If you were a Pharisee, what might you consider to be one of the most despicable animals in the Old Testament? Probably the snake, right? The serpent plunged all of humankind into sin. Well, when Jesus rails against the religious leaders in Matthew 23, one of the names he calls them is "snakes, vipers." I'm sure they felt a powerful emotional connotation.

Another type of connotation, or things associated with words we use, is

historical allusion. Historical allusion is an indirect reference to historical events or people. For example, I'm sure you've heard the expression, "Beware of Greeks bearing gifts." That is an allusion to the Greek armies that presented the Trojan horse to the city of Ilium before they conquered it. (Of course, some would argue about whether or not that is a historical allusion or merely a literary one, but that is beside the point here.).

Popular historical allusions in Psalms include the Exodus (Psalm 77, 136), and the establishment of the Davidic dynasty through covenant (Psalm 89, 132). For example, you may know the praise chorus, "I will sing unto the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously, the horse and rider thrown into the sea." What does that allude to? The exodus, the crossing of the Red Sea, and the death of the Egyptians. That is a historical allusion.

So, when we say that Psalms speak figuratively, we also mean they are not explicit, but implicit. How do psalms speak? First, they are not literal, but pictorial. Second, they are not abstract, but concrete. And third, they are not explicit, but implicit. Our final question is, "How do you interpret figurative words?"

#### How Do you Interpret Figurative Words?

We'll talk more about this later. For now, it's important to remember that the basic idea in figures is comparison. So, to interpret the psalms properly, you must do four things. First, identify the figures, the images. We'll say more about how to do this in our next session. Second, meditate on the

figures you identify, asking, "What is the comparison being made?" Take what is implicit and state it explicitly. Third, interpret the meaning by listing ways in which the things being compared correspond. Ask yourself, "In what ways are (blank) like (blank)?" Finally, use the context to help with interpretation.

You must not simply ask what, but also how. You cannot know what it says until you've identified how it says it. Look for what it says and what it means. We'll go more in-depth on these issues in our next session.

As I lay in that hospital bed almost 17 years ago, one of the things I had to endure was the discouraging educational materials on diabetes. They were supposed to educate me, but as I watched them, I found myself more deflated than educated. The long range consequences of the disease included things like amputation, kidney problems and blindness, but my favorite bit of information was that my life expectancy had just been shortened by 12 years.

One night before going to bed I picked up another poem, this one written by Israel's Shepherd and King, David. As with the poem I recited earlier, in it I found a comforting reassurance and a new perspective. I memorized this one, too. It said:

For Thou didst form my inward parts,  
 Thou didst weave me in my mother's womb.  
 I will give thanks to Thee for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.  
 Wonderful are Thy works and my soul knows it very well.  
 My frame was not hidden from Thee,  
 When I was made in secret and skillfully wrought in the depths of the earth.  
 Thine eyes have seen my unformed substance;  
 And in Thy book they were all written, the days that were ordained for me,  
 When as yet there was not one of them. (Ps 139:13-16, NAS)

My diabetes hadn't taken God by surprise. The days that were ordained for me were all written out before I had lived one of them. The poem reminded me of that. The poem that we call Psalm 139.



**Session #2****Figuring Out Figures of Speech**

This lesson identifies eight common figures of speech used in Psalms--simile, metaphor, personification, hyperbole, rhetorical question, anthropomorphism, zoomorphism, and merism--and gives definitions and examples of each. A brief explanation of interpretive guidelines is provided at the end.

Content was based on the following objective:

1. The learner will identify all eight figures of speech used in Psalms that were presented in class, given their names and examples of each.

## Session #2

### Figuring out Figures of Speech

The American poet Robert Frost said that poetry is “saying one thing and meaning another.” That’s because it is usually said using a figure of speech. Therefore, you must always distinguish between what it says and what it means, which requires work. This even has practical application in marriage. Consider this imaginary conversation that may have taken place between a wife and her tired husband, who is watching a football game on a Sunday afternoon. You’ll notice that each time the husband speaks figuratively, his wife hears it literally.

W: When are you planning on cutting that tree out of the yard?

H: I’m outta gas, honey.

W: I just bought gas & oil for the chain saw yesterday!

H: No, I mean I’ll do it when I can crank it up.

W: Its easy to crank it up, all you do is pull the chord!

H: (Exasperated.) C’mon, will you just cut it out?

W: That’s what I’ve been asking you to do!

You think this doesn’t have a practical application? Hey, studying the poetry of Psalms, figurative language, and figures of speech could improve your relationships! Who knows?

#### What are Some Common Figures of Speech Used in Psalms?

In our last session, we looked at three general characteristics of figurative words. As you study psalms, it is also helpful to be able to identify specific figures of speech. A figure of speech is a departure from the normal

use of words for special purposes. Figures of speech often attempt to picture the unfamiliar by means of the familiar. There are many figures of speech. Bullinger catalogues over 200 and gives 8,000 illustrations in his book. However, we don't have the time to look at all 200, so we'll look at eight common ones. Being able to identify these eight will yield a surprisingly large return as you study the Psalms.

(\*Use Transparency #3.)

### 1. Simile

A simile is a comparison linked by "like" or "as." It's a loose comparison. Let's look at some examples: "He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers" (Ps 1:3). See the word, "like"? Here, the blessed person, named in verse one, is compared to a tree. We said before that it's important to ask, "How is a person like a tree?" when interpreting figures. But this verse gives you a head start by unpacking it for you. The blessed person is like a tree in that he "yields fruit," so there's some kind of productivity, he endures difficulty (his "leaf does not wither"), and he prospers in some way.

Another example is, "As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God" (Ps 42:1). Notice that the "as" appears at the beginning. What is being conveyed by this figure? The writer has a strong desire for God, a longing for fellowship with Him, and even a need, a requirement that can only be satisfied through God.

So, the key words in identifying similes are the words “like” and “as.” Watch for them. The second figure of speech may also be familiar to you. (\*Use Transparency #3.)

## 2. Metaphor

Often the word, “metaphor” is used as a synonym for figure of speech, but here we’re are using it to describe a specific type of figure. A metaphor is a bolder, more direct comparison linked with a form of the verb “to be” in English, such as “am,” “is,” or “are.” This is stronger than the simile. If I want to tell you that my friend Frank is strong, I can use a simile and say, “Frank is like an ox.” But if I want to state it more strongly, I would use the more direct metaphor, “Frank is an ox.”

Likewise, Scripture doesn’t say, “The Lord is like my shepherd.” That is a weak substitute for the stronger, more direct, biblical metaphor, “The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not be in want” (Ps 23:1). Another example is, “He alone is my rock and my salvation; He is my fortress, I will never be shaken” (Ps 62:2). Notice the verb “to be” in the form of “is.”

Metaphor was Jesus’ preferred figure of speech. He often used the “I am” metaphor in the gospel of John. He said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life,” “I am the resurrection and the life,” “I am the door,” and “I am the vine.” Jesus uses seven “I am” metaphors in the gospel of John. Metaphor is probably the most common figure of speech used in the Psalms. A third common figure of speech is,

(\*Use Transparency #3.)

### 3. Personification

Personification is where an inanimate object or abstract idea is endowed with personal attributes. Personification is a non-person being endowed with personal attributes. It can be a noun or a verb, an object or an idea.

In Psalms, here is an example of some inanimate objects endowed with personal attributes:

The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of His hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they display knowledge. There is no speech or language where their voice is not heard. (Ps 19:1-3)

"Heavens" can't "declare" and "skies" can't "proclaim." The actions of declaration and proclamation are performed by persons. The heavens don't have a "voice" that "pours forth speech." But they do--figuratively speaking.

Personification can also come in the form of an abstract idea, as in this next example: "Love and faithfulness meet together; righteousness and peace kiss each other" (Ps 85:10). Meeting together and kissing each other are the activities of persons. Love, faithfulness, righteousness, and peace are all ideas. But when used in this personification, you can feel the tender sweetness and the soft intimacy of the emotional connotation, can't you?

Do you see why you can't rush through the Psalms? It requires time and practice to develop the skill of recognizing and interpreting figures of

speech. The Bible is not fast food. And if you read it like you pass through the drive-thru at McDonald's, you'll miss out on so much of the nourishment that God has placed there. Job said, "I have treasured the words of thy mouth more than my necessary food." The word of God is sweeter than honey, and as nourishing as milk and solid food. So, take your time when you read. You can make Scripture reading like dining in a fine restaurant, not picking something up at Seven-Eleven. The fourth common figure of speech is, (\*Use Transparency #4.)

#### 4. Hyperbole

I think this is my favorite. Hyperbole is gross exaggeration for the purpose of emphasis or heightened effect. By "gross" I mean obvious. It's so obvious, you couldn't miss it in a million years (which is hyperbole, by the way). Hyperbole is not factual truth, but emotional truth. It is overstatement to make a point. Did you ever notice how you never wait for someone for five minutes? No, no. You always wait "an hour." Or if you're really frustrated, you've been waiting "all day." If you've reached the end of your rope, you've probably been waiting "half your lifetime." That's gross exaggeration for the purpose of making a point, namely: "I had to wait too long!"

Hyperbole is not factual truth, but emotional truth. Look at this example: "I am worn out from groaning; all night long I flood my bed with weeping and drench my couch with tears. My eyes grow weak with sorrow; they fail because of all my foes" (Ps 6:6-7). If taken literally, this verse paints an

interesting picture. Has this person really been up “all night!” long? Has he actually “flooded” his bed with tears? Is it a fact that his couch is “drenched” from crying so much? Is he really going blind? Or to use a modern example of hyperbole, is it true that this man has “cried his eyes out?” Of course not, but he certainly feels that way. That’s hyperbole.

Here’s another example that uses tears. For some reason, the emotions of sadness and grief that are expressed through crying and lamenting are often described using hyperbole. “My tears have been my food day and night, while men say to me all day long, ‘Where is your God?’” (Ps 42:3). Can you picture that? I’ve been crying so long and so hard, that I can’t even eat! My tears have been the only thing to pass over my lips. Again, hyperbole is purposeful overstatement. And it is an excellent example of a figure that conveys more through how it is expressed than what is being expressed. Our fifth figure may be the easiest to recognize:

(\*Use Transparency #4.)

## **5. Rhetorical question**

A rhetorical question is a question used to make a point, not get an answer. That is very important to remember. In essence, rhetorical questions are not questions at all. They are statements with a question mark at the end. They are not intended to be answered.

When I was a teenager, there was no faster way for me to get into trouble than to begin answering my parents’ rhetorical questions. When I would

tell an obvious lie to my mother, she would say, "What do you think I am, an idiot?" That was not a question! She was not looking for an answer. That was a statement that just happened to be in the form of a question--a rhetorical question.

In Psalms, there is a point being made, not an answer being sought by the question, "What is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him?" (Ps 8:4). What do you think that point is? Probably that God is so great, and we are so insignificant; it is amazing that He cares so much for us.

In the psalms of lament, the psalms of darkness that we'll look at tomorrow, we often find the rhetorical questions, "Why?" and "How long?" When the pain is acute, the question is usually, "Why?" When the pain is chronic, the question is usually, "How long?" Psalm 13 begins with four rhetorical questions. "How long?" is repeated four times. But as we'll see when we examine this psalm later, the suppliant is not looking for an answer. He is looking for relief. Eugene Petersen communicates this through his translation of Psalm 13 in The Message. He drops the question and renders the phrase, "Long enough, O Lord," which is exactly the point. He repeats the phrase, "Long enough" four times to carry the force of the rhetorical question.

If you want to read a long list of rhetorical questions, check out Job 38-40! God fires them at Job in such rapid-fire succession that you can almost feel Job's mind spinning and see his body riddled with these rhetorical bullets. It feels as if God has a verbal machine-gun! Number six is something called,



(\*Use Transparency #4.)

## 6. Anthropomorphism

Don't be intimidated by the length of the word. The Greek word *anthropos* means "man" and *morphe* means "form." So, anthropomorphism is when God is described using human attributes. It is easy to confuse this one with personification, so be careful. Personification is personal attributes applied to ideas and things. Anthropomorphism is human attributes applied to God.

In a sense, there is no other way to describe God. We are *anthropoi*, so, naturally we describe God anthropomorphically. As humans, we are limited in our conception of God by human language. So, we speak of Him having hands, arms, and eyes, because it is difficult to picture Him any other way.

Here's an example: "In His hand are the depths of the earth, and the mountain peaks belong to Him. The sea is His, for He made it, and His hands formed the dry land" (Ps 95:4-5). God's "hands" refer to His creative power. I referred earlier to Psalm 139, which says, "Your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be" (Ps 139:16). God's "eyes" often refer to His awareness, or His omniscience. His "face" often signifies His presence, as in the phrase, "to stand before His face." All are examples of anthropomorphism. Our seventh figure of speech is another "ism." This "ism" is:

(\*Use Transparency #5.)

## 7. Zoomorphism

In the word zoomorphism you may recognize the word, “zoo.” And what do you find in a zoo? Animals! This will help you remember its meaning. Zoomorphism is God described using animal attributes.

In Psalms, God is described like a bird with wings: “He will cover you with His feathers, and under His wings you will find refuge” (Ps 91:4). This is a picture of God’s protection.

The important thing is to be able to identify and interpret these figures of speech, not remember their definitions. It is not important that you can say, “A metaphor is a bolder, more direct comparison linked with a form of the verb ‘to be’ in English, such as ‘am,’ ‘is,’ or ‘are.’” What’s important is that you can read, “The Lord is my shepherd” and be able to unpack the meaning of the metaphor.

The final figure we’ll examine is also an “ism,” but this one may be new to you. It has a tough definition, but easy recognition:

(\*Use Transparency #5.)

## 8. Merism

Merism is when contrasting, opposite parts are used to express the whole. The best way to remember it is to look at some examples. For example, Psalm 1 says, “But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on His law he meditates day and night” (Ps 1:2). The merism is “day and night.” They are contrasting, opposite parts used to express when meditation should occur.

When should meditation occur? All the time. Constantly. Not all the time except the afternoon, but all of the time including day time and night time.

Psalm 139 is filled with examples of merism that communicate the scope of God's knowledge. Instead of saying that God is omniscient, or that He knows everything, the psalmist says:

You know when I sit and when I rise; You perceive my thoughts from afar. You discern my going out and my lying down; You are familiar with all my ways. You hem me in--behind and before; You have laid your hand upon me. (Ps 139:2, 3, 5)

God knows "when I sit and when I rise," and everything in between. God knows "my going out and my lying down," and everything in between. He is omniscient. And He is omnipresent; He is "behind" me and "before" me. In all of these examples, contrasting, opposite parts are used to express the whole.

The Psalms speak frequently of God as the Creator. When they do, merism is the figure used most often to describe what God has created. The contrasting opposite parts include word pairs such as, heaven and earth, sea and dry land, and mountains and valleys. In other words, God created everything.

### Interpreting Figures of Speech

Finally, remember what we said in the last session about interpretation. First, identify the figures of speech, the images that are being used. Label them if you can. Second, meditate on them, asking, "What is the comparison being made?" Take what is implicit and state it explicitly. Ask,

“What is the intended, unstated thought and emotive effect?” Third, interpret the meaning by listing ways in which the things being compared correspond. Ask, “In what ways is \_\_\_\_\_ like \_\_\_\_\_?” And finally, use the context to help with interpretation.

You can ask two important questions about the context using logical criteria and literary criteria to help determine whether or not an expression is figurative or not. First, ask “Is the expression contrary to reality?” or “Is the expression contrary to reason?” if taken literally. Second, ask, “How do the context, the kind of literature, and other literary devices, such as parallelism inform your interpretation?” Those guidelines should help you determine what is a figure and what is not.

(Use Transparency #6.)

Let’s practice identification for a moment just to be sure you feel comfortable with these eight common figures of speech. Look at Ps 27:1-3:

The Lord is my light and my salvation--whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life--of whom shall I be afraid? When evil men advance against me to devour my flesh, when my enemies and my foes attack me, they will stumble and fall. Though an army besiege me, my heart will not fear; though war break out against me, even then will I be confident.

What figures of speech can you identify there? (Answer: rhetorical question, metaphor, hyperbole.)

Let’s try one more passage, Ps 42:1-3:

As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God? My tears have been my food day and night, while men say to me all

day long, "Where is your God?"

What figures of speech can you identify there? (Answer: simile, personification, rhetorical question, hyperbole, merism.) Just remember, it's hard work at the first, but the harder you work, the easier it gets. And the longer you read the Psalms this way, the richer will be the insights that you'll glean from them.

**Session #3**

**Communicating in Stereo: Four Types of Parallelism**

This lesson examines a key poetic device in Psalms--semantic parallelism. Parallelism is defined and its impact on interpretation is explained. The lesson focuses on how to recognize and interpret of four types of parallelism: synonymous, antithetic, synthetic, and climactic.

Content was based on the following objectives:

1. The learner will identify all four major types of parallelism presented in class, given examples of each.
2. The learner will describe the interpretive function of each of the four major types of parallelism, as presented in class.

### **Session #3**

#### **Communicating in Stereo: Four Types of Parallelism**

When studying the text of Scripture, we examine the individual words and phrases, but we must also focus our attention on larger units of thought as well. When reading poetry, these larger units of thought are contained in lines, and the lines manifest a poetic device called parallelism.

#### **What is Semantic Parallelism?**

Semantic parallelism is a poetic device used to express whole thoughts and feelings by having individual lines correspond to one another. There is a relationship between the lines. Lines are used in concert with each other to express whole thoughts.

The reason I am specifying the kind of parallelism I'm talking about using the word "semantic" is because in Hebrew poetry there are different kinds of parallelism. There is internal, external, sound, and grammatical parallelism. But the kind that comes through the clearest in translation is semantic parallelism, a parallelism in the thoughts and words used.

In an English poem, you can often see the poet rhyming words or word sounds. In an English translation of the Psalms, you can see the Hebrew poet rhyming thoughts, not words or sounds. That's semantic parallelism.

#### **How Does it Impact Interpretation?**

Parallelism significantly impacts interpretation. When you read poetry

with parallelism, the meaning is found in the whole verse, not the individual lines. Parallelism "directs the reader to view both parallel lines in light of one another. The various elements work in concert to create a sense of repetition and dependency between the lines" (Parker, 1995). Parallelism is like the runners on a rocking chair. In order for the chair to be useful and function as it was intended, you need both runners. And in order for a verse of poetry to function as it was intended, you need to look at both runners, both lines, and examine how they interrelate--how they "rock together."

The other thing we'll see as we look at parallelism, is that the process of interpretation is similar to that of interpreting figures of speech. You first decide what type of parallelism you're dealing with, that is, identify it. Then you interpret the parallel lines in light of one another and look for how they depend on each other. Specifically, remember how each of the four types function, how they work. That's what we'll spend the rest of our time in this session looking at: four types of parallelism and how each of those four types functions.

This list is not exhaustive. There are other types of parallelism, even types of semantic parallelism that we won't be covering. However, these four are the most prominent types found in Psalms. If you can recognize them and remember how they function, you'll be able to deal with most of the verses in Psalms. I just wanted to warn you that once you have these four, you won't be able to fit every verse in Psalms into one of these categories. Others exist.



## What are Four Types of Parallelism and how Do They Function?

(\*Use Transparency #7.)

### **Synonymous Parallelism**

With synonymous parallelism, the parallel line or lines strengthen the thought of the first line by repeating similar or complementary terms. In other words, the second line echoes the first line, and conveys a similar message.

It's the difference between having a stereo instead of a radio with only one speaker. With a stereo, each of the two stereo speakers are essential to providing a full, strong sound. But if you isolated each speaker, you might hear a slightly different sound--the same tune, but a different emphasis that, when blended together, makes the whole stronger, deeper, fuller, and richer. The terms are not identical, but they are similar or complementary. Together they strengthen the "sound," that is, the meaning, of the verse.

Notice that the definition specifies that the corresponding terms may be similar or complementary. And you may be saying, "Hey, complementary does not necessarily mean synonymous." And that's true. Bread and butter are complementary, but not synonymous. All I can say is that "synonymous" is the term that has been used for decades, and for lack of a better term, we'll use it here. Just remember that the terms used in synonymous parallelism may be similar or complementary. And even the ones that are true synonyms are functional, not absolute.

Let's look at some examples. (\*Use Transparency #8.) Remember,

you're looking for a strengthening of the thought through the repetition of similar nouns, verbs, subjects, objects, prepositions, etc. Notice that I've attempted to help you by laying out the passages so the parallelism is revealed. The NIV attempts the same thing.

Why do the nations conspire  
and the peoples plot in vain?  
The kings of the earth take their stand and  
the rulers gather together  
against the Lord and  
against his Anointed One.  
"Let us break their chains," they say,  
"and throw off their fetters."  
The One enthroned in heaven laughs;  
the Lord scoffs at them.  
Then he rebukes them in his anger  
and terrifies them in his wrath, saying, (Ps 2:1-5)

In verse one, "nations" is synonymously parallel to "peoples" and "conspire" is similar to "plot in vain." In verse two, there are two sets of similar terms: the subjects "kings of the earth" and "rulers," the verbs "take their stand" and "gather together," and the complementary objects "against the Lord" and "against his Anointed One." Can you hear the stereo effect?

Look how the thoughts are strengthened in the next verses. "Let us break their chains" is strengthened by "and throw off their fetters." How many of you would know what a "fetter" was if you saw it alone on this page? I don't think I would! You might think it was an example of zoomorphism, "Under His fetters you will find peace." But you are given the definition because of the parallel synonym, "chain." Now "break" is different than "throw off," but they are very similar. You can't throw off the chains until you break them.

Likewise, in the next verse it would be possible, I suppose, to debate exactly what God is laughing about, or what kind of laughter it is. But when you see the synonymous, “scoff,” you are immediately informed that God is not laughing at a joke. He is laughing derisively or mockingly at the foolishness of those who plot in vain against Him. You can’t be sure of that unless you understand synonymous parallelism.

The final verse is probably the easiest because it is syntactically synonymous in English. The phrase, “rebukes them in his anger” is directly synonymous, in terms of structure and content, to “terrifies them in his wrath.” “Rebukes” is similar to “terrifies,” “anger” is similar to “wrath,” and the rest of the terms are identical.

Now let’s look at a few examples that have a slight variation in them. We need to identify it so you’re not thrown off course by it. What happens in the following examples?

Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment,  
nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous. (Ps 1:5)  
Declare his glory among the nations,  
his marvelous deeds among all peoples. (Ps 96:3)

Did you notice the change?

The change is called, *ellipsis*. I’m not referring to the three dots that you’re used to seeing when words or phrases are dropped from a quotation, but the concept is the same. An ellipsis is the purposeful omission of words needed to complete a meaning or grammatical instruction. These words are often stated

in the first line and implied in the parallel line. Most of the time it's the verb. When used in synonymous parallelism, think of ellipsis as "synonymous parallelism with blanks." And if you're trying to identify the parallelism, just ask, "How would it read if I filled in the blanks?"

Look at the examples we just read. Therefore the wicked" (that's the subject) "will not stand" (that's the verb) "in the judgment" (that's the object). And the parallel line, "nor sinners" (there's the subject), "in the assembly of the righteous" (there's the object). What's missing? The verb is missing. There's a blank after the subject. How would the second line read if we filled in the blank? "Sinners will not stand in the assembly of the righteous." But because one of the characteristics of parallelism is its terseness, it just uses the word, "nor" and drops the verb altogether.

Look at the second example. The first line reads, "Declare his glory among the nations." What are we to do? Declare. What are we to declare? His glory. And where are we to declare His glory? Among the nations. But look at the parallel line: "His marvelous deeds among all peoples." What's missing? Again, it's the verb. "Declare." So, watch for ellipsis, or you may miss some examples of synonymous parallelism, or confuse them with another type.

In synonymous parallelism, we said that corresponding terms may also be complementary. Look at this next example:

Day after day they pour forth speech;  
night after night they display knowledge. (Ps 19:2)

Now, "they pour forth speech" is obviously similar to "they display knowledge,"

but “night after night” and “day after day” are as different as, well, night and day! Apart from having the same syntactical construction, these phrases are opposites, not synonyms. True, but the verse is an example of synonymous parallelism because the terms are complementary. Remember, these complementary word pairs fit under this classification. In this case, the complementary terms actually form a good example of merism. So, the verse is saying that the heavens constantly and consistently reveal something about the existence of the Creator. (\*Use Transparency #7.)

That’s synonymous parallelism. In it, the parallel line (or lines) strengthens the thought of the first line by repeating similar or complementary terms. The second type of parallelism is much easier to recognize. It’s called,

### **Antithetic Parallelism**

In antithetic parallelism, the parallel line or lines contrast thoughts of the lines by opposing them. Synonymous strengthened the thought by repeating similar or complementary terms, but antithetic contrasts thoughts by opposing them.

Look at the word antithetic. “Anti” means “against” and “thetic” is similar to “thesis” which is a proposition. Antithetic contrasts thoughts. Because the parallel line contrasts the thought of the first line, one of the key words to look for in recognizing this is the word “but.” “But” is a key word. It almost always links the two lines and indicates antithetic parallelism.

(Use Transparency #9.)

The book of Proverbs is filled with antithetic parallelism. Here are two examples:

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge,  
but fools despise wisdom and discipline. (Pr 1:7)  
My son, do not forget my teaching,  
but keep my commands in your heart, (Pr 3:1)

Both examples are linked with the word “but” and contrast opposing thoughts. In each example, one idea is negative and one is positive.

How does this help with interpretation? Well, look at the second example. What does it mean to “keep my commands in your heart?” You can probably guess if you’ve been raised in the church, but the interpretive clue is found in the parallel line. In order to “keep my commands in your heart” you must “not forget my teaching.” So, studying, learning, and remembering are involved. The parallelism reveals that.

Antithetic parallelism is found throughout Psalms, too. For example:

For the Lord watches over the way of the righteous,  
but the way of the wicked will perish. (Ps 1:6)  
Some trust in chariots and some in horses,  
but we trust in the name of the Lord our God. (Ps. 20:7)

The first example sets up a contrast between how God treats the righteous and what will happen to the wicked. As we’ll see later when we study it, the entire psalm is a study in contrasts. Here in verse six, “the Lord watches over the way of the righteous.” Therefore, by implication, they do not perish. But in the second line, “the way of the wicked will perish.” Therefore, by implication, the Lord does

not watch over them. The contrast is between how God treats the righteous and the wicked and what will happen to them as a result.

The other interesting thing about verse six is that the word that the NIV translates “watches over” is a Hebrew word that is translated by the NAS as “know.” The New American Standard says, “the Lord knows the way of the righteous.” That can be somewhat confusing unless you understand the antithetic parallelism that helps you interpret that word. It’s not as if God knows about, that is, has cognitive knowledge of the way of the righteous, but He is ignorant of the way of the wicked. No, He knows all about them too. That is why “the way of the wicked will perish.” What the New International Version does is translate the word “knows” with “watches over” because the antithetic parallelism indicates that meaning in this context.

Look at the second example from Psalms: “Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the Lord our God” (Ps. 20:7). That’s pretty straightforward, isn’t it? Remember, antithetic parallelism contrasts thoughts by opposing them. Synonymous strengthens by repetition; antithetic contrasts by opposition. Now hold on, because the third type is the most difficult to recognize. (\*Use Transparency #7.)

### **Synthetic Parallelism**

In synthetic parallelism, the parallel line or lines advance the thought of the first line by completing, adding, explaining, or extending. Those are four different ways that the parallel line adds something to the first line. But the key

idea here is “add.” The parallel line advances the thought. Think of the difference between “strengthening the thought” (synonymous) and “advancing the thought” (synthetic) this way. When I strengthen the thought, I take what is there and make it stronger without radically altering what is there. When I advance a thought, I take it somewhere else by adding to it.

Synthetic parallelism usually adds something. It may add a related thought, a new one, an explanation of the first, or an extension of the first thought. Because the parallel line advances the thought of the first, one of the key words to look for in recognizing this is the word “and.” It frequently, though not always, links the two lines and indicates synthetic parallelism.

(\*Use Transparency #9.)

Let’s look at examples of each kind of synthetic parallelism: completing, adding, explaining and extending. The first example completes the thought:

The Lord works righteousness  
and justice for all the oppressed. (Ps 103:6)

Notice that the thought of the Lord’s working is completed by the addition of the object of His working, namely, “for all the oppressed.”

In the next example, a brand new thought is added by the parallel line:

He will spend his days in prosperity,  
and his descendants will inherit the land. (Ps 25:13)

These two parallel lines contain two complete thoughts. They are different though related. The verse makes two statements about the subject, which is implied from a previous verse. First, “He will spend his days in prosperity.”



That's a complete thought. Then a new thought is added, "His descendants will inherit the land." Two complete thoughts linked with the word "and."

In the third example, the parallel line gives a reason or explanation of the first line. When this happens, you can anticipate that the two lines will be linked by the words "because" or "for."

I will sing to the Lord,  
for he has been good to me. (Ps 13:6)

The reason for singing to the Lord is explained by the phrase "for he has been good to me."

The final example doesn't occur very often, but it's good to know it's there. It extends the theme of the first line:

Blessed is the man  
who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked  
or stand in the way of sinners  
or sit in the seat of mockers. (Ps 1:1)

The author is saying that the blessed man is the one who doesn't do this, and he doesn't do that, and he doesn't do the other thing. The parallelism extends the theme of what the blessed man does not do.

(\*Use Transparency #7.)

By way of review, synonymous parallelism strengthens the thought through repetition of similar or complementary terms, antithetic parallelism contrasts the thoughts by opposition, and synthetic parallelism advances the thought by completing, adding, explaining, or extending it.

Here's the final one. Next to antithetic, it may be the easiest to recognize. It's called,

### **Climactic Parallelism**

The function of climactic parallelism is to build upon the thought of the first line by repeating one part and adding to it. This is also called Staircase or Step parallelism. Some view this as a kind of synthetic parallelism and not a separate type. While that may be true, I include it separately because its form is distinctive from the way we described synthetic, and it also serves to heighten or intensify the feelings and thoughts being expressed. They build to a climax. An easy way to remember it is using the formula: repetition + addition = climactic parallelism. The added element of an identical, repeated phrase distinguishes it from synthetic parallelism.

Sometimes the thought expressed in the first line is incomplete without the parallel lines, and the parallel line actually completes it, as in Ps 29:1-2:

(\*Use Transparency #10.)

Ascribe to the Lord, O mighty ones,  
ascribe to the Lord glory and strength.  
Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name;  
worship the Lord in the splendor of his holiness.

The repeated phrase is "ascribe to the Lord." Then something is added each time. The first line describes who is being addressed: "mighty ones." The second line adds what is to be ascribed to the Lord: "glory and strength." The third line adds the thought that this glory is "due his name."

Can you hear the drum roll in the background? All of these phrases build to a climax, which is why this is called climactic parallelism. There is a climax, a crescendo, an intensification, a heightening as the verse progresses.

The thoughts in the following lines are also incomplete without the parallel lines. If you want to experience how this verse was intended to feel, read it aloud over in the seaside town of Del Mar one stormy day this winter:

The seas have lifted up, O Lord,  
the seas have lifted up their voice;  
the seas have lifted up their pounding waves. (Ps 93:3)

The repeated phrase is, "the seas have lifted up," but you don't know what the seas have lifted up until you read the other lines. They provide additional insight. The formula is repetition plus addition equals climactic.

Now, it is not always the case that the first thought is incomplete without the others. In the next example, there is repetition and addition, but each of the phrases could stand on their own even though the force of the complete thought is contained in the whole verse:

Sing to the Lord a new song;  
sing to the Lord, all the earth.  
Sing to the Lord, praise his name;  
proclaim his salvation day after day. (Ps 96:1-2)

Again, a phrase is repeated, "sing to the Lord," and each of the lines add either who is to sing or what is to be sung. That's what climactic parallelism does. It builds upon the thought by repeating one part and adding to it.

Before we review, let me add that identifying these four types takes time

and practice, practice, practice. Even remembering these four might be a lot for you to swallow in one session. But I encourage you to follow up this session by practicing on your own. Identify them as you read through the psalms. Use the assignments in the back of your notes. I think parallelism is a case of "Use it or lose it." Even though it seems like hard work now, I guarantee you it will get easier, until you can do it without even thinking about it.

Let's take a moment and review each of the four types and their function.

#### FOUR TYPES OF SEMANTIC PARALLELISM

(\*Use Transparency #7.)

1. **SYNONYMOUS** - strengthens the thought  
by repeating similar or complementary terms.
2. **ANTITHETIC** - contrasts thoughts  
by opposing them.
3. **SYNTHETIC** - advances the thought  
by completing, adding, explaining, or extending.
4. **CLIMACTIC** - builds upon the thought  
by repeating one part and adding to it.

Let's try practicing parallelism identification. Look at each example, and proceed by ruling out what you know for sure it is not, then deciding between the options that remain. Keep your answer to yourself until all have had a chance to think about it, then be prepared to answer. I'll expect you to be able to justify your answer.

## PARALLELISM PRACTICE

(\*Use Transparency #11.)

Praise be to the Lord,  
for he has heard my cry for mercy. (Ps 28:6) [SYNTHETIC]

He does not treat us as our sins deserve  
or repay us according to our iniquities. (Ps 103:10) [SYNONYMOUS]

A wise son brings joy to his father,  
but a foolish son grief to his mother. (Pr 10:1) [ANTITHETIC]

He set the earth on its foundations;  
it can never be moved. (Ps 104:5) [SYNTHETIC]

The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it,  
the world, and all who live in it. (Ps 24:1) [SYNONYMOUS w/ellipsis]

The voice of the Lord is powerful;  
the voice of the Lord is majestic.  
The voice of the Lord breaks the cedars;  
the Lord breaks in pieces the cedars of Lebanon. (Ps 29:4-5) [CLIMACTIC]

Praise the Lord, O my soul,  
and forget not all his benefits (Ps 103:2) [SYNTHETIC]

Praise the Lord, O my soul;  
all my inmost being, praise His holy name! (Ps 103:1) [SYNONYMOUS]

**Session #4****Psalms That Look Alike: Four Psalm Forms**

This lesson examines four psalm forms--lament-petition, narrative praise, descriptive praise, and miscellaneous. The term *form* refers to a psalm's internal structure. Each form is described generally and the remainder of the sessions examine psalms of each type. In addition, five benefits of studying Psalms are presented. This lesson is especially important because it sets up the five psalms examined in lessons 5-9.

Content was based on the following objectives:

1. The learner will identify all four major psalm forms presented in class, given examples of each.
2. The learner will describe three of five ways to use Psalms to promote personal spiritual growth, as presented in class.

## Session #4

### Psalms That Look Alike: Four Psalm Forms

Let's review what we've covered so far. We began by examining three characteristics of figurative language. We said that the Psalms contain a lot of figurative language, which is important to know because figurative language has its own rules for reading. In session two, we looked at eight common figures of speech, how they function, and how to identify and interpret them.

Understanding figures helps us understand the words used in Psalms. In our last session, we looked at four types of parallelism. Understanding parallelism helps us grasp the meaning of the lines in Psalms.

#### What Is a Form?

In this section we're going to look at four psalm forms, which will help us understand the structure of the psalm as a whole. Now you may be asking, "Psalm forms? What does that mean?" Well, a *form* is simply a structure, an internal structure, that can be found in all types of communication--spoken, written, or broadcast (like TV).

For example, in between the time someone says, "Good morning" and you hear someone say, "Good night," you are bombarded with stereotyped spoken expressions and verbal formulas. Expressions such as, "How are you?" "Fine, what's happening?" "Nothing much," are all accepted forms of greeting.

All of us hear certain forms of speech so often that we know what is being communicated without thinking about it. If I say, "I've got one for you:

"Knock, knock." You know to answer, "Who's there?" because you recognize that I'm about to tell a joke, which has a certain form, as does a lecture, or a sermon. Spoken communication has a variety of forms.

Likewise, you know the difference between written forms, too. You know when you're reading a play, a novel, or a letter to the editor. If you read the words on the overhead (\*Use Transparency #15), "Once upon a time. . ." you could guess that you were reading a fairy tale and anticipate that it might end with the words, "And they all lived \_\_\_\_\_" (happily ever after).

If you owned your own business, it would not occur to you to begin your professional correspondence, "My dearest Phil . . ." and end it, "Love, Mary." Instead, you would use the language, formulas, and structures of a business letter. You might even use a form letter.

Look at the writing on the overhead again. (\*Use Transparency #15.) You may be able to tell what form of writing it is without even reading it, but we'll read it anyway.

A flea and a fly in a flue,  
 Were imprisoned so what could they do?  
 Said the flea, "Let us fly!"  
 Said the fly, "Let us flee!"  
 So they flew through a flaw in the flue.

Many of you could have probably recognized the form of a limerick by looking at it, but most of you at least recognize it now that you've heard it. And because you're familiar with it, hearing it or reading it creates certain expectations in your mind. You have a preconceived reading or listening strategy when you're



familiar with the form.

Being able to identify different kinds of forms, helps you understand what you are reading. Ancient Israel had forms, just like we do, but they are far removed from us historically, culturally, and theologically, and therefore we don't understand them automatically. But it's important to identify and understand them, because understanding the form of the psalm you are reading can help you understand its meaning more clearly.

So, here's where we are. (\*Use Transparency #14.) We have been looking at different characteristics of poetry as a kind of literature. Psalms are a kind of poetry. Now we are going to look at four forms of psalms. Poetry is a kind of literature, psalms are a kind of poetry, and these are four forms of psalms.

I am using the word "forms" instead of "types" because there are different ways to categorize psalms. You can categorize them according to form, function, content, theme, or even a poetic technique like acrostic. We'll be looking at the internal structure of the psalm, so I've chosen the word form to convey that, and also because the school of biblical study that has grown up around this notion is called form criticism.

### What Are the Different Psalm Forms (Structures)?

In case you pick up any of the resources on Psalms listed in your notes, you should know this. The school of form criticism, in which you'll find names such as Gunkel, Mowinckel, and Westermann, focused on two aspects of the psalms: first, their liturgical setting, and second, how they were constructed. Our

focus will be on their pattern or form. These men discovered that most psalms seemed to follow a pattern, but like the patterns of a leaf, they were not rigid. From time to time certain ingredients are missing. Oak leaves look like other oak leaves. They are distinct from maple leaves. But no two oak leaves are identical. We'll see that with psalm forms. The first is called, the

### **Lament-Petition Psalm**

The lament-petition psalm can be summed up in one sentence: "O God, help." The lament-petition is a crying out, a call to God, a complaint, a prayer request. It usually contains three ingredients. The first ingredient is a complaint against God (I'm using the words, "lament" and "complaint" synonymously); second, a complaint about others; third, there is a lament over personal suffering and pain.

The suppliant in the lament-petition is frequently in some sort of desperate situation from which he would like to be removed. He is lamenting his presence in it, complaining about those who are responsible for him being in it, and asking God to do something about it. The three ingredients I just mentioned are not necessarily in this order, but you can almost always identify them in these psalms.

Another clue that informs you that you're reading a lament-petition is the presence of a rhetorical question like, "How long?" or "Why?" You'll remember we said before that "How long?" usually expresses an experience of chronic pain, and "Why?" usually expresses an experience of acute pain. Christ's lament

on the cross was a classic example of an acute pain: "My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

The lament-petition may also be individual or community. We'll examine one of each. Psalm 13 is a lament-petition of an individual and Ps 126 is a communal lament-petition. You can tell by looking at the pronouns used. Frequent use of "I" indicates an individual lament, while use of "we" and "us" indicates the voice of the community. Lament-petitions also represent the largest category of psalm forms. There are more lament-petitions than praise psalms.

Turn in your Bibles with me to Ps 55. It is an example of a lament-petition. Let's see if you can find the clues I've mentioned that will help you identify this psalm as a lament-petition. Remember, you're looking for indications that the psalm is a crying out, a call to God, a complaint, a prayer request that contains three ingredients: a complaint against God, a complaint about others, and a lament over personal suffering and pain. It may also contain one of the frequently used questions, "Why?" or "How long?"

\*EXERCISE: Psalm 55

Examples of lament-petitions in Psalms include Pss 3-7, 9-10, 12-13, 17, 51, 54-57, 140-143 (individual); and Pss 44, 58, 60, 74, 79-80, 83, 85, 90, 126, 137 (community). Again, this is the largest category of psalm. You'll notice that the title of this seminar is, "Cries of Pain, Songs of Praise." The lament-petition psalms are the "cries of pain." The "songs of praise" are comprised primarily of two psalm forms. The first is called the

## **Narrative Praise Psalm**

Narrative praise psalms are also called “songs of thanksgiving,” just in case you purchase any of the Psalm books listed in the resources section of your notes. Typically, you’ll find this psalm form referred to as narrative praise, declarative praise, or songs of thanksgiving.

The narrative praise psalm can be summed up in the sentence: “God has acted.” Remember how the lament-petition psalm could be summed up in the sentence, “O God, help”? Well, the narrative praise psalms are linked with the lament-petition in that they tell the story or narrative of how God answered the lament-petition. That’s where they get their name. They are stories that praise God for a specific, unique intervention or deliverance.

The word “specific” is important in this definition because the next psalm form praises God in general terms for who He is and what He does. But “narrative” praise tells a specific story about a specific deliverance. That’s a clue to watch for. And because it tells a story, there is always a section that uses the past tense. That’s the tense you would use if you were telling a story, right? So, watch for that as a clue to narrative praise.

Narrative praise psalms usually contain three ingredients in the telling of the story. It’s not that these words are used, but these phrases can help you remember the concepts. The phrases are: “I cried . . . He heard . . . He saved.” In other words, they describe the crying out, the petition. Then they describe how God heard the petition. Then they describe how He intervened and delivered or saved. “I cried . . . He heard . . . He saved.” Notice that all of these

verbs are in the past tense.

Turn in your Bibles with me to Ps 30. (We'll study this psalm together a little later.) It is an example of a narrative praise psalm. Let's see if you can find the clues I've mentioned that will help you identify this as a narrative praise psalm. Remember, you're looking for indications that the psalm is telling a story, using the past tense, and expressing the formula, "I cried . . . He heard . . . He saved." Or it will use "we" if it is a community narrative praise.

**\*EXERCISE: Psalm 30**

One other comment on the value of this type: They remind us that God is not outside our historical world. Many people really do not expect God to manifest His existence by intervening in the human situation. Even Christians can be "practical atheists"—not one who denies God's existence but His activity. Narrative praise psalms remind us that He did act and He does act. They assure us of His existence when we doubt His reality, and of His activity when we doubt His relevance. They communicate, "He is there and he is involved in His world." Therefore, "He is there and He matters."

Examples of narrative praise psalms include Pss 18, 30, 32, 34, 63, 73, 92, 116, 118, and 138. Again, this psalm form praises God by telling the story in the past tense of a specific, unique intervention of God. The second form of praise psalm is called the

### **Descriptive Praise Psalm**

Psalms of descriptive praise are also referred to in the Psalm literature as “hymns.” That seems appropriate because many of the hymns that we sing in church are based on these psalms. The narrative praise psalms are developments of the sentence: “God has acted.” Descriptive praise psalms follow the guideline: God is. . . God does. . . .” This is praise in general terms for God's being, who He is, and His activity, what He does.

Another reason why they may be the most familiar to you is because they are frequently used in Christian worship services to begin the service. That's because most descriptive praise psalms contain a call to worship. And then they explain why God should be worshiped by listing His attributes and His actions, His characteristics and His deeds (generally speaking). These lists reflect both the greatness of God and the grace of God.

Turn in your Bibles with me to Ps 103. It is an example of a narrative praise psalm. We'll look at Ps 95 a little later. Let's see if you can find the clues I've mentioned that will help you identify this as a descriptive praise psalm. Remember, you're looking for a call to worship and a general description of God's attributes and activities. The call may be issued to the self, to others, or to all of creation.

**\*EXERCISE: Psalm 103**

Examples of descriptive praise psalms include Pss 8, 29, 33, 95, 103-105, 113, 117, 135, 136, and 145-150. You can remember the difference between

narrative and descriptive praise simply by remembering their names. Narrative praise songs tell a specific story, a narrative. Descriptive praise psalms describe generally the actions and attributes of God.

The fourth category contains songs that are both cries and pain and songs of praise. Therefore, the final category of psalms is simply called

### **Miscellaneous Psalms**

Unlike the other three forms, miscellaneous psalms may have a single form, a mixed form, or no identifiable form whatsoever. See why we call them miscellaneous? It is beyond the scope of this class to cover them all in detail, but it is important to be aware of them. They include songs of trust, wisdom psalms, exhortations, salvation history psalms, royal songs, and liturgies. Examples are listed on your notes. Later, we'll examine Psalm 1. It has no fixed form. Another example is Psalm 49. Turn in your Bibles and we'll read it together.

**\*EXERCISE:** Psalm 49

The important thing to remember about the miscellaneous psalm is that if the psalm you're reading is not a crying out to God, a prayer request from an experience of suffering; if it is not a praise-filled story about how God answered that prayer; or if it is not a general description of God's praiseworthy characteristics and deeds; or if it contains a little of all of that; in other words, if it is not a lament-petition, a narrative praise, or a descriptive praise psalm, then it probably fits into the miscellaneous category!

## How Can you Benefit From Studying the Psalms?

(\*Use Transparency #13.)

Up to this point, we have dealt with a lot of technical material. In case you've lost sight of the goal, namely, to study the psalms on your own, I want to spend some time now reminding you how you can benefit from your own personal study of psalms. First,

### **They can instruct you.**

Psalms have great practical content and great theological content. For instance, Psalm 51 describes what to do with sin, and Psalm 119 describes the practical benefits of the word of God. Psalm 139 is an insightful treatise on the omniscient, omnipresent Creator. Narrative praise psalms are deeply theological because as a form, they are fulfilled in the person of Christ. Wasn't there in time in our lives when we cried, He heard, and He saved us? So, the first benefit is they can instruct you. Second,

### **They can help you pray.**

Most of the Bible contains God's words to people, but the Psalms are mostly people's words to God, though still inspired. Athanasius said, "The psalms have a unique place in the Bible because most of the Scripture speaks to us while the psalms speak for us." Again, Psalm 51 is an excellent example of a psalm that can help us express our guilt and ask for forgiveness.

They have been called the "living prayers of dead men." They are helpful during those times when you can't find the words to express what you're



feeling. They can help you pray. Third,

**They can help you praise.**

That's probably how they've been used most in the Christian tradition. Some denominations still exclude all texts except the singing of Psalms in their worship services. Many of the songs we sing in worship today are either directly from Psalms or based on Psalms. For example, Pss 5, 34, 95, 103, and many others. Martin Luther's, "A Mighty Fortress" is based on Ps 46. You'd be surprised to know how much of what we sing is rooted in Psalms. Fourth,

**They can help you process the pain of life.**

The psalms are very emotive. They convey a message and capture a mood. They convey content, but they also express an experience. The psalms acknowledge personal pain, they don't deny it. When the psalmist is angry, he complains and questions; when he is delighted with life and who God is, he praises Him. We can often identify with the feelings conveyed--anger, despair, disappointment or joy, excitement, freedom. This is also probably why we turn to them when we are delighted and feel like flying, and when we are depressed and feel like crying. Finally,

**They can help you relate to God more honestly.**

I just said that they convey a message and capture a mood. Maybe the most prevalent mood is honesty. In that way, they are a guide for relating to God. They help us with how to pray, worship, process pain, praise, and

meditate, but they are brutally honest. In this way, they instruct through their example of honesty--honest communication with God. Listen to Ps 10:1: "Why, O Lord, do you stand far off? Why do you hide yourself in times of trouble?"

Wow. That's honest. Listen to this honesty:

O Lord, hear my prayer, listen to my cry for mercy; in your faithfulness and righteousness come to my relief. Do not bring your servant into judgment, for no one living is righteous before you. The enemy pursues me, he crushes me to the ground; he makes me dwell in darkness like those long dead. So my spirit grows faint within me; my heart within me is dismayed. I remember the days of long ago; I meditate on all your works and consider what your hands have done. I spread out my hands to you; my soul thirsts for you like a parched land. (Ps 143:1-6)

This is a colorful, picturesque, honest expression directed to God.

So, what can you do now? Well, first, read and study them on your own. You can choose from the list of examples I've given.

Second, meditate on them. You have to in order to understand the meaning of the figures of speech, identify the parallelism, and classify the form!

Third, memorize them. Ps 119:9 asks the question, "How can a young man keep his way pure?" The answer is, "By living according to your word." The application of the answer comes in verse 11: "I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you."

Fourth, pray them, or at least use them as a guide as you praise or process pain. Many of our modern praise choruses pale in comparison. The psalms have a much richer, deeper, fuller expression of praise. You can dive in when feeling the darkness of life, give yourself permission to feel it, and then

use the Psalms to help you work through the difficulty.

Fifth, if you're really creative you can put them to music!

The psalms were originally intended to be sung (cf. Ps 22:1), though not all were composed for use in public worship. For example, Ps 45 is a psalm for a royal wedding. Putting them to music can be a great way to memorize them and meditate on them.

These are just a few ways you can dig into the psalms. No matter how you use them, they can be of tremendous help to you emotionally and spiritually.

I have mentioned the importance of German scholarship in our understanding of Psalms. One of the names associated with psalms in scholarly circles is Claus Westermann. One of his ground-breaking works was entitled, The Praise of God in the Psalms, published in German in 1954. He began that work while he was in prison camp during World War II. Another name that may be more familiar to you as a writer on Christian living is Dietrich Bonhoeffer who wrote, The Cost of Discipleship. He also was imprisoned by the Nazis during World War II and found the psalms to be a great comfort during those lonely days before his eventual execution. It is significant that his last publication before he was executed was, Psalms: The Prayer Book Of The Bible, published in 1940. In the midst of a time of despair and darkness when two great men needed hope and light, they turned to Psalms. I hope you can find them to be as comforting as they did.

**Session #5****When You're Feeling the Darkness**

This lesson is an exegetical treatment of Psalm 13, an individual lament-petition psalm. It examines the three sections of the lament-petition--the complaint, the petition, and the praise sections--and how these sections helps us pray honestly, boldly, and hopefully during times of difficulty.

Content was based on the following objectives:

1. The learner will name the three main sections of the lament-petition psalm and the corresponding ways that they guide our prayers, in the order given in class.
2. The learner will identify the three main sections of the lament-petition psalm, given an example of a lament-petition psalm.

**Session #5****When You're Feeling the Darkness**  
(Psalm 13: Individual Lament-Petition)

(\*Use Transparency #1.)

Let me begin by summarizing briefly where we've been and where we're going. We've looked at figures of speech. Being able to identify and interpret them helps you with the words of the Psalms. Then we looked at four types of parallelism because words form lines. Being able to identify and describe the function of parallelism helps with the interpretation of psalm lines. Then in our last session, we examined psalm forms--internal structures that help with the psalm as a whole.

Having looked at the parts and the whole, we now turn our attention to the Psalms themselves. In the sessions that remain, we'll take an in-depth look at each psalm form we mentioned in our last session, and dissect it section by section, using the skills we've learned in the previous lessons. Hopefully, by the time we are finished, you will be able to study a psalm on your own and determine its form (lament-petition, narrative praise, descriptive praise, or miscellaneous), identify the sections of each form, identify the types of parallelism used in each section, and identify the figures of speech employed in each of those parallel lines.

That may sound overwhelming, but that's our goal! In the next five lessons, we'll look at a lament-petition of the individual (Ps 13), a community

lament-petition (Ps 126), a narrative praise (Ps 30), a descriptive praise (Ps 95), and a miscellaneous psalm (Ps 1). Then we'll wrap things up with a final, summarizing session, "Songs for the Journey of Life." Are you ready? Okay, let's go!

When I was a child, my family visited Luray Caverns. The caverns are located in Virginia. Actually, they are located deep within the earth below Virginia. The tour guide escorted our group deep within these caves that were far below the earth's surface, and as we descended, it grew colder and colder, and darker and darker. For a young child, it was frightening. So, as we went deeper and deeper, I squeezed my mother's hand tighter and tighter.

Then the guide, wanting us to experience how dark it really was hundreds of feet below the earth, had us stand in a group, and he shut the lights out. Wow. It was so dark, you could feel it. There was no light at all. No trickle of light from the stars, no soft moon beam, no dull illumination squeezing through a crack or under the bottom of a closed door. Nothing. It was the first time I can remember feeling the darkness.

Sometimes we go through experiences in life when we can feel the darkness. Because of some tragedy or difficulty, we feel a creeping despair, a gathering gloom, a smothering darkness. That happened to me several years ago when I was pastoring a church. The congregation went through some struggles that sent me into a period of oppressive darkness. People hurled hurtful insults, made outlandish accusations against each other, and ravaged one another's reputations. There was mistrust, suspicion. It is an

understatement to say that feelings were hurt.

As a young, inexperienced pastor, I didn't quite know how to guide them through such stormy, rocky waters. People were angry. Some of the anger was expressed toward me, some toward my friends. The people closest to me were the elders, and because of a flaw in the church constitution, each of the elders except one were voted out of office at a congregational meeting. It was a very dark night. I was distraught and felt very, very alone.

As the church began to crumble and the situation worsened, I sank into a deep depression, descending into a cavernous despair from which I couldn't seem to emerge. I was feeling the darkness. I could barely preach. I could barely pray. And eventually I resigned.

It has taken me years to recover from that situation. Along the way, I learned that feeling the darkness can drive you to God or from God. Darkness, in the sense of extreme difficulty, can make you bitter or better; it can make you or break you.

It can be difficult to relate to God when you are going through a period of darkness and for some reason God refuses to turn the light on, or a period when you feel that God is silent to your pleas for help. I certainly felt that way. The question I would like us to wrestle with today is,

### How Do you Pray When You're Feeling the Darkness?

In this session, we meet a man who has been feeling the darkness and waiting for God to turn the lights on. God has not answered his prayer yet, and

the man is sick and tired of waiting. This psalm form is called a lament-petition and you'll understand why as soon as we read it. Let's read it together. We'll identify some figures of speech and parallelism in a moment, but for now, I'd like you to try and get a feel for this psalm without letting the technical stuff get in the way. How does this psalm feel to you? (\*Use Transparency #16.)

How long, O Lord? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me? How long must I wrestle with the thoughts in my soul and every day have sorrow in my heart? How long will my enemy triumph over me? Look on me and answer, O Lord my God. Give light to my eyes, or I will sleep in death; my enemy will say, "I have overcome him," and my foes will rejoice when I fall. But I trust in your unfailing love; my heart rejoices in your salvation. I will sing to the Lord, for he has been good to me.

"How long?" is a question that people ask during a period of extended darkness, when pain is continual or chronic. Persistent, painful darkness forms the context for this psalm. As a prayer, it helps us answer the question, "How do you pray when you're feeling the darkness?" Each of the three answers we'll look at correspond with one of the sections of the lament-petition psalms. You can follow along on your notes and see how that's the case. The first way to pray when you're feeling the darkness is,

(\*Use Transparency #16.)

### **Honestly**

The section of the lament-petition that models honesty in prayer is called the "complaint" section. Characteristics of the complaint include an



introductory address (sometimes) that establishes that God is being addressed. It's usually, "O Lord" or "O God." This is also a descriptive section in which the psalmist describes his condition in terms of pain and anguish. Often, all three lament subjects are found here--I, Thou O Lord, and my enemies. The section may also contain a rhetorical question like, "Why?" or "How long?"

In Ps 13, the complaint section is found in verses 1-2. By the way, it is rare to find a psalm that sets up as nicely as Psalm 13. The three lament-petition sections are in verses 1-2, 3-4, and 5-6. Just so you know, that's not the norm!

Notice how the psalmist describes his condition. This is the cry of a person in pain. How do you know? How do you know how the psalmist feels? Look at the language. Remember, rhetorical questions make points; they don't seek answers. What is the point of, "Will you forget me forever?" in terms of how he is feeling? He's feeling neglected and hopeless.

"How long will you hide your face?" How is he feeling? Probably alone, isolated, separated, forgotten and ignored. "How long must I wrestle with the thoughts in my soul and every day have sorrow in my heart?" How is he feeling? Again, we're not trying to answer the question, but discern the point that it is trying to make about how the psalmist feels. Those words communicate that he probably feels anxious and exhausted, sad and grieving. And it has engulfed and consumed his entire being, body and soul.

"How long will my enemy triumph over me?" What's the point of that rhetorical question? How is he feeling? It seems like he feels defeated, like

he's fighting a losing battle. Of course, he's not looking for an answer, he's looking for action. He wants relief. He's saying: How long must I feel this way? How long is this going to continue? How long must I endure this agony?

"How long?" is a classic rhetorical question. He repeats it four times to underscore his point, which is, "God, Your help is long overdue. I need You to act now on my behalf and put an end to my misery. I am sick and tired of wrestling, sighing, grieving, crying and I want You to intervene and help me right now!"

This whole discourse may make some of you uncomfortable. Honest communication has a way of disturbing us. But here it is. Though it may make us uncomfortable, God invites honest communication. When we're feeling the darkness, He wants us to pray honestly.

What do we do with each other, including our children? When they express anger, we often say, "Don't say that!" Like, we think if they don't say it, it doesn't exist! If we can prevent them from expressing it, we can prevent them from experiencing it. But we know that's not true. And the lament-petitions are guides to praying honestly.

In the spring of 1993, I moved to Michigan to enter a doctoral program in Religious Education at Andrews University. Of all the quarters I spent there, the first one was the hardest. I hadn't been in school in some time and my brain was rusty. I wasn't accustomed to studying six to eight hours a day, and on top of that my classes required a ton of work. Worst of all, I had a torturous class

known as, "Statistics." It was incredibly difficult.

I am terrible in math and science. In addition, I hadn't had math since I was a freshman in college in 1975. And now, I find myself in a graduate level statistics course. I thought I was going to die. I kept thinking, "You're going to fail. You'll have to drop out and people will laugh at you." Not to mention those student loans, eh? I was feeling very desperate. But two things helped me survive. The first was being honest about how I was feeling. After numerous conversations with my wife, I finally stopped denying how I was feeling and faced it honestly. The second thing was verbalizing my despair. I brought my feelings to speech and shared my despair with others--my wife and a good friend, especially.

There's something about getting it out, talking about it, and putting it on the table. How can God touch us and heal us in that deep, wounded place if we refuse to bring those deep wounds before Him? If God gives us permission to pray this way--honestly--surely we can give ourselves permission.

So, how do you pray when you're feeling the darkness? First, you pray honestly. The complaint section of the lament underscores that. Second, you pray

### **Boldly**

(\*Use Transparency #16.)

The section of the lament-petition that models boldness in prayer is called the "petition" section. The petition section is exactly what the name

implies. It contains the prayer requests, the petitions. In it, the psalmist cries out for God's attention and intervention, frequently in the form of commands, or verbs of imperative petition. If I was desperate for you to help me, I might say, "Help me!" That's a petition in the form of a command. The most frequent verbs in this section include, "hear," "look on me," "come," "consider," "judge" my enemies, and then "save," "deliver," "help," "rescue," and "answer" me.

Often, reasons why the petition should be answered are given in this section, too. You'll frequently find the words "for" or "or," which lead to a description of the consequences that will occur if God fails to act.

There is often an introductory petition section, and sometimes a confession of trust. The confession of trust contrasts the preceding section, and is usually introduced with "but." It may be lengthy or omitted completely, as it is in Psalm 13.

In Ps 13, the complaint section is found in verses 3-4. Notice the three verbs of imperative petition: "look," "answer," and "give light to my eyes." "Look on me" is contrasted with the description of God hiding His face (in the complaint section). The cry is, "Turn your face back to me." This is a cry for God's attention. "Show regard for me" is another way to say it.

But the psalmist also wants God's intervention. He wants God to respond, so he cries, "Answer me." He's saying, "I want you to hear me and do something about what you hear."

The third petition is, "Give light to my eyes." That is, brighten my eyes, make my eyes shine. We might say, "Make my eyes light up!" This is a request

for the restoration of physical and emotional energy. It's an indirect petition for God's intervention, for only when God gives help would the psalmist's eyes again shine.

Reasons why God should answer are also given. They are introduced with "or." The psalmist is saying, "If you don't do this, O God, I am going to die and my enemies, who are your enemies, will rejoice!" Implication: You'll be a laughingstock!

Now, don't get the wrong impression about these honest, bold petitions. They are not merely the ramblings of chronic complainers, but cries of pain brought to God. God's people cry differently. They do not cry out because He doesn't care; they cry out because they know He does care! What they cry out for is visible confirmation of the fact that He cares, and will intervene on their behalf.

When I was struggling so much with my statistics class, it was important for me to be honest with myself and others, and to speak about it, but one of the key things I did was to ask for help. I asked boldly, and I asked everyone! I asked our Chinese graduate assistant, Chang-Ho Ji, for extra time outside of the normally scheduled labs; I asked my friend Kurt if he would go over my homework with me on the phone twice a week from Seattle; I formed a study group and asked people to attend, and I asked a Croatian doctoral student named Samir to tutor us. I not only asked, I begged for help! Desperate times call for bold prayers, and these prayers are bold!

Do you know what these psalms tell us? We have a personal God who hears. Though at times it may seem like He is slow to act, what are the alternatives? You can try following your horoscope, but I'd rather take my chances with a personal God than impersonal forces. When you're feeling the darkness, pray, plead and petition boldly. Don't be afraid to express honestly and ask boldly. Tell God exactly what you need. Hebrews 4:16 says, "Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need." That's what these prayers are modeling.

How can you pray? First, honestly, then boldly. That's how to pray when you're feeling the darkness. And finally,

### **Hopefully**

(\*Use Transparency #16.)

The section of the lament-petition that models hope in prayer is called the "praise" section. There is not a single example of a lament-petition that ends with the lament or the petition. Instead, these psalms always end on a hopeful note that we call the praise section. In that way, the psalm seems to model a healthy progression through and out of the darkness.

Don't get me wrong, I don't think you can expect to work through difficulty or find your way out of the darkness in the time it takes you to read through verses one through six. This can take weeks or months. However, the psalm does model a progression. And the praise section provides an

expression of hope that can help illumine the darkness.

Though you can't be sure how long it may take, by the end of this journey, or by the end of this prayer, the perspective of the suppliant has altered. He's not saying and feeling what he said and felt at the beginning. The psalm closes with an expression of confidence in the future because of confidence in God. The one who laments his suffering to God does not remain in his lament. However, remember that before this point can be reached, the suffering must be expressed.

The characteristics of the praise section include the presence of verbs of praise, like "praise," "sing," "glorify," "tell," and "recount." There is usually a declaration of praise or a vow (a promise) of praise introduced with the words, "I will." The entire section may be introduced by "but" or "then" to signal the change in tone that is about to occur. And it may contain an assurance of having been heard, an assurance that is expressed using the past tense.

In Ps 13, the praise section is found in verses 5-6. That very important "but" signals the transition from petition to praise. The psalmist says, "I trust." Though you may not be able to control what you experience, you do have some degree of control over how to respond to it. Doesn't this reveal the true nature of faith? Trusting in God not only in the absence of reasons, but in the presence of reasons not to!

In what does the psalmist trust? "In your unfailing love." The Hebrew word is *chesed*, and when this word is used to describe God's relationship to His people, it connotes loyalty as well as love. This is the word that describes

the responsibility of God to loyally care for, protect, "love" His people. Our relationship has a history to it. It is a history of God's faithfulness, loyalty and unfailing commitment.

He continues, "My heart rejoices," that is, I get excited about "your salvation." Why? He hasn't experienced God's salvation yet, has he? That's what he's waiting for. That is exactly what he needs! But as an expression of faith, he rejoices and trusts. Notice that "rejoices" is one of those verbs of praise that characterize this section. This mention of God's deliverance emphasizes his hopefulness.

He concludes the psalm and the praise section with the vow, "I will sing." This is an indirect command expressing a resolve, "I intend to sing," and another example of a verb of praise. Why does he intend to sing? For "He has been good to me." The psalmist's hope is rooted in his personal history with God. He is saying, "I've been here before." He's looking into the past and remembering that God has helped him before, and He'll help him again.

This is what we tend to forget in the midst of difficulty, but it is that which restores our perspective and helps us to put all pain in perspective: Even the pain we experience occurs in the context of God's goodness. God can even use pain for good in our lives. A favorite author of mine once wrote, "Even evil is good in the hands of a sovereign God."

It has been several years since my dark church experience, and I can see better now. I have a different perspective now than I had then. I can see



some of the good that has come from it, as well as some reasons why it occurred. I'm wiser as a result. I've also been reminded of how much I love to teach. I've been able to get my Ph.D. in Religious Education (well, almost). My wife has been able to pursue her Ph.D. in Marriage and Family Therapy at Virginia Tech, and much still remains to be seen years from now that we can't see now.

Someone once told me, "Too much sunshine makes a desert." Maybe that is why God allowed a dark storm to pass through our lives, I'm not sure. Sometimes I even wonder, "I could have handled some rain. Why did God have to send a flood?" But then I'm reminded that when the Nile floods each year, the flood waters carry rich minerals to the farm lands that line the banks of the river. The floods enrich the depleted soil, enabling things to grow for years to come. Maybe we needed an enriching flood. We've certainly grown as a result.

When you're feeling the darkness, you can pray hopefully. Situations may change, but the character of God does not. His love remains loyal, and His goodness remains bountiful, even though His expressions of it may seem delayed. Therefore, pray hopefully. We can move from lament to praise. The point is not that it can happen so fast (within several lines of the complaint), but that there is a natural progression if we will trust in God.

Let's take a moment and review the main sections of the lament-petition and see if we can identify them in Psalm 3. The "complaint" section is first. It describes the psalmist's condition, often in terms of pain and anguish, and may contain a rhetorical question. The petition section is second. It

contains verbs of imperative petition asking for God's attention and intervention, and reasons introduced with "for" and "or." The praise section is last. It contains verbs of praise, a declaration or vow of praise (look for the words, "I will"), and may be introduced by "but" or "then." Now let's look at Psalm 3.

**\*PRACTICE - Ps 3**

(\*Use Transparency #17.)

- v. 1, 2 - **Complaint** section
- v. 3-6 - **Confession of Trust**
- v. 7 - **Petition** section
- v. 8 - **Praise** section (\*Note: Only 1 verse!)

**Session #6****When Darkness Ends**

This lesson is an exegetical treatment of Psalm 126, a community lament-petition psalm. Instead of examining the three sections of the lament-petition, this lesson reviews the historical context of the prayer, then unpacks the meaning of the three images employed by the psalm. The dream image points back into the past, the stream image points to God in the present, and the sowing and reaping image points to a rewarding future.

Content was based on the following objectives:

1. The learner will describe the historical context of Ps 126 from memory, as presented in class.
2. The learner will explain the meaning of all three primary images contained in Ps 126, given the verse references of each.

**Session #6****When Darkness Ends  
(Psalm 126: Community Lament-Petition)**

When I was a youth pastor in the 1980s, we decided it would make a great youth activity to attend the Rose Parade in Pasadena. A friend of mine named Chuck had done it before and strongly encouraged us to go. The idea was to caravan down to Pasadena around 5:00 p.m. the day before the parade, then camp out on Colorado Boulevard all night, and watch the parade in the morning.

I was new in California. I had never been to the Rose Parade, and I was young and foolish, so it seemed like a good idea to me. I remember asking, "What do we do if it rains?" My friend Chuck answered, "Don't worry. It never rains on the Rose Parade. Never." As I later discovered, it had, in fact, been some 83 years since it had rained on the parade. However, as I discovered that night, that didn't mean it never rained the night before the parade.

That year, I experienced a cold, rainy, long, seemingly endless, dark, night. It didn't rain. It poured. Buckets. Kids slept in the street in sleeping bags covered with Hefty trash bags as the rain swelled the gutters. Temperatures hovered near freezing. There were close to a half a million people along the parade route that night, and there would be a million the next day.

At about 3:00 a.m. I decided I wasn't going to make it to the next day. I

was cold, soaked, miserable, and feeling like it was time to do something drastic. I went to Chuck, who was our senior pastor, to tell him it was time to load up the kids and go home. He was in a nice, warm, dry camper when I woke him up! I said, "Chuck, this is a disaster. We've got to get out of here." He said, "No, no, don't worry. It never rains on the parade." Of course, I didn't even care about the parade at that point. All that I could see was the present: I was cold and wet and wanted to go.

We stayed, and you'll never believe what happened. The darkness ended! Morning came, the sun rose and dried the street, we dried out, and the darkness ended. It felt like it would last forever, but it didn't. At 3:00 a.m. it felt like the night would be endless. But it wasn't. You know what else? The parade was awesome. The discomfort of the night faded with the brilliant colors of the richly decorated floats.

We went back for years to come. We never experienced such a cold, wet, long, dark night, but I never enjoyed the parade so much as I did that first year. I think it was because of the day. The day that followed one of the longest, coldest, darkest, most miserable nights I had ever known.

I tell you this because our next psalm is lament-petition that clearly communicates a theme about the darkness. That theme is: No matter how deep the darkness, darkness doesn't last forever.

#### Darkness Doesn't Last Forever

That's the main point of Psalm 126: Darkness doesn't last forever. It is

a community lament-petition. It varies slightly from the form we've just learned, but except for a unique first section, the basic form is present and can be identified easily.

It is difficult to ascertain the historical context of most psalms, but that is not the case here. And knowing the historical context helps us understand the meaning of the images presented in the psalm. The destruction of Jerusalem is in the distant past. The Jews spent 70 years in exile in Babylon. But through the decree of Cyrus the Persian, they returned home. This psalm was composed after the Jewish exiles had returned home to Jerusalem. It looks back on receiving the news that they were going home. The exile is the historical situation to which the psalm alludes. In keeping with our theme, you might say that the darkness of exile didn't last forever.

Likewise, we'll see that the darkness of the difficulties we experience do not last forever. This psalm conveys that message by looking into the past, the present, and the future. That's how we'll apply its message, too. As the three main points on your outline suggest, as we look back into the past, and look to God in the present, we can look forward to the future.

Instead of highlighting the form as we examine this psalm, we're going to use the form to highlight three pictures, or three images the psalm employs to communicate its message. Each of the lament-petition sections contains an image. The first image, in verses 1-3, looks back to the past to the time when the exiles were restored to Jerusalem:

(\*Use Transparency #18.)

1) When the Lord brought back the captives to Zion, we were like men who dreamed. 2) Our mouths were filled with laughter, our tongues with songs of joy. Then it was said among the nations, "The Lord has done great things for them." 3) The Lord has done great things for us, and we are filled with joy.

### **The dream image points to the past.**

The primary image is a dream. It points to the past and is presented in the form of a simile. Notice the indicator word, "like," and the comparison: "We were like men who dreamed."

This image looks back into the past to the way God's people felt when they heard they no longer had to live in exile. Their return home to Jerusalem was an event so wonderful and unbelievable, that it appeared to be unreal, like a dream. This image communicates that God did something so amazing, the people could hardly believe it. The permission to return was so miraculous, so incredible, so wonderful, they could scarcely believe it was true! They thought they were dreaming! What happened was so amazing, they kept wondering, "Is this really happening, or are we going to wake up soon?"

On that day, they also found something in their mouths they hadn't tasted for 70 years in Babylon: joy! They heard the sound of something that had not reached their ears in a long time: laughter! And their restoration was so surprising that even the nations around them, who had laughed the day they fell, were forced to admit it was the work of God: "Then it was said among the nations, 'The Lord has done great things for them.'"

As you've probably noticed, this is different from the typical lament

section we examined in our last session. That happens sometimes.

Remember, the Psalms are like snowflakes: They may show similarities, but no two are exactly alike. This section is more of a reflection than a lament. This is a perspective-restoring reflection because looking back on this particular time of darkness reminds us that the darkness doesn't last forever.

During the winter of 1993, I was considering moving to Michigan to enter a doctoral program in Religious Education. All I could think about were the obstacles. There was so much that needed to happen in order for me to be able to go. Then one morning I read Psalm 77, and found myself deeply comforted by verses 10-12. Verses 7-9 contain six rhetorical questions expressing the psalmist's doubts about whether or not God is going to come through in the clutch and provide for him. Listen to this anguish:

Will the Lord reject forever? Will he never show his favor again? Has his unfailing love vanished forever? Has his promise failed for all time? Has God forgotten to be merciful? Has he in anger withheld his compassion?

That pretty much sums up how I was feeling, but then he says:

Then I thought, "To this I will appeal: the years of the right hand of the Most High." I will remember the deeds of the Lord; yes, I will remember your miracles of long ago. I will meditate on all your works and consider all your mighty deeds.

What does it mean to appeal to "the years of the right hand of the Lord Most High?" "Right hand" is, in part, an anthropomorphism that speaks of God's power, but how is it related to His "years?" The passage actually helps you out by explaining itself in verses 11-12. The person is appealing to God's faithful



track record. He decides to meditate on God's past work, the years of faithfully responding to the prayers of His people. So, I did the same. I made a list of God's track record of faithfulness to Jan and I--His resume. Then, I offered my prayers in light of it. And within a few weeks, God provided all we needed to make our move to Michigan.

So, the psalmist says, "We were like men who dreamed." But now, he's in trouble again. The darkness has returned. The psalmist knew long before Scott Peck that "life is difficult," that it doesn't get easier as you get older, it gets harder. So, the psalmist doesn't stay in the past, wishing for the good old days, he moves from it, applying the lessons of the past to the present situation. As he looks back to an earlier divine intervention, he is encouraged to look to God in the hope that God would again intervene on his behalf. So he not only looks back into the past, but he looks to God in the present. His prayer in the present is: "Restore our fortunes like the streams in the Negev." Now,

**The stream image points to the present.**

The primary image is a stream. It points to the present. Again, it is presented in the form of a simile: "Restore our fortunes like the streams in the Negev." So, we go from a dream to a stream.

This is a short petition section. However, we still find the imperative petition, "restore our fortunes," that we described in our last session. In order to understand the simile, you need to know that the "Negev" is Southern Judah. It is a very, very dry, arid place. You also need to understand what a *wadi* is.

A wadi is a dry river bed. In the summer, in the arid south especially, the wadi beds are dry until the winter rains fill them. It is with this latter phenomenon that the comparison is made. Most of these floods swept into the Mediterranean and were useless in the times of antiquity; however, along these river beds are located most of the springs and wells of the Negev which were essential for permanent habitation.

This image reflects what God's people need in the present. They need life-sustaining refreshment in the midst of barrenness. The image points to the fact that God can provide life-giving energy and refreshment as quickly as the winter rains fill the wadis. The image communicates God's ability to refresh His people, and the people's present need for this activity on God's part.

A wadi is the equivalent to a southern California wash: a stream bed that is dry most of the year until it rains in the spring and the snow melts. When I first moved to southern California in 1980, I saw a map of the area. Near Redlands, where we lived, there was a wide, blue line on the map that said, "Santa Ana River." I thought, "Wow! A place to fish and swim." Of course, I drove through the Santa Ana River wash in August and choked on the dust. I thought, "Where's the river?" Well the river is a wash. It reminded me of Mark Twain's comment about jumping into a river in southern California and needing to dust himself off when he got out!

Likewise, here it is another August in the life of the psalmist. He's tired of the summer heat, so he prays for a winter rain. This a prayer for life-giving

energy, for restoration, for refreshment. The prayer is: You did it before, do it again! Restore, revive, return, refresh us now. We are experiencing some dryness and we're in need of the life-giving refreshment of a winter rain.

God delights in filling wastelands and wadis with water. But He often waits for us to ask. The psalmist's prayer in the present reminds us that the dryness doesn't last forever, or to return to the metaphor we've been using, darkness doesn't last forever.

It is the assurance that God has acted in the past that prompts us to look to God in the present, and look forward to the future. So, it is as we look back and remember the way God acted, that we can look forward in confidence to the future, for

**The sowing/reaping image points to the future.**

The primary image in verses 5-6 is of sowing and reaping. It is linked with weeping and singing, but the primary emphasis is on sowing and reaping. The image points us to the future, and fills the praise section. Therefore, you can anticipate that the psalm is going to end on a hopeful note. Let's look at it:

- 5) Those who sow in tears will reap with songs of joy.
- 6) He who goes out weeping, carrying seed to sow, will return with songs of joy, carrying sheaves with him.

It's not exactly a familiar twentieth century image, is it? It's a little unfamiliar. What is the point of the image? Are the two verses saying the same thing? Actually, they are.

This image encourages God's people to persevere and look forward with hope to the future. What's the point? The temporary nature of sowing points to the temporary nature of sorrow. Let me repeat that, in case you missed it: The temporary nature of sowing points to the temporary nature of sorrow. Like sowing, pain, darkness, and sorrow end. (I say sorrow because the psalm describes tears and crying.) Like sowing, pain and sorrow end. They don't last forever. In the verse, the sower eventually becomes the singer as he reaps the joyful fruit of his labor.

And verse six is simply an amplification of verse five. The point here in verse five is: "Those who sow in tears will reap with songs of joy." That's the Reader's Digest version of the point. But just in case you missed it, it's repeated. "He who goes out weeping, carrying seed to sow [i.e., those who sow in tears], will return with songs of joy, carrying sheaves with him [i.e., will reap with songs of joy]."

Before I became a Senior Pastor, I was a Youth Pastor and I went through several periods of time when I wasn't sure what I wanted to do with my life, that is, in what area of ministry I wanted to serve. Should I specialize in youth? Worship? College? Singles? I wasn't sure, and it was frustrating trying to find my niche when I didn't even know what it looked like! When I was sharing this confusion in the back of church one Sunday with the president of Mission Aviation Fellowship, he told me, "Ted, just be faithful for now. Today's ministry is preparation for tomorrow's." He knew I was having a difficult time, that I was "sowing in tears," but he wanted me to sow faithfulness, knowing that

one day I would reap the joyful results. I didn't need to know the future to continue to sow faithfulness in the present. I was having a difficult time, but one day it would end.

Today's sorrow prepares us for tomorrow's celebration. It was Augustine who said that you don't appreciate eating until you've been hungry, or drinking until you've been thirsty. Those who have sown in tears more fully comprehend the depths of joyful reaping.

This image provides us with a healthy perspective adjustment. All sorrow, like all sowing, eventually ends. You don't sow forever. Those who sow in tears eventually reap with joy. Those who go out crying eventually return singing. The image encourages us to keep going, to keep sowing. What you sow, you reap. The purpose of the image is to give us hope and remind us that darkness doesn't last forever.

What a great message! The dream image encourages us look back, the stream image encourages us to look to God, and the image of sowing and reaping encourages us to look forward hopefully to the future. That outline suggests some practical application.

It seems important to slow down and take time to look back, to realize that the miracles of the past are the measures of the future. Looking back can help give the pain of the present a context, and provide hope.

What about looking to God? How does this psalm guide our prayers? Well, it helps us view deserts and dry places as potential rivers. It also invites

bold petition because God delights in giving and fulfilling dreams, in turning night into light, in turning deserts into rivers, tears into laughter.

And we can maintain a hopeful perspective in a pessimistic world. We can look forward to the future as we remember that hard toil and good seed always yield a harvest. God makes sure that wadis become wet in winter.

It was the first week of November, 1992, and I was feeling the darkness. I felt like the last nine months of my life had been one long, cold, dark night. I was coming to the end of my first senior pastorate. The church was splitting. It was the death of a dream. I had loved my job. I loved studying, teaching, and working with people. But all that was over. The dream was dead. I felt like I was wandering in a dreamless night that would never end. I was lost, and I'm not sure I wanted to be found.

In the midst of this darkness, a friend came over to my house. It was a Wednesday night, and I had been preparing to preach on this very psalm, Psalm 126. He tried to give me some perspective, but I refused to be consoled. He knew that I was in a bad place, so he called two other men from the church, men that were dear friends, and they also came over to comfort and encourage me. The three of them listened to me and embraced me as my tears flowed freely and I poured out my anguish.

I didn't sleep very well, so I got up early the next day, at 4:00 a.m., to return to this passage. It was so dark; so very dark. I sank into a chair to study, and at about 5:30, I walked out on my patio, which faces east, to watch the sun rise. As I stood there, I saw something I had never seen before. I had seen it a

thousand times, but never like I saw it that morning. With this psalm in my head and my eyes toward the east, I saw the night give way to the light. Tears streamed down my face as I repeated it aloud, "The night gives way to the light." Darkness doesn't last forever. The night gives way to the light. You know, it always does. Day always dawns. The light always replaces the darkness.

If you find yourself in the middle of a dark, dreamless night: Hang on. The darkness won't last forever. The night will give way to the light. Hold on. Morning's on its way. Let's take a moment and pray together, then we'll review what we've covered.

**\*REVIEW:**

Historical context: The destruction of Jerusalem is in the distant past. The Jews spent 70 years in exile in Babylon. But through the decree of Cyrus the Persian, they have returned home. This psalm was composed after the Jewish exiles had returned home to Jerusalem. It looks back on receiving the news that they were going home.

Three images:

**DREAM:** This image looks back into the past to the way God's people felt when they heard they no longer had to live in exile. Their return home to Jerusalem was an event so wonderful that it appeared to be unreal, like a dream. This image communicates that God did something so amazing, the people could hardly believe it.

**STREAM:** This image reflects what God's people need in the present: life-sustaining refreshment in the midst of barrenness. It points to the fact that God can provide life-giving energy and refreshment as quickly as the winter rains fill the wadis. The image communicates God's ability to refresh His people and the people's present need for this activity on God's part.

**SOWING/REAPING:** This image encourages God's people to persevere and look forward with hope to the future. The temporary nature of sowing points to the temporary nature of sorrow. Like sowing, pain, darkness and sorrow (tears, crying) end. They don't last forever. The sower eventually becomes the singer as he reaps the joyful fruit of his labor.

**Session #7****Storytelling Praise**

This lesson is an exegetical treatment of Psalm 30, a narrative praise psalm. The lesson examines how narrative praise psalms record the story of the lament and the answer to its petition in three sections--the prologue, the story, and the epilogue sections. Characteristics of each section are explained and the major themes of the psalm are summarized.

Content was based on the following objectives:

1. The learner will identify all three sections of the narrative praise psalm as presented in class, given an example of a narrative praise psalm.
2. The learner will identify three themes in Ps 30 using the phrases given in class, given the text of Ps 30.



**Session #7****Storytelling Praise**  
(Psalm 30: Narrative Praise)

American radio personality Paul Harvey became famous telling “The Rest of the Story.” His radio spots, which have been transcribed and placed in book form, open with some sort of teaser about an event or an anonymous person. Harvey tells a story, then says, “But that was before you heard the rest of the story.” Then they go to commercial break. When he comes back, he reveals a surprise ending to the story.

In a sense, the psalmist’s story begins with the “lament-petition.” There is a complaint, some bold requests, and then a vow of praise--an expression that the psalmist still clings to the hope that God will answer and intervene. The form of the psalm we examine in this session is called, “narrative praise.” You might call it the Paul Harvey of psalm forms because it tells the “rest of the story.”

The lament-petition and narrative praise psalms “belong together like two acts in a drama. At the end of [a lament-petition] psalm, we hear the vow to praise. That vow to praise is now fulfilled in the psalm of narrative praise. What was promised and vowed there is carried out and fulfilled here” (Westermann, 1980, p. 72-73).

Compare Ps 13:6, found at the end of a lament-petition, to Ps 30:1, the opening verse of this narrative praise. Ps 13:6 says, “I will sing to the Lord, for he has been good to me.” Ps 30:1 says, “I will exalt you, O Lord, for you lifted

me out of the depths and did not let my enemies gloat over me.” One is a vow to praise, the other is the fulfillment of that vow. The narrative praise psalm is the fulfillment of the vow to praise found in the lament-petition.

Like the lament-petition, the narrative praise psalm has three main sections. Since the name is “narrative” praise, all of the section names relate to different parts of a story. The first section is called,

### **The Prologue**

(\*Use Transparency #22.)

The prologue is the introduction, the preview of what’s coming. The prologue sets up the story. It is not insignificant, though, because it reminds you that you’re in a psalm of praise. The prologue often contains a proclamation of intent to praise God, introduced with the words, “I will [shall] . . .” or “May. . . .” The prologue is also filled with the vocabulary of praise—words like “glorify,” “sing,” “exalt,” “magnify,” “praise,” and “bless”

In Ps 30, the prologue section is found in verses 1-5. The prologue is usually only a few verses, but in this case the worshiper felt compelled to relate everything that happened, so the prologue is longer than usual. Even though the first sentence would have sufficed, this prologue anticipates the entire psalm. Let’s look at each verse in the prologue separately.

(\*Use Transparency #19.)

“I will exalt you, O Lord, for you lifted me out of the depths and did not let my enemies gloat over me.” In the phrase, “lifted me out of the depths,” the

psalmist uses the same word that means “to draw up water from a well.” The psalmist had been drawn from the pit of death like water is drawn from a well in a bucket, so he says, “I will exalt you.” Notice the synthetic parallelism? An explanation is given in the parallel line for the thought expressed in the first line. The reason “I will exalt you” is because “you lifted me out of the depths.”

How is God extolled or exalted? By the speaker’s narration of his experience. It’s his “storytelling” that praises God. It’s the telling of the story of God’s deliverance that exalts Him. Look at verse two.

“O Lord my God, I called to you for help and you healed me.”

Now, when he says, “you healed me,” it doesn’t necessarily mean he was actually sick. Commentators differ because being “healed” can be understood as a typical experience of deliverance. In Psalms, “sickness is a situation of extremity, a situation of utter disorientation: everything comes apart; one no longer feels in control; one feels caught; the very body dissolves before us. In situations of deep sickness and pain one is so controlled and dominated and undone by the illness that it is almost impossible to think about or deal with any other aspect of life. Nearly everyone has experienced a sickness--even if only briefly--when he or she feels about to die, even wants to die. One may not actually be on the edge of death, but feels that way” (Miller, 1986, p. 25).

If you’ve ever been sea-sick and you knew that the boat wasn’t headed back to the dock for a long time, you may have experienced a slight death wish! In that situation, you probably were not on the edge of death, but felt like it. You may

even have uttered the words, "How long, O Lord?" Look at verse three.

"O Lord, you brought me up from the grave; you spared me from going down into the pit." Note the synonymous parallelism. God has snatched the psalmist from the power of death. You might say he was rescued from a very "grave" situation. In Psalms, "any threat to a person's welfare . . . is understood to be an invasion of the empire of death" into the arena of life (Anderson, 1970, p. 89-90). In Psalms, death doesn't just end life; it invades life. It is possible to be living, but not to be alive. We even speak that way today, like in the expression, "Get a life."

Notice that this brief description in the prologue isn't specific, but that's intentional. Being able to bring the details of our own specific situation to the text helps us relate better to the poem. The language of Psalms tends to be general and non-specific so the listeners and readers can connect with them emotionally without the details of a particular situation getting in the way. For example, most of us have felt, at one time or another, like we were going to die. So we can relate! Look at verses 4-5.

"Sing to the Lord, you saints of his; praise his holy name. For his anger lasts only a moment, but his favor lasts a lifetime; weeping may remain for a night, but rejoicing comes in the morning." Do you see the antithetic parallelism? It communicates a theme that should be very familiar to you: The night gives way to the light. Darkness doesn't last forever. That's what the two examples of antithetical parallelism communicate: "His anger lasts only a moment, but his favor lasts a lifetime; weeping may remain for a night, but

rejoicing comes in the morning." Exciting stuff, isn't it?

This statement is a call to worship and a reason for worship that "presupposes the presence of a circle of listeners who are often mentioned in the Psalms. They are sometimes summoned to join in with the praise of the one telling what God has done," as they are here (Westermann, 1980, p. 73).

This statement is also a preview of the story that will soon follow. That's what the prologue is. Apparently, the psalmist found himself in a situation that he concluded was an expression of God's anger, but then God intervened and showed him His favor. The difficulty lasted for the night, but rejoicing came in the morning.

In keeping with the term, "narrative praise," I call the main section of the the psalm,

### **The Story**

(\*Use Transparency #22.)

The "story" section has three main characteristics: a reflection on the past need, the cry for help, and the report of deliverance. You'll see all of these in the story section of Ps 30. You'll also see the familiar pattern, "I cried . . . He heard . . . He saved."

The clearest indicator that you are in the story section is the use of the past tense to tell the story. Look for the past tense to describe the action. That is critical. The section may be very short or long, but it always uses the past tense to tell the story.

(\*Use Transparency #19.)

In Psalm 30, the past need or distress is found in verses 6-7. Verses 8-10 contain the cry for help, and verse 11 describes the deliverance. It's not always this clear, but this is the typical flow. These three ingredients are critical. They tell the story. Clause Westermann, the foremost critical scholar that I mentioned last night, said that all narrative praise psalms are nothing more than the development of this one sentence: "God has acted" (Westermann, 1981, p. 108). These are stories about how God has acted. Let's look at the past need described in verses 6-7.

"When I felt secure, I said, 'I will never be shaken.' O Lord, when you favored me, you made my mountain stand firm; but when you hid your face, I was dismayed." The psalmist's fall into the depths was preceded by a time of false security. He's saying, "This is how I was delivered, but I thought I would never need such a deliverance! I felt like, 'Things are going great. What could possibly happen to me?'"

Note how the antithetic parallelism in verse seven is used to heighten the contrast between the consequences of God's favor and God's judgment. The other device that accomplishes this is the use of "mountain" to contrast with "depths". These figures and parallelism paint a picture of the psalmist's past need. Out of that need, the psalmist cried to God.

"To you, O Lord, I called; to the Lord I cried for mercy: 'What gain is there in my destruction, in my going down into the pit? Will the dust praise you? Will it

proclaim your faithfulness? Hear, O Lord, and be merciful to me; O Lord, be my help.” In these verses the psalmist tells the story of how he cried out to God. He even uses the words, “called” and “cried.” Then he uses logic in verse nine and argues that if he dies, it will serve no good purpose. Notice the three rhetorical questions in verse nine: “What gain is there in my destruction, in my going down into the pit? Will the dust praise you? Will it proclaim your faithfulness?”

“Can the dead still praise Thee?” is a common rhetorical question in Psalms (cf. Pss 6:5; 88:10-12; 115:17; 119:175). Remember that the Christian view of life after death is not developed yet. In 9c dead people are referred to as the dust. Sheol, world of the dead, is pictured as a place of darkness and dust (cf. Pss 22:15, 29; 88:10-12; 115:17). The psalmist is not trying to develop a theology of life after death. His point is, “If I die, I’ll be silenced and unable to praise You. So, don’t let me die, and I won’t be silent.”

The story of crying out includes a description of how the psalmist cried out, namely, using the same kind of bold imperatives that we saw in the petition section of the lament-petition psalm. There are three in verse 10: “Hear,” “Be merciful,” and “Be my help.” And then he was delivered. The deliverance is recorded in verse 11.

“You turned my wailing into dancing; you removed my sackcloth and clothed me with joy.” See the synonymous parallelism? He’s saying, “As a result of Your intervention and deliverance, my sorrow has been turned into joy.” The synonymous parallelism strengthens the thought and illumines it. The picture in the first line is of wailing being turned into dancing. But then the

parallel line says, "you removed my sackcloth and clothed me with joy." Isn't that a rich picture? When did one wear sackcloth? In the midst of mourning and grieving. Here, God removes the garments of grief, and clothes the psalmist with joy. And covered with joy, the psalmist begins to dance (figuratively speaking).

So, remember, narrative praise psalms can be summarized in a single sentence--God has acted; God has intervened; God has saved. That's what the story is all about; that's the reason for the praise.

"In modern times the notion has developed . . . that 'God' is outside our historical world. Few people . . . today expect God to manifest his activity in the human situation. . . . [But] Israel began her confession of faith by pointing to a historical situation of distress from which, in a wholly unexpected and humanly impossible way, deliverance was granted" (Anderson, 1970, p. 30).

I think I already mentioned that many people today seem to be practical atheists. They don't deny God's reality, but His relevance. They say, "He exists, but it's irrelevant; He exists, but so what? What does that have to do with me?" But psalms of narrative praise give praise to God by recounting how God has been both present and active. The psalmists praised God by narrating and describing how God had been recently involved in their personal worlds--by storytelling!

Everyone of us can participate in this kind of praise, because we all have a unique story to tell. We often call that story our "testimony." It is a story



that testifies that “God has acted, God has intervened” in our lives. In most of our lives, there was a time when we were in distress, we cried, He heard, and He saved. The details may vary, but our story lines share these common characteristics. And every time we tell that story, that narrative, God is praised, God is exalted.

Since we called the first section the prologue, and the second section the story, you can probably guess that the third section is called,

### **The Epilogue**

(\*Use Transparency #22.)

The epilogue closes the storytelling praise. It’s the conclusion. It is often characterized by a renewed vow of praise or instruction, which can be as long or longer than the story. Sometimes the psalmist thinks that because of his experience, he has a lot to teach others about God. Also, you will frequently find the formulas, “I will [shall] . . .” or “The Lord will [shall] . . .” in this section. But here is a great indicator: If you can insert the word, “therefore” at the beginning of the statement, it’s usually the epilogue. That’s one way to know that you have transitioned out of the story section and into the epilogue. (And the past tense is no longer used.)

(\*Use Transparency #19.)

In light of that, you might think that verse 12a is part of the story. The verse reads, “that my heart may sing to you and not be silent. O Lord my God, I will give you thanks forever.” “Therefore” fits before 12b. The text would read,

"You removed my sackcloth and clothed me with joy that my heart may sing to you and not be silent. Therefore, O Lord my God, I will give you thanks forever." But look at the verb tense. The past tense ends in verse 11. So, we'll consider verse 12 the epilogue.

Notice, too, the psalmist's use of "sing" and "silence." These words form a nice poetic contrast with each other. The vow to sing and give thanks in verse 12 is in stark contrast to the silence that verse nine said would have resulted if God had not acted. Since God has acted, the psalmist can sing His praises.

We have one more question to answer before we close:

**What Are the Major Themes That the Language Suggests?**

(\*Use Transparency #23.)

Think about it for a moment. What are the major themes that we have covered as we've studied this psalm? We're not looking for something new, we're trying to summarize what we have covered. It seems that there are three main themes that are suggested by the language of Psalm 30. The first theme is,

### **Deliverance From Death**

This theme is suggested in verses 1, 3, and 9. The deliverance is described by the phrases, "you lifted me out," "you brought me up," "you spared me from going down," and in the implied deliverance that follows the rhetorical question in verse nine. That the deliverance was from death is conveyed by

use of the phrases, “the depths,” “the grave,” “the pit,” and “my destruction” in those same verses. A second theme that we see is,

### **Sorrow Turned Into Joy**

This theme is suggested in verses 5 and 11. There are three phrases that describe sorrow turned into joy. The first is, “Weeping may remain for a night, but rejoicing comes in the morning.” That is a principle that the psalmist has experienced. The second phrase is, “You turned my wailing into dancing.” And the third is, “You removed my sackcloth and clothed me with joy.” All of those phrases indicate that sorrow turned into joy is a major theme of the psalm. And the final theme is the most dominant theme because it’s what the entire psalm is about. Namely,

### **Praise Because “God Has Acted”**

This theme is suggested throughout the psalm, but most clearly in verses 1, 4, 5, 9, and 12. Over and over the psalmist praises God and encourages others to do the same, because of what God has done. He says, “I will exalt you,” “Sing to the Lord, you saints of His, praise His holy name,” “Will the dust praise you?” and “that my heart may sing to you and not be silent. O Lord my God, I will give you thanks forever.” Those are all descriptions of praise.

And all the psalmist’s praise is a response to the fact that God has “lifted me out of the depths,” “healed me,” “brought me up from the grave,” “spared me from going down to the pit,” “turned my wailing into dancing,” and “removed my

sackcloth and clothed me with joy." All of those descriptions are attributed to God. The psalmist views God as responsible, so he responds with praise.

Why this exercise on looking at words and arriving at the themes of this psalm? Because words are the vehicles of meaning and the building blocks for themes. We look at words and phrases to discern meaning, and then group meanings into themes. As we determine the themes of certain psalms, we are better able to connect them with the themes of our lives, which could enable us to make better use of the Psalms as a resource for finding comfort, perspective, hope, even companionship during the various "moods" of our lives.

I like to listen to certain types of music when I feel like celebrating, certain types of music when I feel like meditating, and certain types of music when I feel like unwinding. But I can only find those connections if I know the music! Knowing the themes of the Psalms is like "knowing the music" that's available for you to connect with and listen to. And like music, sometimes the Psalms can give words to our feelings and help us find a way of expressing our hurt or joy. So, that's the reason for this exercise.

Let's review the characteristics of narrative praise and practice identifying the three sections. (See the following page.)

**\*Review:** Sections of narrative praise: (\*Use Transparency #22)

### 1. PROLOGUE

**Characteristics:** A prelude; an introduction; it sets up the story.

- Introduction; preview
- Proclamation of intent to praise
- "I will [shall] . . ." or "May . . ."
- Vocabulary of praise

### 2. STORY

**Characteristics:** The narrative itself looks back to the time of NEED, records the CRY for help, and reports God's intervening DELIVERANCE. The development of the sentence: God has acted.

- Reflection on past NEED
- CRY for help
- Report of DELIVERANCE
  - \*\*I cried . . . He heard . . . He saved"
- PAST tense used to describe the action

\*May be very short or long.

### 3. EPILOGUE

**Characteristics:** Closes the storytelling praise. It's the conclusion.

- Renewed vow of praise
- Instruction
- "I will [shall] . . ." or "The Lord will [shall] . . ."

\*If you can insert "Therefore. . .," it's usually the epilogue.

## Identifying Narrative Praise Psalms

**\*Practice:**

- Ps 116 (\*Use Transparency #20.)
- Ps 138 (\*Use Transparency #21.)

**Session #8****A Call to Worship**

This lesson is an exegetical treatment of Psalm 95, a descriptive praise psalm. The lesson describes the three sections of descriptive praise psalms--the call to praise, the cause for praise, and the conclusion--and the function of each. The instruction also explains how Psalm 95 answers the question of what to do with knowledge about God: worship God exuberantly and reverently, and obey him faithfully.

Content was based on the following objectives:

1. The learner will identify all three sections of the psalm of descriptive praise, as presented in class, given an example of a psalm of descriptive praise.
2. The learner will name the three ways that Ps 95 instructs believers to respond to knowledge about God, given the corresponding verse sections presented in class.

**Session #8****A Call to Worship**  
(Psalm 95: Descriptive Praise)

I assume most of you are here today because of your interest in studying the Bible. If that's an accurate assumption, here's a question for you to consider. It's a question that needs to be answered by all serious students of the Bible or theology. It is raised by J. I. Packer in his book, Knowing God.

Packer writes:

(\*Use Transparency #27.)

We need to ask ourselves: what is my ultimate aim and object in occupying my mind with these things? What do I intend to do with my knowledge about God, once I have got it? For the fact that we have to face is this: that if we pursue theological knowledge for its own sake, it is bound to go bad on us. It will make us proud and conceited. The very greatness of the subject-matter will intoxicate us, and we shall come to think of ourselves as a cut above other Christians because of our interest in it and grasp of it; and we shall look down on those whose theological ideas seem to us crude and inadequate, and dismiss them as very poor specimens. . . . To be preoccupied with getting theological knowledge as an end in itself, to approach Bible study with no higher a motive than a desire to know all the answers, is the direct route to a state of self-satisfied self-deception. (p. 17)

The key question he raises is, "What do you do with knowledge about God?"

Packer lists what you don't do, namely, pursue it as an end in itself, and Psalm 95 will help us with what to do. So, we'll attempt to answer this question, "What do you do with knowledge about God?", as we look at three parts of descriptive praise psalms.

### Three Parts Of Descriptive Praise Psalms

As was the case with lament-petition and narrative praise psalms, descriptive praise psalms have three sections. The first section is called the (\*Use Transparency #25.)

#### **Call to Praise**

This section is what you normally hear in Christian church services. Occasionally, these psalms begin by focusing on the majesty of God, but most of the time there is a distinct call to worship.

The “call to praise” section contains several characteristics that will help you identify it. These are prominently displayed in Ps 95. The first is a call to worship. The call can be issued to the self, as we saw in Ps 103, or to others, as it is in Ps 95, or to all creation, as in Ps 150. Also, the call to praise contains the vocabulary of praise. So, watch for words like “praise,” “bless,” “worship,” “sing,” “shout,” “extol,” “magnify,” “glorify,” “bow down,” and “kneel.” You also frequently find the “Come . . . let us . . .” formula.

(\*Use Transparency #24.)

For instance, Ps 95 opens with:

(1) Come! Let us sing out in joy to the Lord; let us shout aloud to the Rock of our salvation. (2) Let us come before Him with thanksgiving and let us extol Him with music and song.

There's the “Come, let us” formula, and notice all the terms from the vocabulary of praise: “sing out in joy,” “shout aloud,” “come before Him with thanksgiving,” and “extol Him with music.”



This section provides us with our first answer to the question, “What do you do with knowledge about God?” And it helps us with how we worship God. Notice on your outline that the first thing we can do with knowledge about God is, worship God exuberantly.

Why “exuberantly?” Well, notice the verbs that are used in the call to worship in verses 1-2. “Sing out in joy” and “shout aloud” are synonyms (you’ll also notice the synonymous parallelism of verse one) that call for exuberance. The call is to joyfully, exuberantly sing and shout to the Lord. In most of our churches, the only time we ever shout is at board meetings and congregational meetings. But here, we are commanded to do it in worship!

The shouting is not meaningless shouting, but is described by the phrases, “come before Him with thanksgiving,” and “extol Him with songs.” The psalm gives us a reason for all the excitement, too. The reason we worship God is found in the second section in psalms of descriptive praise, the section we’ll call the

(\*Use Transparency #25.)

### **Cause for Praise**

As the name implies, this section provides a description of the reasons why God should be exuberantly praised. It logically follows the call. It’s as if the psalmist is saying, “Praise God! Here’s why. . . .”

The “cause for praise” section also has several characteristics that will enable you to identify it. Probably the most important characteristic of this

section is that God is the subject. He is the one being described. Remember, the call was directed toward the self, others, or creation. Here, the descriptions refer to God. He is the central character in this section.

Because this section gives reasons why God should be praised (it's often called "reason" or "ground of praise" section), you find a general description of God's attributes and activities. Watch for words like "for" and "who." They may not introduce the section, but indicate you're in it. Look at Ps 95:

(\*Use Transparency #24.)

(3) For the Lord is the greatest God, and the greatest king above all gods,  
 (4) in His hand are the depths of the earth, and the peaks of the mountains belong to Him. (5) The sea is His, for He made it, and His hands formed the dry land.

This section is introduced with the word, "for" and goes on to describe God. The cause for praise section answers the question, "Why worship God?"

Why worship God according to Ps 95? Because our God is "the greatest God," as well as King, Creator, and the Rock of our salvation. This is a superlative. It's saying, "The Lord is the greatest. There's no comparison with anyone else." By the way, the verse is not implying that other true gods exist. It is using polytheistic beliefs found in the ancient Near East to emphasize that nothing compares with God.

Note the use of merism, anthropomorphism, and synonymous parallelism in verses 4-5. The anthropomorphism is "hand." And there are two

examples of merism, the “two contrasting parts that are used to signify the whole?” The two examples of merism convey what God created and continues to sustain by His power (His “hand”). One is, the “depths of the earth” and the “peaks of the mountains,” and the other is, the “sea” and the “dry land.” God created and sustains everything. Therefore, worship God exuberantly!

In psalms of descriptive praise, doxology is grounded in theology. These psalms never say, “Praise God. Period.” They tell us why. You can’t say, “I don’t want to be a theologian, I just want to praise God,” because if you say that, I might ask you, “Why should God be praised?” As soon as you begin to explain, you’ve become a theologian. In a sense, everyone is a theologian. The question is, “Are you a good one or a bad one?”

In addition, in psalms of descriptive praise, theology leads to doxology. When I was going through seminary getting my M.Div., I always wanted to sing. I would sit through class after class where capable professors unpacked the attributes of God and the mysteries of soteriology, pneumatology, Christology, and eschatology. And when they were finished we would leave. But there were many times when I wanted to jump up and say, “Wait! Let’s sing before we go. Let’s take a minute and allow this theology to lead us to doxology.” I finally got a friend of mine who was teaching soteriology, doctrines related to salvation, to give me the last 10 minutes of class each time we met, and we closed the class by singing great hymns of salvation that were thematically cued to the content we had just covered. It was rich. The theology led us into doxology. That’s what happens in psalms of descriptive praise.

The passage calls us to worship God exuberantly, but also to worship God reverently. That's the second thing we should do with our knowledge about God. Look at verses 6-7:

(\*Use Transparency #24.)

(6) Come! Let us worship and let us bow down; let us kneel before the Lord our Maker. (7) For He is our God and we are the people He shepherds and the flock under His care.

Notice that the call to praise section is repeated. This often happens in psalms of descriptive praise. The two sections, "call" and "cause" often repeat and overlap. But this time there's no singing and shouting and exuberant celebration, because everyone is flat on their faces!

Remember when we discussed the emotional connotation of words? Well, compare "sing out" and "shout aloud" to "bow down" and "kneel." Can you feel the difference in the tone of this second call to praise section? The three verbs used here are synonyms that describe physical action that conveys a reverential attitude. The worship called for here is reverent, not exuberant worship.

Why the difference? What is the reason for this call to worship God reverently? Look at verse seven. The cause for praise section is repeated, too. The indicator word, "for" is present, and the psalmist grounds this call to praise in the explanation, "For He is our God and we are the people He shepherds and the flock under His care."

Do you notice the tone change? This is a much more personal and

intimate description. The psalmist is saying that this God is our God. The Maker of heaven and earth is our Maker. He is the King and our Creator, but He is also our Shepherd. And we are the objects of His shepherding, His care, His protection. This cause for praise section is descriptive of our personal relationship with Him. And this description of His tender relationship with us is intended to produce a response of reverent worship.

Please resist the temptation to think only in Old Testament categories, for this is a call to us as Christians to worship Jesus Christ. Jesus is our great God (John 10:30), our King (Matt 2:1-6), our Creator and Sustainer (Col 1:16, 17), the Rock of our salvation (1 Cor 10:4), and our Good Shepherd (John 10:11-30; 1 Pet 2:25). So, we respond in exuberant worship or reverent worship, depending on what aspect of God's character we're responding to.

God always anticipates a response to His word and that is exactly what the psalm continues to tell us. Notice that the third section is introduced in the middle of verse seven. That is somewhat unusual. The third section is called, for lack of a better term, the  
(\*Use Transparency #25.)

### **Conclusion**

The "conclusion" section usually contains concluding praise or (as here) instruction. I should say, "and/or" instruction, because sometimes it has both praise and instruction. There are other characteristics, too. The call may be repeated, praise may be repeated, or instruction may be given. The key to

knowing that you are in the conclusion section is that the subject changes to the self or others. The subject is no longer God. Whereas God was being described in the cause for praise section, now people are being addressed.

The conclusion section of Ps 95 is purely instructional:

(\*Use Transparency #24.)

Today, if you hear His voice, (8) “do not harden your hearts as you did at Meribah, as you did that day at Massah in the desert, (9) where your fathers tested and tried Me, even though they had seen My work. (10) For forty years I loathed that generation. I said, ‘They are a people whose hearts wander and they have not known My ways.’ (11) Therefore, I swore an oath in My anger, ‘They shall never enter My rest.’”

The psalm seems to take an abrupt turn at this point, but its really not as abrupt as it seems. It began with a call to worship. Now it issues a call to obedience.

The point is, worship and obedience go hand in hand. They are both responses to God and what He has done. They are both responses to our knowledge about God. So, not only are we to worship God exuberantly and reverently, but we should also obey God faithfully. That is a third way of responding to our knowledge about God.

The psalm began with celebration; it ends with exhortation. Now, the psalmist becomes a prophet and the voice of God enters the psalm. We see the phrase, “Today, if you hear His voice,” and then we hear His voice. God speaks. And what does He say? “Do not harden your hearts” as you did at “Meribah” and “Massah.” Remember our first session? This is an historical allusion from Exodus 17. Meribah was where the people quarreled with Moses

about having nothing to drink. It means “strive, contend.” Massah was where a similar event occurred almost forty years later in Num. 20. It means “test, try.” The people tested and tried the patience and the power of God by not believing He would provide for them. Meribah and Massah are the two place names which sum up Israel's disobedience, unbelief and ingratitude toward God.

God had led them out of Egypt, taken them through the Red Sea, but when times got tough, they did not turn to God in trust, but turned away from God in disgust! Therefore, God states “I loathed” that generation. I was repulsed! This is exactly the same word which Israel used to describe their feelings towards the manna after prolonged feeding on it in Num. 21:5! It seems as if God, too, was fed up and sick--of Israel!

Israel saw God's work, but they didn't understand His ways. Even though God had proven repeatedly that He would guide them and provide for them, they hardened their hearts and refused to believe He would do it one more time. Therefore, they didn't receive the blessing of the specific resting place of Canaan that God had promised His people.

Israel's temptation is the same as ours. Our constant temptation is not to trust God during difficulty--to think that our present situation is different from past situations in which God has helped us. The situation may be different, but our God is the same, and He is still worthy to be trusted, no matter what our circumstances.

This conclusion section, this call to obedience, shows us that Bible studies, classes, and small groups are not content to be learned, but commands

to be obeyed. Jesus said, "If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them." Doing the word of God is what Bible study is all about.

We opened this session with a quote by J. I. Packer from his book, Knowing God. In that first quote, he raised a question for us that we've been trying to answer from Ps 95: What do we do with knowledge about God? In this concluding quote, he suggests an answer to his question:

(\*Use Transparency #27.)

Our aim in studying the Godhead must be to know God Himself the better. Our concern must be to enlarge our acquaintance, not simply with the doctrine of God's attributes, but with the living God whose attributes they are. . . . The rule for doing this is demanding, but simple. It is that we turn each truth that we learn *about* God into matter for meditation *before* God, leading to prayer and praise *to* God. (p. 18)

What do we do with knowledge about God? If I can paraphrase, we allow each truth we learn about God to lead us to exuberant, reverent worship of God, and faithful obedience to God. We worship God exuberantly, we worship God reverently, and we obey God faithfully.

Let's take some time to review the three sections of descriptive praise, and then we'll practice identifying them.



(\*Use Transparency #25.)

**\*Review:** Three Parts of Descriptive Praise Psalms

**1. CALL TO PRAISE (or focus on majesty)**

- Call is issued to self, others, and creation to worship God
- Watch for words like *praise, bless, worship, sing, shout, extol, magnify, glorify, bow down, kneel*
- "Come . . . let us. . . ." formula

**2. CAUSE FOR PRAISE**

- God is the subject
- Gives reasons why God should be praised
- General description of God's attributes and activities
- Watch for words like *for* and *who*

**3. CONCLUSION (praise and/or instruction)**

- Call may be repeated or instruction given
- Subject changes from God to self or others

(\*Use Transparency #26.)

**\*Practice:** Pss 117, 113

**Session #9****Two Paths: A Study in Contrasts**

This lesson is an exegetical treatment of Psalm 1, a wisdom psalm that falls into the miscellaneous psalm category. The lesson describes what the psalm teaches through an examination of how it teaches. It is a study in contrasts between the life paths, maps, characteristics, and destinies of two groups of people--the righteous and the wicked. The lesson also examines how the book of Psalms is organized and proposes a reason why this psalm was placed at the beginning of the Psalter.

Content was based on the following objectives:

1. The learner will describe four contrasts found in Ps 1, as presented in class, given the text of Ps 1.
2. The learner will explain one reason Ps 1 introduces the Psalter, as presented in class, given the text of Ps 1.

**Session #9****Two Paths: A Study in Contrasts  
(Psalm 1: Miscellaneous--Wisdom)**

In June of 1991, my wife and I traveled north from our home in southern California to the quaint, seaside town of Carmel on the Monterey Peninsula. We were meeting another couple up there, and planning to celebrate the woman's birthday. They had taken the freeway several days before us, and I decided, without really looking at a map, that I wanted to take the Coast Highway. It sounded like a great idea. Because we were celebrating our friend's birthday at dinner, I anticipated arriving at 3:00 p.m. with dinner around 6:00. What I was unaware of, because I hadn't looked at a map, is that Coast Highway from San Luis Obispo to Big Sur is one long, slow serpentine crawlway. It was very, very slow.

So, we're running late, and I'm getting a bit surly, when my wife asks, "Do you know where the Cypress Inn is in Carmel, do you know how to get to it?" Well, no, I didn't, and of course, I didn't want anyone asking me! We get through Big Sur, the road opens up, and I'm gunning it. Like, I'm going to make up 3 hours in 13 miles. We get in town, and by this time it is going on 7:00 and we can't find the Inn. So, we drive around and around. Jan keeps suggesting that I ask someone, but of course, it seemed to me to be much more reasonable to drive around and around as it's getting later and later and I'm getting more irritable. We finally stumbled onto it, quite accidentally, met our friends, and enjoyed dinner--albeit a very late dinner.

As I look back with humor on that experience, (although did you notice how the humor is nowhere to be found during the experience?), I realize that it would have been helpful to have had a good map, and to have used it. Or at the very least, it would have been helpful to have had detailed instructions so I knew a little about what to expect on the journey, and so I had some guidance when I had to choose a road.

Whenever you travel, it usually makes for a more enjoyable journey if you consult a map before you start. Maybe that's why Psalm 1 is at the beginning of the book of Psalms. It teaches that the path you choose determines the journey you take. That is my theme for Psalm 1. Notice there are two parts to this theme. The first part is the "path." I'm using path to refer to a person's lifestyle, the way a person lives. We'll examine two contrasting paths or lifestyles presented in Psalm 1. The second part of this theme is the "journey," which refers more to the consequences of the choices a person makes. All choices have consequences, or to put it more elaborately using the imagery of Psalm 1: The path you choose determines the journey you take.

We said at the beginning of this seminar that when reading poetry, it is important to look at what a psalm says, and how it says it. That is especially important when studying this short psalm. This psalm falls into the "miscellaneous category." It does not have an identifiable form like the lament-petition, narrative praise, or descriptive praise. It has been classified as a "wisdom psalm" not because of its form, but because it possesses certain traits

of biblical wisdom literature. Unlike the other psalms we've studied, this is not a prayer addressed to God, but a teaching that addresses people.

So, we begin by asking the question, "How does the psalm teach?" And the answer is, "Through contrasts." Understanding this will help us understand the psalm. We'll identify six contrasts, and you'll be asked to describe four on the post-test. Of these, four are obvious and central. I'll refer to them as major contrasts. They're numbered in bold print in your notes. Two are subtle and peripheral. I'll refer to them as minor contrasts.

### Contrasts in Psalm 1

First of all, the entire psalm sets up a contrast between two groups of people and the way they live. I've listed it in your notes as a contrast between: (\*Use Transparency #28.)

#### **1. The LIFE PATHS of the "righteous" and the "wicked."**

I've laid out the text of Ps 1 to show the parallelism more clearly. As we look at it, watch for the contrasts between the life path of the righteous and the life path of the wicked:

- 1) Blessed is the man who does  
not walk in the counsel of the wicked  
or stand in the way of sinners  
or sit in the seat of mockers.
- 2) But his delight is in the law of the Lord,  
and on His law he meditates day and night.
- 3) He is like a tree planted by streams of water,  
which yields its fruit in season and  
whose leaf does not wither.  
Whatever he does prospers.
- 4) Not so the wicked!

- They are like chaff that the wind blows away.
- 5) Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment,  
nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous.
  - 6) For the Lord watches over the way of the righteous,  
but the way of the wicked will perish.

The “way” or “path” is a common biblical metaphor for way of life or lifestyle.

This psalm contrasts two lifestyles: the path of a group of people called the “wicked,” and a group called the “righteous.”

Right away you might have a negative reaction to these terms. In our politically correct, 20th-century society, we usually don’t refer to individuals or groups of people as righteous or wicked. But that’s the way the psalm is set up. These terms form what is called an antithetic word pair. From our lecture on parallelism, you’ll remember that these words are opposites. Together they form a strong contrast. There are many found in the Bible: blessing/curse, love/hate, good/evil, light/darkness, wise/foolish.

The purpose of using this word pair is pedagogical. It helps teach polar opposites. The terms are categories of discrimination that function as simple opposites with no grading in between. They are used to teach about black and white. Which doesn’t mean that gray doesn’t exist. The categorical character of these terms doesn’t imply that people are either absolutely morally righteous or absolutely morally wicked. But for the purpose of teaching the concept that, “the path you choose determines the journey you take,” that choices have consequences, the psalmist almost oversimplifies and places people in one of two categories: righteous or wicked. You might say that the

psalmist doesn't teach about gray until he is sure that you understand the standard of black and white.

The basic issue that separates the “righteous” from the “wicked” in the mind of the psalmist is how these people live in relation to God and God’s revelation--His instruction, His law. Within all the individuality that particular lives express, in the ancient Hebrew mind there were generally only two paths for the journey to take: the path of the wicked or the path of the righteous. One path led toward God and the other away from Him. And this psalm encourages the pursuit of a righteous way of living by contrasting how God rewards one and judges the other.

The entire psalm sets up the first contrast, then unpacks it using others like:

(\*Use Transparency #28.)

## **2. The MAPS of the “righteous” and the “wicked”**

When I use the word, “map” I’m using the word figuratively to mean “guidance.” The first two verses describe what guides the lives of these two groups. Verses 1-2 explicitly state what does and doesn’t guide the life of the righteous. And by implication, the opposite is true of the wicked. Look at verse one:

Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked  
or stand in the way of sinners  
or sit in the seat of mockers.

This is an example of synthetic parallelism we looked at before. The parallel

lines advance the thought of the first line by extending it.

The way the righteous lives is not guided by the principles and practices of those who disregard God's counsel and make a mockery of it. The righteous person does not follow their advice, plans, or pattern of life. The map of the wicked is their own counsel. Verse one describes what the map of the righteous is not. Then what is it?

Verse two forms the second half of the contrast, and is introduced appropriately with the word, "but":

But his delight is in the law of the Lord,  
and on His law he meditates day and night.

The word translated "law" is the Hebrew word, *torah*. It is better translated, "instruction" because it does not refer to legal rules and stipulations or the specific legal portions of the Pentateuch, but the whole tradition of God's word, His teaching, His instruction. For Christians it refers to the entire Bible.

What do people do with God's instruction? They "delight in" it and "meditate on" it. Meditation is not necessarily the setting apart of a special time for personal devotions, but the reflection on the Word of God in the course of daily activities. Notice the merism used to describe how often this occurs: "day and night." In other words, all the time.

The word "meditate" is very picturesque. It means "mumble," "moan," "whisper," "reflect aloud." All these meanings involve the same process, the process of musing, meditating on, God's instruction. For the Jew, meditation



was talking to yourself about God's torah.

The blessed man meditates on and delights in God's instruction. C. S. Lewis described how people can "delight" in God's instruction when he wrote:

Their delight in the Law is a delight in having touched firmness; like the pedestrian's delight in feeling the hard road beneath his feet after a false short cut has long entangled him in muddy fields. (1958, p. 62)

Isn't that rich? If you have ever had to walk through slush, or snow, or mud, you know how delightful it is to reach solid footing.

By implication, the "wicked" do not use the map of God's torah as a guide. The "wicked" are called "sinners" and "mockers." The three words are synonyms. They live by their own principles. They openly mock God's instruction and those who live by it. They draw their own maps and ridicule the map God has given. Their attitude toward God's torah forms our first minor contrast: The "righteous" person meditates on torah, the "wicked" person scoffs at it. The third major contrast is between the

(\*Use Transparency #28.)

### **3. CHARACTERISTICS of the "righteous" and the "wicked"**

The characteristics of the righteous and the wicked are illustrated using two contrasting similes: the tree and the chaff. The characteristics of the righteous are illustrated by the tree. The characteristics of the wicked are illustrated by the chaff. Let's look at the tree first:

He is like a tree planted by streams of water,  
which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither.  
Whatever he does prospers.

This tree is planted beside “streams of water.” The tree the psalmist has in mind probably is one that has been planted purposely near irrigation canals--artificial water channels made for the purpose of irrigation. So, this tree has deep roots. It’s healthy, fruitful, enduring, and prosperous, as are the people whose lives are guided by God’s instruction. They will be healthy, fruitful, and able to endure times of drought if they are rooted in God’s instruction.

It’s also important to point out here that the prosperity described does not mean that nothing ever goes wrong in their lives. Devotions each day don’t keep difficulty away. If I can extend the simile, you might say that even trees planted by streams are subject to the scorching heat and drought of Middle-Eastern summers. The point is not that they never experience drought. But rather, when the drought comes, these people have inner resources available that they draw on because they have deep roots in God’s instruction (on which they meditate). It’s not that drought doesn’t come, but when it comes, the tree doesn’t wither and die.

In contrast to the image of the tree that is stable, firmly grounded, and enduring is the image of the chaff that is unstable, easily blown away and disappears. The beginning of verse four is startling:

Not so the wicked!  
They are like chaff that the wind blows away.

Isn’t that a great introduction to the simile? “Not so the wicked!” communicates,

“How different are the characteristics of the wicked!” “They are like chaff.” This is a very rich picture, but an unfamiliar one to most people living in our twentieth century, technological society.

In the ancient Middle East, grain had to be winnowed on threshing floors at harvest time. These threshing floors were built on elevated ground. Grain-filled stalks were tossed in the air with a pitch fork so the heavier grain could be separated from the empty husks, straw, and stubble--the chaff. During this process, the grain, which was heavier, fell to the floor and the wind blew away the chaff. To be “like chaff that the wind blows away” is to be without permanence, unstable, to lack a firm foundation. These are the characteristics of the wicked.

Like a tree, the righteous are grounded in and guided by God’s instruction. They are rooted in torah. But like chaff, the wicked are not grounded. They are the play things of the wind. The righteous are rooted firmly in God’s instruction; the wicked are floating in mid-air. Even the length of the two similes is a contrast! The brevity of the wicked’s description stands in stark contrast to the fuller, more detailed description of the righteous.

The final major contrast teaches that each life path has its distinctive “destiny.” That’s the contrast presented in verses 5-6:

#### **4. The DESTINIES of the “righteous” and the “wicked”**

The “destinies” of the righteous and the wicked are spelled out in the final two verses:

(5) Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment,  
nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous.

(6) For the Lord watches over the way of the righteous,  
but the way of the wicked will perish.

Now that he's talking about judgment, the psalmist is more detailed about the wicked! There is one line about the destiny of the righteous: "The Lord watches over the way of the righteous." There are three lines about the destiny of the wicked: "Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment," "nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous," and "the way of the wicked will perish."

Verse five is an example of synonymous parallelism with ellipsis:

"Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous." It presents a picture of judgment. The destiny of the wicked is judgment. Two aspects of this judgment are highlighted by the parallelism.

The first aspect of judgment is captured in the phrase, "will not stand."

The wicked will not "stand their ground" when judgment comes. Those who have rejected God and mocked His instruction will not have a leg to stand on when they are called to give an account for the path they have chosen. They will be defenseless.

The second aspect of judgment is captured in the parallel phrase, "the assembly of the righteous." The "assembly of the righteous" is composed of those who have a relationship with God. "Assembly" is a collective term for the people of God. What the line is saying is that the wicked will have a different destiny from the righteous. They will be alone.

This use of the word “stand” forms our second minor contrast. In the first verse, the word “stand” was used to describe something that the righteous do not do, namely, “stand in the path of sinners.” Here, the word “stand” describes what the wicked will not do, namely “stand in the judgment.”

The psalm ends on a very sober note. This talk of judgment and destiny is carried over to the antithetic parallelism of verse six which specifically contrasts the destiny of the righteous and the destiny of the wicked:

For the Lord watches over the way of the righteous,  
but the way of the wicked will perish.

You might remember that the word the NIV translates “watches over” means literally, “know.” God’s “knowing” involves not only an objective knowledge about the righteous, but also a subjective relationship with them. God cares for His own, protects them and will reward them. On the other hand, “the way of the wicked will perish.” It leads nowhere, has no lasting future; it is doomed, just like the chaff the wind blows away.

I chose Psalm 1 not only because it is a good example of a Wisdom psalm in the miscellaneous category, but also because of where it is--at the beginning of the Psalter. This psalm needs to be analyzed at two levels: Its meaning in isolation and its meaning in context. So, the final question I’d like us to consider is,

Why Is This Psalm at the Beginning of the Psalter?

I suppose it’s possible to list many reasons why this particular psalm

might have been chosen, but most commentators agree that the primary reason is because it encourages meditation on the Torah, the Psalter, and all of God's instruction. The language of this psalm was different from all the other psalms we studied. It was directed to people, not God. Presumably, it was directed especially toward the people who would read the Psalter.

It is also interesting that the Psalter is arranged into 5 books or collections:

Book 1: 1-41

Book 2: 42-72

Book 3: 73-89

Book 4: 90-106

Book 5: 107-150

Most biblical scholars believe that these five books correspond to the five books of the Torah (with a capital "T"), the Law, the Pentateuch. It's as if the editors were saying, "The psalms that follow are God's torah, His instruction. Meditate on them. They teach you how to live. Following them produces righteous conduct. They'll keep you on the right path if you use them. So, meditate on them, and follow where they lead." Good words with which to close.

(\*To review contrasts, use Transparency #29.)

**Session #10****Songs for the Journey of Life**

This lesson concludes the seminar by examining how the psalms relate to life in general and the Christian life in particular. The instruction reveals how life experiences correspond to each of the four formal elements found in psalms--lament, petition, narrative praise, and descriptive praise--and how they can be used to guide Christian prayers, shape Christian salvation stories, and facilitate Christian worship.

Content was based on the following objectives:

1. The learner will construct a chart that demonstrates the relationship between the formal elements of psalms and personal elements of life, as presented in class, given the number of formal elements.
2. The learner will explain two ways the book of Psalms impacts the practice of the Christian faith, as presented in class.

**Session #10****Songs for the Journey of Life**

Well, we've finally arrived. In this final session, I'd like us to reflect on what we've learned today, try to apply some of the academic aspects of the series to our lives, and bring some closure to our study.

Sometimes I enjoy watching television commercials and the T-shirts people wear because I think they tell us a lot about life. I've seen a lot of slogans recently that carry metaphors for life. You know what I mean. They usually start off with the words, "Life is a . . ." followed by a moral imperative. Examples I've seen include, "Life's a beach, soak it up," "Life's a sport, drink it up," and "Life is short, play hard." In my opinion, there's no better metaphor for life than the biblical metaphor we saw in Psalm 1, "Life is a journey." I must confess, there were times I wanted to wear a T-shirt to church that said something like, "Life's a journey . . . take a hike!" I never had the gumption, but I was tempted.

If that biblical metaphor is true, it's legitimate to ask, How is life like a journey? It seems that there are many layers to the "journey" metaphor that correspond to life. For example, like a journey, life has varying lengths and degrees of difficulty. There are excruciating passages and stretches that we sail through with relative ease. Along the way, we experience mountains of delight and valleys of despair. Sometimes we travel in darkness; sometimes we lose our way. Some people focus primarily on the destination, while others choose



to enjoy the journey itself, being more concerned with going there than getting there.

Another similarity in the life/journey metaphor is that both are usually more meaningful when you travel with others. Most people like a traveling companion. Having a friend to share the tears and the laughter can make the difficult portions more tolerable and the joyful portions more enjoyable. As someone has said, "Sorrow shared is sorrow halved, but joy shared is joy doubled."

And as we saw in our last session, it's helpful to have a map. That's something God has provided. But He has also provided something else. God has provided songs for the journey of life. Traveling songs. Journey songs. These "songs for the journey" are found in the book of Psalms. The psalms are poetry, but they are also lyrics. Most were originally composed to be sung. In the superscriptions you'll often see tunes referred to. A group of psalms is called, "the psalms of ascent." They were sung on the way to Jerusalem to worship, but all psalms are songs for the journey of life.

As is the case with my favorite songs, the artistry of this poetic book touches my emotions, soothes my pain and releases my joy. I have experienced the Psalms as an example of art imitating life. The Psalms are art imitating life. What do I mean by that? They are filled with everything life is filled with--grief, anguish, pain, questioning, sorrow, darkness, reassurance, light, guidance, celebration, joy, and praise. Everything you find in life, you can find in Psalms. Maybe that's why I chose to write my dissertation on Psalms--

they remind me of all that I've experienced in the last three years.

We close our seminar by asking two questions. The first is,

### How Do the Psalms Relate to Life?

This first question will correspond to the second. They're even in parallel form! How do the Psalms relate to life? Well, to use a bit of slang, we can say,

(\*Use Transparency #30.)

**They reflect the "stuff" of life.**

They reflect the stuff of life. They are filled with everything life is filled with. The formal elements of the Psalms reflect the personal elements we experience in life. Those are the two categories we're going to examine on the chart in your notes. On the left, you have the space to write four formal elements of Psalms. On the right, there is the space to group personal elements in life that correspond to each of the formal elements from Psalms.

Let's look first at the formal elements. This is just a review of what we've already covered. The first formal element is the element of "lament." The second is "petition." The third is "narrative praise." And the fourth is "descriptive praise." I know that the lament-petition was one of the psalm forms that we covered, but I have separated the two formal elements, lament and petition, so that you can see clearly their correspondence with personal elements in life.

The first formal element is lament. We saw that the complaint section

of the psalm had people lamenting about their condition, complaining to God about others, and complaining about his lack of attention and intervention. This section was filled with honest complaints.

The second formal element is petition. You'll remember that the petition section of the psalms, in both the laments and the narrative praise psalms, was filled with bold prayer requests. Imperative petitions were spurred by the psalmist's condition. Together they formed cries of pain.

The third formal element is narrative praise. These were stories of how God responded to the lament and answered the petition. Because people were delivered from their difficulty, they had a story to tell, a narrative to share with others. The story was about how God intervened and their situation changed.

The final formal element is descriptive praise. Lament flowed into petition, petitions answered led to narrative praise, and as we saw at the end of those psalms, narrative praise frequently spilled over into descriptive praise. Descriptive praise describes how terrific God is and why He is worthy of praise. By the time descriptive praise arrives, the lament is way in the background.

Those are the formal elements of Psalms. They reflect the stuff of life. There is a correspondence between what we read in Psalms and what we experience in life. Let's fill in the right hand side of your chart.

First, all of us go through times of lament, don't we? All of us go through experiences like sickness, grief, loss, death, oppression, and confusion. Loss alone can come in many different packages: financial loss, the loss of a dream, the loss of energy to pursue something that you once pursued

passionately, the death of friends and family members.

One of the things I lost and that affected me so deeply when I left my old church was regular interaction with friends. We lost the intimacy of shared experiences and relationships. That was a significant loss.

These experiences of lament are often accompanied by emotions such as sadness, hurt, anger, frustration, and hopelessness. I was very sad when I left my home in San Diego and moved to Michigan to begin my doctoral studies. Our church split made me feel hurt, angry, depressed. The hopelessness that accompanied those dark days was heavy and suffocating. I felt like I was going to die.

You can find all of those experiences and all of those emotions reflected in the lament sections of the psalms. It's interesting that the laments were my close friends in the year and a half following my departure from my church. However, I haven't studied a lament psalm recently. I wonder what that says about the stuff of my life recently.

Second, we all go through times of questioning. How many times in the course of your life have you asked, "Why?" or "How long?" How many times have you cried out to God for help in the midst of difficulty? And don't your prayers tend to be bolder the greater the difficulty you experience? Don't we go through periods of desperately needing others and asking for help?

In December of 1994, I went through a two-week period where I was almost screaming my prayers. I cried to God, petitioning Him with every cell in

my being. You see, my wife had gone to the doctor while I was away on business, and he found malignant melanoma on her leg. She was all alone when she got the news. As we waited for the biopsy, I was a living lamentation. It was a period in my life that reflected these formal elements of the Psalms. By the way, all the cancer was removed and she's okay now. But that's the "rest of the story" found in the narrative praise!

Third, we often experience a feeling of relief when a change occurs in our circumstances or in us. Relief sometimes comes in life because something happens in us--a change in perspective, an insight, a new appreciation, a new solution. Sometimes relief comes because of something that happens to us--the removal of the cancer, we get a new job, we get healthy, whatever.

Those changes are often accompanied by an awareness of the change and a verbal expression of gratitude--to God or to other people. That becomes a story that we tell others. Narrative praise works the same way. It reflects back on a need, a cry, and a deliverance. That's the story it tells.

Finally, sometimes in life, we go through periods where there is absolutely nothing wrong, or at least nothing that we're not in the process of dealing with. There's nothing we can't handle. These are the times when we experience feelings of security and confidence. We have a positive, optimistic outlook. We're glad to get up in the morning. Each day is a new adventure. And this feeling may lead to verbal expressions of excitement or contentment. Those are the times when we connect with descriptive praise psalms.

Let me add that all of these periods in life that I've been describing are

mixed together. There's rarely an experience of "nothing but lament" or "nothing but praise." These elements are interwoven throughout life. They always overlap, and we separate them here for the purpose of description.

The point I'm trying to make is that the Psalms reflect the stuff of life. Therefore, they can give words to what we're feeling. They can help us express what we may have trouble expressing--what is bottled up inside. They can be a source of comfort in sorrow. They can facilitate celebration in joy. They can reassure us that we're not alone in life.

This seminar was designed to help you understand and appreciate Psalms, but especially to equip you with skills to study them. It is my belief that studying the Psalms can have a significant impact on your life. Therefore, our final question is, "How do the Psalms relate to the Christian life?"

(\*Use Transparency #31.)

### How Do the Psalms Relate to the Christian Life?

#### **They reveal the Source of Life.**

If the Psalms reflect the stuff of life in general, how do they relate specifically to the Christian life? They reveal the Source of Life. The Psalms point the Christian to Jesus. All of the different psalm forms point us to Jesus in some way. When Christians read the Psalms, they find Jesus there, even though His name may not be mentioned. I would like us to close by examining three ways that the Psalms influence the practice of the Christian life and point

us to the source of that life.

First, the Psalms guide Christian prayers and encourage the honesty displayed by Jesus. The lament-petition especially encourages honesty, boldness, and hope in prayer. And Jesus models the elements of the lament-petition in His own prayers. Consider what He prayed the night before He was crucified. In Gethsemane, Jesus was doubting and questioning His mission in life. In the tradition of the lament-petition He prayed, "If it is possible, let this cup be taken from me" (Matt 26:39, 42). And it was on the cross He asked the rhetorical question in the midst of His lament, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Matt 27:46). It was an expression of acute pain. The prayers of Jesus were honest, like the lament-petitions, and His example encourages the same honesty in us.

Second, the Psalms shape Christian salvation stories and point to Jesus as the One who saves. You'll remember that the narrative praise psalms told the story, "I cried . . . He heard . . . He saved." The Christian tells the same story. Christian testimonies are usually stories about crying out to God from some situation of distress and being heard and saved by Jesus. For the Christian, Jesus is the Savior in the psalms of narrative praise. All Christians can participate in narrative praise. All Christians have this story to tell: God has acted. I cried, He heard, Jesus saved.

Finally, the Psalms facilitate Christian worship and call the church to exalt Jesus. When Christians read how God is described in the psalms of descriptive praise, they think of Jesus. We saw an example of this in Psalm 95

where God is described as King, Creator, Rock of salvation and Good Shepherd. Christians view this as a call to worship Jesus. Jesus is our great God (John 10:30), King (Matt 2:1-6), Creator and Sustainer (Col 1:16-17), Rock of salvation (1 Cor 10:4), and Good Shepherd (John 10:11-30; 1 Pet 2:25). That's why these Old Testament invitations to worship call us to worship Jesus.

Church history is filled with stories of individuals who have gained comfort from Psalms. Paul and Silas probably used them while they were "praying and singing hymns to God" (Acts 16:25) in a Philippian prison. We mentioned earlier how Claus Westermann began his great work, Praise and Lament in the Psalms, while interned in a Nazi prison camp during World War II, and how Dietrich Bonhoeffer's final publication before his execution was, Psalms: The Prayer Book of the Bible (1940/1970).

The story of missionary James Gilmour illustrates the way psalms have brought encouragement and strength to individuals down through the centuries. Gilmour left the comforts of English civilization in the nineteenth century to live in the huts of the Mongols. He labored for years with little encouragement, but when he was weary and in need of personal refreshment, he turned to Psalms. He wrote in his personal journal:

When I feel I cannot make headway in devotion, I open in the Psalms, push out in my canoe, and let myself be carried along in the stream of devotion which flows through the whole book. The current always sets toward God, and in most places is strong and deep. (Davison, 1898, p. 270)

The stream has flowed for centuries, carrying many toward God in its



graceful current. My prayer is that you will be carried to God as you employ the skills you have learned and practiced in our time together. I pray that the Psalms will enrich your experience of life and the Christian life; that they will help you appreciate the darkness and the light, the mountains and the valleys, the joy and the sorrow, as you remember that darkness doesn't last forever. Night always gives way to light.

**APPENDIX E**

**INSTRUCTOR'S MANUAL TRANSPARENCIES**

## ***CRIES OF PAIN, SONGS OF PRAISE***

### **Session Schedule**

- #1 - How Poems Speak--The Figurative Language Of Psalms
- #2 - Figuring Out Figures Of Speech
- #3 - Communicating in Stereo--Four Types Of Parallelism
- #4 - Psalms That Look Alike--Four Psalm Forms
- #5 - When You're Feeling The Darkness  
(Psalm 13: Individual Lament-Petition)
- #6 - When Darkness Ends  
(Psalm 126: Community Lament-Petition)
- #7 - Storytelling Praise  
(Psalm 30: Narrative Praise)
- #8 - A Call To Worship  
(Psalm 95: Descriptive Praise)
- #9 - Two Paths: A Study In Contrasts  
(Psalm 1: Miscellaneous--Wisdom)
- #10 - Songs For The Journey Of Life

## FIGURATIVE WORDS

1. They are not LITERAL,  
but PICTORIAL.
  
  2. They are not ABSTRACT,  
but CONCRETE.
  
  3. They are not EXPLICIT,  
but IMPLICIT.
- Emotional connotation
  - Historical allusion

## FIGURES OF SPEECH

### 1. SIMILE - a comparison linked by "like" or "as"

He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers. (Ps 1:3)

As the deer pants for streams of water,  
so my soul pants for you, O God. (Ps 42:1)

### 2. METAPHOR - a bolder, more direct comparison linked with a form of the verb "to be" in English, such as "am," "is," or "are"

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not be in want. (Ps 23:1)

He alone is my rock and my salvation;  
He is my fortress, I will never be shaken. (Ps 62:2)

### 3. PERSONIFICATION - an inanimate object or abstract idea endowed with personal attributes

The heavens declare the glory of God;  
the skies proclaim the work of His hands.  
Day after day they pour forth speech;  
night after night they display knowledge.  
There is no speech or language where their voice is not heard. (Ps 19:1-3)

Love and faithfulness meet together;  
righteousness and peace kiss each other. (Ps 85:10)

**4. HYPERBOLE - gross exaggeration for the purpose of emphasis or heightened effect**

**I am worn out from groaning; all night long I flood my bed with weeping and drench my couch with tears. My eyes grow weak with sorrow; they fail because of all my foes. (Ps 6:6-7)**

**My tears have been my food day and night, while men say to me all day long, "Where is your God?" (Ps 42:3)**

**5. RHETORICAL QUESTION - a question used to make a point, not to get an answer**

**What is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him? (Ps 8:4)**

**6. ANTHROPOMORPHISM - God described using human attributes**

**In His hand are the depths of the earth, and the mountain peaks belong to Him. The sea is His, for He made it, and His hands formed the dry land. (Ps 95:4-5)**

**Your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be. (Ps 139:16)**

## **7. ZOOMORPHISM - God described using animal attributes**

**He will cover you with His feathers, and under His wings you will find refuge. . . . (Ps 91:4)**

## **8. MERISM - when contrasting, opposite parts are used to express the whole**

**But his delight is in the law of the Lord,  
and on His law he meditates day and night. (Ps 1:2)**

**You know when I sit and when I rise;  
You perceive my thoughts from afar.  
You discern my going out and my lying down;  
You are familiar with all my ways.  
You hem me in--behind and before;  
You have laid your hand upon me. (Ps 139:2, 3, 5)**

## **Figures of Speech - Practice**

**Ps 27:1-3**

**The Lord is my light and my salvation--  
whom shall I fear? The Lord is the  
stronghold of my life--of whom shall I be  
afraid?**

**When evil men advance against me to  
devour my flesh, when my enemies and my  
foes attack me, they will stumble and fall.**

**Though an army besiege me, my heart will  
not fear; though war break out against me,  
even then will I be confident.**

**Ps 42:1-3**

**As the deer pants for streams of water,  
so my soul pants for you, O God.**

**My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.  
When can I go and meet with God?**

**My tears have been my food day and night,  
while men say to me all day long, "Where  
is your God?"**



## FOUR TYPES OF SEMANTIC PARALLELISM

### Function:

#### 1. **SYNONYMOUS** - strengthens the thought

by repeating similar or complementary terms.

#### 2. **ANTITHETIC** - contrasts thoughts

by opposing them.

#### 3. **SYNTHETIC** - advances the thought

by completing, adding, explaining, or extending.

#### 4. **CLIMACTIC** - builds upon the thought

by repeating one part and adding to it.

**SYNONYMOUS examples**

**Why do the nations conspire  
and the peoples plot in vain?**

**The kings of the earth take their stand  
and the rulers gather together  
against the Lord  
and against his Anointed One.**

**"Let us break their chains," they say, "  
"and throw off their fetters."**

**The One enthroned in heaven laughs;  
the Lord scoffs at them.**

**Then he rebukes them in his anger  
and terrifies them in his wrath, saying, (Ps 2:1-5)**

**Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment,  
nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous. (Ps  
1:5)**

**Declare his glory among the nations,  
his marvelous deeds among all peoples. (Ps 96:3)**

**Day after day they pour forth speech;  
night after night they display knowledge. (Ps 19:2)**

**ANTITHETIC examples**

**The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge,  
but fools despise wisdom and discipline. (Pr 1:7)**

**My son, do not forget my teaching,  
but keep my commands in your heart, (Pr 3:1)**

**For the Lord watches over the way of the righteous,  
but the way of the wicked will perish. (Ps 1:6)**

**Some trust in chariots and some in horses,  
but we trust in the name of the Lord our God. (Ps.  
20:7)**

**SYNTHETIC examples**

**The Lord works righteousness  
and justice for all the oppressed. (Ps 103:6)**

**He will spend his days in prosperity,  
and his descendants will inherit the land. (Ps 25:13)**

**I will sing to the Lord,  
for he has been good to me. (Ps 13:6)**

**Blessed is the man  
who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked  
or stand in the way of sinners  
or sit in the seat of mockers. (Ps 1:1)**

**CLIMACTIC examples**

**Ascribe to the Lord, O mighty ones,  
ascribe to the Lord glory and strength.  
Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name;  
worship the Lord in the splendor of his holiness.  
(Ps 29:1-2)**

**The seas have lifted up, O Lord,  
the seas have lifted up their voice;  
the seas have lifted up their pounding waves. (Ps  
93:3)**

**Sing to the Lord a new song;  
sing to the Lord, all the earth.  
Sing to the Lord, praise his name;  
proclaim his salvation day after day. (Ps 96:1-2)**

**PARALLELISM PRACTICE**

**Praise be to the Lord,  
for he has heard my cry for mercy. (Ps 28:6)**

**He does not treat us as our sins deserve  
or repay us according to our iniquities. (Ps 103:10)**

**A wise son brings joy to his father,  
but a foolish son grief to his mother. (Pr 10:1)**

**He set the earth on its foundations;  
it can never be moved. (Ps 104:5)**

**The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it,  
the world, and all who live in it. (Ps 24:1)**

**The voice of the Lord is powerful;  
the voice of the Lord is majestic.  
The voice of the Lord breaks the cedars;  
the Lord breaks in pieces the cedars of Lebanon.  
(Ps 29:4-5)**

**Praise the Lord, O my soul,  
and forget not all his benefits (Ps 103:2)**

**Praise the Lord, O my soul;  
all my inmost being, praise His holy name! (Ps  
103:1)**

## FORMS OF PSALMS

### 1. LAMENT-PETITION - *"O God. . . help."*

- a crying out, a call to God, a complaint, a prayer request

### 2. NARRATIVE PRAISE - *"God has acted. . ."*

- praise for a specific, unique intervention or deliverance of God

### 3. DESCRIPTIVE PRAISE - *"God is. . . does. . ."*

- praise in general terms for God's being and activity

### 4. MISCELLANEOUS

- a single form, a mixed form, or no identifiable form

## VALUE OF PSALMS

1. They can **INSTRUCT** you.
2. They can help you **PRAY**.
3. They can help you **PRAISE**.
4. They can help you **PROCESS PAIN**.
5. They can help you **RELATE HONESTLY** to God.

# **Types of literature (genre) >>>**

## **Poetry >>>**

### **Psalms >>>**

#### **Psalm Forms:**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.



**A flea and a fly in a flue  
Were imprisoned so what could they do?  
Said the flea, "Let us fly!"  
Said the fly, "Let us flee!"  
So they flew through a flaw in the flue.**

**"Once upon a time . . ."**

**" . . . and they lived happily ever  
after."**

**PSALM 13**

---

**<sup>1</sup>How long, O Lord? Will You forget me forever?  
How long will You hide Your face from me?**

**<sup>2</sup>How long must I wrestle with the thoughts in my  
soul and every day have sorrow in my heart?  
How long will my enemy triumph over me?**

---

**<sup>3</sup>Look on me and answer, O Lord my God. Give light  
to my eyes, or I will sleep in death;**

**<sup>4</sup>my enemy will say, "I have overcome him," and my  
foes will rejoice when I fall.**

---

**<sup>5</sup>But I trust in Your unfailing love;  
my heart rejoices in Your salvation.**

**<sup>6</sup>I will sing to the Lord, for He has been good to me.**

**Lament-Petition Practice**  
**Psalm 3**

- 1) **O Lord, how many are my foes!  
How many rise up against me!**
- 2) **Many are saying of me, "God will not deliver him."**
- 3) **But you are a shield around me, O Lord;  
you bestow glory on me and lift up my head.**
- 4) **To the Lord I cry aloud,  
and he answers me from his holy hill.**
- 5) **I lie down and sleep;  
I wake again, because the Lord sustains me.**
- 6) **I will not fear the tens of thousands drawn up  
against me on every side.**
- 7) **Arise, O Lord! Deliver me, O my God! Strike all  
my enemies on the jaw; break the teeth of the  
wicked.**
- 8) **From the Lord comes deliverance.  
May your blessing be on your people.**

**WHEN DARKNESS ENDS**  
**(Psalm 126)**

- 1) *When the Lord brought back the captives to Zion, we were like men who dreamed.*
- 2) *Our mouths were filled with laughter, our tongues with songs of joy. Then it was said among the nations, "The Lord has done great things for them."*
- 3) *The Lord has done great things for us, and we are filled with joy.*

\_\_\_\_\_ image points to the \_\_\_\_\_

- 4) *Restore our fortunes, O Lord, like streams in the Negev.*

\_\_\_\_\_ image points to the \_\_\_\_\_

- 5) *Those who sow in tears will reap with songs of joy.*
- 6) *He who goes out weeping, carrying seed to sow, will return with songs of joy, carrying sheaves with him.*

\_\_\_\_\_ image points to the \_\_\_\_\_

**Psalm 30**

- 1) I will exalt you, O Lord,  
for you lifted me out of the depths  
and did not let my enemies gloat over me.
- 2) O Lord my God, I called to you for help  
and you healed me.
- 3) O Lord, you brought me up from the grave;  
you spared me from going down into the pit.
- 4) Sing to the Lord, you saints of his;  
praise his holy name.
- 5) For his anger lasts only a moment,  
but his favor lasts a lifetime;  
weeping may remain for a night,  
but rejoicing comes in the morning.
  
- 6) When I felt secure, I said,  
"I will never be shaken."
- 7) O Lord, when you favored me,  
you made my mountain stand firm;  
but when you hid your face, I was dismayed.
  
- 8) To you, O Lord, I called;  
to the Lord I cried for mercy:
- 9) "What gain is there in my destruction, in my  
going down into the pit? Will the dust praise  
you? Will it proclaim your faithfulness?"
- 10) Hear, O Lord, and be merciful to me;  
O Lord, be my help."
  
- 11) You turned my wailing into dancing;  
you removed my sackcloth  
and clothed me with joy,
  
- 12) that my heart may sing to you and not be silent.  
O Lord my God, I will give you thanks forever.

**Psalm 116 - Narrative Praise Practice**

- 1) I love the Lord, for he heard my voice;  
he heard my cry for mercy.
- 2) Because he turned his ear to me,  
I will call on him as long as I live.
- 3) The cords of death entangled me,  
the anguish of the grave came upon me;  
I was overcome by trouble and sorrow.
- 4) Then I called on the name of the Lord: "O Lord, save  
me!"
- 5) The Lord is gracious and righteous;  
our God is full of compassion.
- 6) The Lord protects the simplehearted;  
when I was in great need, he saved me.
- 7) Be at rest once more, O my soul,  
for the Lord has been good to you.
- 8) For you, O Lord, have delivered my soul from death,  
my eyes from tears, my feet from stumbling,
- 9) that I may walk before the Lord in the land of the  
living.
- 10) I believed; therefore I said, "I am greatly afflicted."
- 11) And in my dismay I said, "All men are liars."
- 12) How can I repay the Lord for all his goodness to me?
- 13) I will lift up the cup of salvation  
and call on the name of the Lord.
- 14) I will fulfill my vows to the Lord  
in the presence of all his people.
- 15) Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his  
saints.
- 16) O Lord, truly I am your servant; I am your servant,  
the son of your maidservant; you have freed me  
from my chains.
- 17) I will sacrifice a thank offering to you  
and call on the name of the Lord.
- 18) I will fulfill my vows to the Lord  
in the presence of all his people,
- 19) in the courts of the house of the Lord--  
in your midst, O Jerusalem. Praise the Lord.

**Psalm 138 - Narrative Praise Practice**

- 1) I will praise you, O Lord, with all my heart;  
before the "gods" I will sing your praise.**
- 2) I will bow down toward your holy temple and  
will praise your name for your love and your  
faithfulness, for you have exalted above all  
things your name and your word.**
- 3) When I called, you answered me;  
you made me bold and stouthearted.**
- 4) May all the kings of the earth praise you, O Lord,  
when they hear the words of your mouth.**
- 5) May they sing of the ways of the Lord,  
for the glory of the Lord is great.**
- 6) Though the Lord is on high, he looks upon the  
lowly, but the proud he knows from afar.**
- 7) Though I walk in the midst of trouble, you  
preserve my life; you stretch out your hand  
against the anger of my foes, with your right hand  
you save me.**
- 8) The Lord will fulfill [his purpose] for me;  
your love, O Lord, endures forever--  
do not abandon the works of your hands.**

## CHARACTERISTICS OF NARRATIVE PRAISE

### PROLOGUE

- Introduction; preview
- Proclamation of intent to praise
- *"I will [shall] . . ."* or *"May . . ."*
- Vocabulary of praise

### STORY

- Reflection on past **NEED**
- **CRY** for help
- Report of **DELIVERANCE**
- \**"I cried . . . He heard . . . He saved"*
- **PAST** tense used to describe the action

### EPILOGUE

- Renewed vow of praise
- Instruction
- *"I will [shall] . . ."* or *"The Lord will [shall] . . ."*
- \*Can usually insert *"Therefore. . . ."*



**Psalm 30--MAJOR THEMES  
THE LANGUAGE SUGGESTS**

- **DELIVERANCE** from **DEATH**
- **SORROW** turned into **JOY**
- **PRAISE** because "**GOD HAS ACTED**"

**Psalm 95****WORSHIP GOD EXUBERANTLY.**

- 1) Come! Let us sing out in joy to the Lord;  
let us shout aloud to the Rock of our salvation.
- 2) Let us come before Him with thanksgiving and  
let us extol Him with music and song.
- 3) For the Lord is the greatest God,  
and the greatest king above all gods,
- 4) In His hand are the depths of the earth,  
and the peaks of the mountains belong to Him.
- 5) The sea is His, for He made it,  
and His hands formed the dry land.

**WORSHIP GOD REVERENTLY.**

- 6) Come! Let us worship and  
let us bow down;  
let us kneel before the Lord our Maker
- 7) For He is our God and we are the people He shepherds  
and the flock under His care.

**OBEY GOD FAITHFULLY.**

- Today, if you hear His voice,
- 8) "do not harden your hearts as you did at Meribah,  
as you did that day at Massah in the desert,
  - 9) where your fathers tested and tried Me,  
even though they had seen My work.
  - 10) For forty years I loathed that generation.  
I said, 'They are a people whose hearts wander  
and they have not known My ways.'
  - 11) Therefore, I swore an oath in My anger,  
'They shall never enter My rest.'

## THREE PARTS OF DESCRIPTIVE PRAISE PSALMS

### 1. **CALL TO PRAISE** (or focus on majesty)

- Call is issued to self, others, creation to worship God
- Watch for words like *praise, bless, worship, sing, shout, extol, magnify, glorify, bow down, kneel*
- “Come . . . let us. . . .” formula

### 2. **CAUSE FOR PRAISE**

- GOD is the subject; He is described
- Gives reasons why God should be praised
- General description of God’s attributes and activities
- Watch for words like *for* and *who*

### 3. **CONCLUSION** (praise and/or instruction)

- Call may be repeated or instruction given
- Subject changes to self or others--not God

\*In psalms of descriptive praise,

- Doxology is grounded in theology
- Theology leads to doxology

**DESCRIPTIVE PRAISE PSALMS - Practice****Psalm 117**

- 1) Praise the Lord, all you nations;  
extol him, all you peoples.
- 2) For great is his love toward us,  
and the faithfulness of the Lord endures forever.  
Praise the Lord.

**Psalm 113**

- 1) Praise the Lord.  
Praise, O servants of the Lord,  
praise the name of the Lord.
- 2) Let the name of the Lord be praised, both now and  
forevermore.
- 3) From the rising of the sun to the place where it  
sets, the name of the Lord is to be praised.
- 4) The Lord is exalted over all the nations,  
His glory above the heavens.
- 5) Who is like the Lord our God,  
the One who sits enthroned on high,
- 6) who stoops down to look on the heavens and the  
earth?
- 7) He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the  
needy from the ash heap;
- 8) He seats them with princes, with the princes of  
their people.
- 9) He settles the barren woman in her home as a  
happy mother of children. Praise the Lord.

We need to ask ourselves: what is my ultimate aim and object in occupying my mind with these things? What do I intend to do with my knowledge about God, once I have got it? For the fact that we have to face is this: that if we pursue theological knowledge for its own sake, it is bound to go bad on us. It will make us proud and conceited. The very greatness of the subject-matter will intoxicate us, and we shall come to think of ourselves as a cut above other Christians because of our interest in it and grasp of it; and we shall look down on those whose theological ideas seem to us crude and inadequate, and dismiss them as very poor specimens. . . . To be preoccupied with getting theological knowledge as an end in itself, to approach Bible study with no higher a motive than a desire to know all the answers, is the direct route to a state of self-satisfied self-deception.

- J. I. Packer, Knowing God, p. 17

Our aim in studying the Godhead must be to know God Himself the better. Our concern must be to enlarge our acquaintance, not simply with the doctrine of God's attributes, but with the living God whose attributes they are. . . . The rule for doing this is demanding, but simple. It is that we turn each truth that we learn *about* God into matter for meditation *before* God, leading to prayer and praise *to* God.

- J. I. Packer, Knowing God, p. 18

**Psalm 1**

- 1) **Blessed is the man who does  
not walk in the counsel of the wicked  
or stand in the way of sinners  
or sit in the seat of mockers.**
- 2) **But his delight is in the law of the Lord,  
and on His law he meditates day and night.**
- 3) **He is like a tree planted by streams of water,  
which yields its fruit in season and  
whose leaf does not wither.  
Whatever he does prospers.**
- 4) **Not so the wicked!  
They are like chaff that the wind blows away.**
- 5) **Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment,  
nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous.**
- 6) **For the Lord watches over the way of the righteous,  
but the way of the wicked will perish.**

1) **LIFE PATH** of the "righteous" . . . of the "wicked"

2) **MAP** of the "righteous" . . . of the "wicked"

3) **CHARACTERISTICS** of the "righteous" . . . of the "wicked"

4) **DESTINY** of the "righteous" . . . of the "wicked"

**CONTRASTS in Psalm 1****1. Two lifestyles of two groups of people****Life path of the righteous (1-3, 6a)****vs.****Life path of the wicked (4-5, 6b)****2. Their MAPS****Torah (2) vs. Their own counsel (1)****3. Their CHARACTERISTICS****Tree (3) vs. Chaff (4)****4. Their DESTINIES****Lord watches over it (6a)****vs.****It will perish (6b)****5. Attitudes toward God's instruction (torah)****Delight in it (2) vs. Scoff at it (1)****6. Use of "stand"****Righteous does not (1) vs. Wicked will not (5)**

## **HOW DO THE PSALMS RELATE TO LIFE?**

**\*They REFLECT the "STUFF" of life.\***

**FORMAL elements:  
(in PSALMS)**

**Personal elements:  
(in life)**

### **1. LAMENT**

- 1. - Experiences like  
sickness, grief, loss,  
death, oppression,  
confusion  
- Emotions that  
accompany them such as  
sadness, hurt, anger,  
frustration, hopelessness**

### **2. PETITION**

- 2. - Questioning  
- Cry to God for help  
- Asking others for help**

### **3. NARRATIVE PRAISE**

- 3. - Feeling of relief  
because of a change in  
your circumstances or in  
you  
- Awareness of the  
change  
- Verbal expression of  
gratitude**

### **4. DESCRIPTIVE PRAISE**

- 4. - Feeling of security,  
confidence  
- Positive, optimistic  
outlook  
- Verbal expressions of  
excitement or  
contentment**



**HOW DO THE PSALMS RELATE TO THE CHRISTIAN LIFE?**

\*They REVEAL the SOURCE of life.\*

- They guide Christian PRAYERS and encourage the honesty displayed by JESUS. (LP)
  
- They shape Christian SALVATION stories and point to JESUS as the One who saves. (NP)
  
- They facilitate Christian WORSHIP and call the church to exalt JESUS. (DP)

**APPENDIX F**

**LEARNER'S MANUAL**

HOW POEMS SPEAK: THE FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE OF PSALMS

*\*WHY STUDY PSALMS?*

*\*HOW DO PSALMS SPEAK?*

1. They are not \_\_\_\_\_, but \_\_\_\_\_.

2. They are not \_\_\_\_\_, but \_\_\_\_\_.

3. They are not \_\_\_\_\_, but \_\_\_\_\_.

*\*HOW DO YOU INTERPRET FIGURATIVE WORDS?*

*FIGURING OUT FIGURES OF SPEECH*

*\*WHAT ARE SOME COMMON FIGURES OF SPEECH USED IN PSALMS?*

1. Simile -
  
2. Metaphor -
  
3. Personification -
  
4. Hyperbole -
  
5. Rhetorical question -
  
6. Anthropomorphism -
  
7. Zoomorphism -
  
8. Merism -

**COMMUNICATING IN STEREO: FOUR TYPES OF PARALLELISM**

**\*WHAT IS SEMANTIC PARALLELISM?**

**\*HOW DOES IT IMPACT INTERPRETATION?**

**\*WHAT ARE FOUR TYPES OF PARALLELISM AND HOW DO THEY FUNCTION?**

FUNCTION:

1. SYNONYMOUS parallelism -

2. ANTITHETIC parallelism -

3. SYNTHETIC parallelism -

4. CLIMACTIC parallelism -

**PSALMS THAT LOOK ALIKE: FOUR PSALM FORMS****\*WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENT KINDS OF PSALM FORMS (STRUCTURES)?****1. LAMENT-PETITION - "Cries of Pain" - "O God. . . , help."**

\*A crying out, a call to God, a complaint, a prayer request.

Usually three ingredients:

1 - \_\_\_\_\_ against God

2- \_\_\_\_\_ about others

3 - \_\_\_\_\_ over personal suffering, pain

May contain a question like, " \_\_\_\_\_ ?" or " \_\_\_\_\_ ?"

Examples: Ps 3-7, 9-10, 12-13, 17, 51, 54-57, 140-143 (individual);  
Ps 44, 58, 60, 74, 79-80, 83, 85, 90, 126, 137 (community).

**\*Praise - "Songs of Praise"****2. NARRATIVE PRAISE (songs of thanksgiving) - "God has acted. . . ."**

\*Praise for a \_\_\_\_\_, unique intervention or deliverance of God.

- "Narrative" praise because it \_\_\_\_\_ a \_\_\_\_\_.

- Usually contains the three ingredients,

"I \_\_\_\_\_ . . . He \_\_\_\_\_ . . . He \_\_\_\_\_."

Examples: Ps 18, 30, 32, 34, 63, 73, 92, 116, 118, 138

**3. DESCRIPTIVE PRAISE (hymns) - "God is. . . does. . . ."**

\*Praise in \_\_\_\_\_ terms for God's being (who He is) and activity (what He does)

- Usually contains a \_\_\_\_\_ to worship.
- Listing of Attributes & Actions, characteristics, general deeds.
- Themes include the \_\_\_\_\_ & \_\_\_\_\_ of God.

Examples: Ps. 8, 29, 33, 95, 103-105, 113, 117, 135, 136, 145-150.

**4. MISCELLANEOUS - have a single form, a mixed form, or no identifiable form**

Trust - Ps 11, 16, 23, 62

Wisdom - Ps 1, 37, 49; 119 (torah song)

Exhortation - Ps 75, 81, 82

Salvation history - Ps 78, 114

Royal songs - Ps 45, 101, 110

Liturgies - Ps 15, 68, 132-134

**\*HOW CAN YOU BENEFIT FROM STUDYING THE PSALMS?**

1. They can \_\_\_\_\_ you.
2. They can help you \_\_\_\_\_.
3. They can help you \_\_\_\_\_.
4. They can help you \_\_\_\_\_ the pain of life.
5. They can help you \_\_\_\_\_ to God more \_\_\_\_\_.

**\*WHAT CAN YOU DO NOW?**

**WHEN YOU'RE FEELING THE DARKNESS**  
(Psalm 13)

**\*HOW DO YOU PRAY WHEN YOU'RE FEELING THE DARKNESS?**

\_\_\_\_\_ (1,2) (The \_\_\_\_\_ section)

- 1) *How long, O Lord? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me?*  
2) *How long must I wrestle with the thoughts in my soul and every day have sorrow in my heart?  
How long will my enemy triumph over me?*

Characteristics:

\_\_\_\_\_ (3,4) (The \_\_\_\_\_ section)

- 3) *Look on me and answer, O Lord my God. Give light to my eyes, or I will sleep in death:*  
4) *my enemy will say, "I have overcome him," and my toes will rejoice when I fall.*

Characteristics:

\_\_\_\_\_ (5,6) (The \_\_\_\_\_ section)

- 5) *But I trust in your unfailing love; my heart rejoices in your salvation.*  
6) *I will sing to the Lord, for He has been good to me.*

Characteristics:



CRIES OF PAIN, SONGS OF PRAISE  
Session 6

Ted Ewing

**WHEN DARKNESS ENDS**  
(Psalm 126)

Historical context:

***\*DARKNESS DOESN'T LAST FOREVER.***

**I. As we LOOK BACK into the past, (1-3)**

Image:

Meaning:

**II. and LOOK TO GOD in the present, (4)**

Image:

Meaning:

**III. we can LOOK FORWARD to the future. (5,6)**

Image:

Meaning:

STORYTELLING PRAISE - Psalm 30

**\*WHAT ARE THE CHARACTERISTICS OF NARRATIVE PRAISE PSALMS?**

\_\_\_\_\_ section  
Characteristics:

- 1) I will exalt you, O Lord,  
for you lifted me out of the depths  
and did not let my enemies gloat over me.
- 2) O Lord my God, I called to you for help  
and you healed me.
- 3) O Lord, you brought me up from the grave;  
you spared me from going down into the pit.
- 4) Sing to the Lord, you saints of his;  
praise his holy name.
- 5) For his anger lasts only a moment,  
but his favor lasts a lifetime;  
weeping may remain for a night,  
but rejoicing comes in the morning.

\_\_\_\_\_ section  
Characteristics:

Need:

- 6) When I felt secure, I said,  
"I will never be shaken."
- 7) O Lord, when you favored me,  
you made my mountain stand firm;  
but when you hid your face, I was dismayed.

Cry:

- 8) To you, O Lord, I called;  
to the Lord I cried for mercy.
- 9) "What gain is there in my destruction, in my  
going down into the pit? Will the dust praise  
you? Will it proclaim your faithfulness?"
- 10) Hear, O Lord, and be merciful to me;  
O Lord, be my help."

Deliverance:

- 11) You turned my wailing into dancing;  
you removed my sackcloth  
and clothed me with joy.

\_\_\_\_\_ section  
Characteristics:

- 12) that my heart may sing to you and not be silent.  
O Lord my God, I will give you thanks forever.

**\*WHAT ARE THE MAJOR THEMES THAT THE LANGUAGE SUGGESTS?**

- \_\_\_\_\_ from \_\_\_\_\_.
- \_\_\_\_\_ turned into \_\_\_\_\_.
- \_\_\_\_\_ because " \_\_\_\_\_."

CRIES OF PAIN, SONGS OF PRAISE

Ted Ewing

Session 8

A CALL TO WORSHIP (Psalm 95)

**\*WHAT ARE THE THREE PARTS OF  
DESCRIPTIVE PRAISE PSALMS?**

**\*WHAT DO WE DO WITH KNOWLEDGE  
ABOUT GOD? (according to Ps 95)**

**1. CALL TO PRAISE (1-2)**

**Worship God exuberantly.**

Come, let us sing out in joy to the Lord;  
let us shout aloud to the Rock of our salvation.  
Let us come before Him with thanksgiving and  
let us extol Him with music and song.

**2. CAUSE FOR PRAISE (3-5)**

For the Lord is the greatest God,  
and the greatest King above all gods.  
In His hand are the depths of the earth,  
and the mountain peaks belong to Him.  
The sea is His, for He made it,  
and His hands formed the dry land.

**\* (Call To Praise repeated) (4)**

**Worship God reverently.**

Come, let us worship, and  
let us bow down;  
let us kneel before the Lord our Maker;

**\* (Cause For Praise repeated) (7-8)**

for He is our God and we are the people He shepherds,  
and the flock under His care.

**3. CONCLUSION (9b-11)**

**Obey God faithfully.**

Today, if you hear His voice, "do not harden your hearts as  
you did at Meribah, as you did that day at Massah in the desert,  
where your fathers tested and tried me, even though they had  
seen my work. For forty years I loathed that generation. I  
said, 'They are a people whose hearts wander, and they have  
not known my ways.' So I declared an oath in my anger, 'They  
shall never enter my rest.'"

TWO PATHS: A STUDY IN CONTRASTS  
(Psalm 1)

**WHAT DOES THE PSALM TEACH?** *"The path you choose determines the journey you take."*  
**HOW DOES THE PSALM TEACH?** *"Through \_\_\_\_\_."*

- |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>1) <i>Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers.</i></p> <p>2) <i>But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on His law he meditates day and night.</i></p> <p>3) <i>He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers.</i></p> <p>6) <i>For the Lord watches over the way of the righteous.</i></p> | <p>4) <i>Not so the wicked! They are like chaff that the wind blows away.</i></p> <p>5) <i>Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous.</i></p> <p><i>but the way of the wicked will perish.</i></p> |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

1) LIFE PATH of the "righteous" (1-3, 6a)

LIFE PATH of the "wicked" (4-5, 6b)

2) MAP of the "righteous" (1-2)

MAP of the "wicked" (1-2)

3) CHARACTERISTICS of the "righteous" (3)

CHARACTERISTICS of the "wicked" (4)

4) DESTINY of the "righteous" (6)

DESTINY of the "wicked" (5-6)

**WHY IS THIS PSALM AT THE BEGINNING OF THE PSALTER?**

- It \_\_\_\_\_ on the Torah, the Psalter, and all of God's instruction.

## SONGS FOR THE JOURNEY OF LIFE

**HOW DO THE PSALMS RELATE TO LIFE?**

\*They \_\_\_\_\_ the \_\_\_\_\_ of life.

FORMAL elements:  
(in PSALMS)Personal elements:  
(in life)

- |    |    |
|----|----|
| 1. | 1. |
| 2. | 2. |
| 3. | 3. |
| 4. | 4. |

**HOW DO THE PSALMS RELATE TO THE CHRISTIAN LIFE?**

\*They \_\_\_\_\_ the \_\_\_\_\_ of life.

- They guide Christian \_\_\_\_\_ and encourage the honesty displayed by Jesus.
- They shape Christian \_\_\_\_\_ stories and point to Jesus as the One who saves.
- They facilitate Christian \_\_\_\_\_ and call the church to exalt Jesus.

**APPENDIX G**

**SEMINAR HANDOUTS**

**CRIES OF PAIN, SONGS OF PRAISE**  
**(A Seminar on Psalms)**

Some things you'll want to know . . .

*Cries of Pain, Songs of Praise* is a ten-hour seminar that will enable you to benefit from your own personal study of the book of Psalms. The seminar will instruct you how to study the poetry of Psalms by examining figurative language, figures of speech, parallelism, and psalm forms. In order to apply the skills you'll learn, we'll study five psalms together. Our final wrap-up session will demonstrate how the book of Psalms can help you relate to God and others through all of life's experiences--sorrow and joy, pain and pleasure, despair and hope.

The seminar is sponsored by Maranatha Chapel and Leaders For Christ. Our instructor is Ted Ewing, a Ph.D. candidate in Religious Education at Andrews University and former San Diego area pastor. Ted has spent over fifteen years in a teaching ministry. For the last two years he has worked exclusively on developing this Psalms seminar.

Your seminar packet has three sections. They contain: (1) Detailed, note-taking outlines we'll use in each session; (2) A list of assignments for your own follow-up study, or for a future Psalms class that you teach; and (3) A list of resources to enhance your own study of Psalms for years to come. This weekend will be a packed, exciting time of discovery. Let's ask God to sustain us in it and help us benefit from it as we seek together to profit from the Psalms' rich reservoir of wisdom.

***Cries of Pain, Songs of Praise Session Schedule***

*Friday, December 1, 1995*

6:45 - 9:45 pm

- Session #1 - How Poems Speak--The Figurative Language Of Psalms
- Session #2 - Figuring Out Figures Of Speech
- Session #3 - Communicating in Stereo--Four Types Of Parallelism

*Saturday, December 2, 1995*

8:00 am - 12:00 pm.

- Session #4 - Psalms That Look Alike--Four Psalm Forms
- Session #5 - When You're Feeling The Darkness (Psalm 13)
- Session #6 - When Darkness Ends (Psalm 126)
- Session #7 - Storytelling Praise (Psalm 30)

12:00 - 1:15 pm.

Lunch provided at the church.

1:15 - 4:30 pm.

- Session #8 - A Call To Worship (Psalm 95)
- Session #9 - Two Paths: A Study In Contrasts (Psalm 1)
- Session #10 - Songs For The Journey Of Life

### PSALM ASSIGNMENTS

The assignments below are designed to reinforce the skills and concepts learned in the ten sessions under which they are listed. You can use them as a follow-up to attending the Psalms seminar, or as future assignments for a group that you lead through this material. You may want to alter the assignment based upon the time available. Assignments should be completed after each session.

#### #1 - How Poems Speak--The Figurative Language of Psalms

1. The following assignment illustrates how our interpretation of a text is determined by our identification of its genre. Genre identification determines our reading strategy. This exercise is taken from *How To Read The Psalms* (1988) by Tremper Longman III, p. 21.

Read the following story under the title of the murder mystery, "Murder at Marplethorpe."

The clock on the mantelpiece said 10:30, but someone had suggested recently that the clock was wrong. As the figure of the dead woman lay on the bed in the front room, a no less silent figure glided rapidly from the house. The only sounds to be heard were the ticking of that clock and the loud wailing of an infant.

Read it again, asking yourself: Who is the dead woman and how did she die? Who is the silent figure? Why is the infant crying? What is the significance of the time? Record your answers.

Try to clear your mind now. Read the story a second time as a biography under the title, "The Personal History of David Marplethorpe." How do your answers to the questions change? Why?

2. Prose and poetry should be read and interpreted differently. Read the following texts of Scripture. How are they different? Why are they different?

- Compare Judges 4:21 with Judges 5:26-27.
- Compare Exodus 14:26-31 with Exodus 15:1-5.

#### #2 - Figuring Out Figures Of Speech

1. Identify the figures of speech in Ps 91 or a psalm of your choice.
2. List the ways in which the figures you identified are compared, then interpret them.



**#3 - Communicating in Stereo--Four Types of Parallelism**

1. Identify the types of parallelism in Pss 29, 120, and 119:97-104.
2. Identify the types of parallelism in the following passages outside of Psalms:  
- Jonah 2:2-9 and Exodus 15:1-18

**#4 - Psalms That Look Alike--Four Psalm Forms**

1. Identify the forms of Pss 49, 33, 113, 3, 51.
2. Identify the forms of Pss 8, 15, 73, 6, 9. (These are more difficult.)

**#5 - When You're Feeling The Darkness (Psalm 13)**

1. Identify the sections of Ps 44 (a lament-petition psalm).
2. Identify the sections of Ps 51 (a lament-petition psalm). (This is more difficult.)

**#6 - When Darkness Ends (Psalm 126)**

1. Identify the sections of Ps 80 (a community lament-petition psalm).
2. Can you think of times in history (world, national, and personal) when a community lament would have been appropriate? What might it look like today for a group to lament together?

**#7 - Storytelling Praise (Psalm 30)**

1. Identify the sections of Pss 18 and 118 (narrative praise psalms).
2. Using the form of the narrative praise psalm, write out your own story (either of a recent answer to prayer, or your conversion story) and share it with someone.

**#8 - A Call To Worship (Psalm 95)**

1. Identify the sections of Pss 33 and 135 (descriptive praise psalms).
2. Write your own psalm of descriptive praise using imagery and aspects of God's character that are meaningful to you.

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**#9 - Two Paths: A Study In Contrasts (Psalm 1)**

1. Read Pss 15, 78, and 23. Identify the liturgy, the salvation history psalm, and the psalm of trust. On what did you base your choice?
2. Study how contrast is used in Ps 37 (another wisdom psalm).

**#10 - Songs For The Journey Of Life**

1. Meditate on the following quote by Walter Brueggemann about the importance of the psalms of lament. What do you think about it? Record your thoughts and discuss it with others.
2. Meditate on the following quotes by Patrick Miller and Claus Westermann and the importance of praise. What do you think about them? Record your thoughts and share them with others.

## THE IMPORTANCE OF LAMENT

"I think that serious religious use of the lament psalms has been minimal because we have believed that faith does not mean to acknowledge and embrace negativity. We have thought that acknowledgment of negativity was somehow an act of unfaith, as though the very speech about it conceded too much about God's 'loss of control.'

"God [is] one who is present in, participating in, and attentive to the darkness, weakness, and displacement of life. . . . Life is understood to be a pilgrimage or process through the darkness. . . .

"It is no wonder that the church has intuitively avoided these psalms. They lead us into dangerous acknowledgment of how life really is. They lead us into the presence of God where everything is not polite and civil. They cause us to think unthinkable thoughts and utter unutterable words. Perhaps worst, they lead us away from the comfortable religious claims of 'modernity' in which everything is managed and controlled. In our modern experience, but probably in every successful and affluent culture, it is believed that enough power and knowledge can tame the terror and eliminate the darkness. . . . But our honest experience, both personal and public, attests to the resilience of the darkness. The remarkable thing about Israel is that it did not banish or deny the darkness from its religious enterprise. It embraces the darkness as the very stuff of new life. Indeed, Israel seems to know that new life comes from nowhere else."

- Walter Brueggemann, *The Message of the Psalms*, pp. 52-53.

## THE IMPORTANCE OF PRAISE

"It is only within a particular understanding of this world and all of reality that praise does make sense. If the world is just here, then praise makes no sense. If the world is created, then all its inhabitants and all the elements of the cosmos should give praise. . . . So in a very real way, praise evokes a world; it suggests a different understanding of reality than everything else we encounter seems to do. In the midst of the mundane, praise points to the transcendent. Thus one of the most important things that happens when the congregation prays the prayers and sings the hymns of the Psalter. . . . is that it gives explicit and clear testimony to the reality of God in a God-denying or God-indifferent world."

- Patrick Miller Jr., *The Psalms As Praise And Poetry*, p. 13

"Exalting is a part of existence. . . . [People] must surely exalt, admire, honor something. There is no real, full existence that does not in some way honor, admire, look up to something. All this was originally meant in the vocabulary of praise. God is so real, so much alive for the man in the Old Testament that all this is directed toward God. . . . The Psalms say that only where God is praised is there life."

- Claus Westermann, *Praise and Lament in the Psalms*, pp. 160-161

### RESOURCES FOR FURTHER STUDY

#### General works on Psalms

##### *Basic*

Bellinger, W. H., Jr. (1990). *Psalms: Reading and studying the book of praises*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson.

Longman, Tremper. (1988). *How to read the Psalms*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity.

Westermann, Claus (1980). *The Psalms: Their structure, content & message* (R. D. Gehrke, Trans.). Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House.

##### *Intermediate*

Anderson, Bernard W. (1970). *Out of the depths: The Psalms speak for us today*. Philadelphia: Westminster Press.

Brueggemann, Walter (1984). *The message of the Psalms: A theological commentary*. Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg.

Westermann, Claus (1981). *Praise and lament in the Psalms* (K. R. Crim & R. N. Soulen, Trans.). Atlanta, GA: John Knox Press.

Westermann, Claus (1989). *The living Psalms* (J. R. Porter, Trans.). Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.

##### *Advanced (Some knowledge of Psalms literature and/or Hebrew recommended)*

Gillingham, S. E. (1994). *The poems and psalms of the Hebrew Bible*. Oxford, England: Oxford University Press.

Parker, Don (1995). *Using biblical Hebrew in ministry*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America.

### RESOURCES FOR FURTHER STUDY

#### Works on reading and interpreting the Bible

##### Basic

Sproul, R. C. (1977). *Knowing Scripture*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity.

Ryken, Leland. (1984). *How to read the Bible as literature*. Grand Rapids, MI: Academie Books.

##### Intermediate

Fee, Gordon D., & Stuart, Douglas (1981). *How to read the Bible for all its worth: A guide to understanding the Bible*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

Longman, Tremper, & Ryken, Leland. (Eds.). (1993). *A complete literary guide to the Bible*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

##### Advanced

Osborne, Grant R. (1991). *The hermeneutical spiral: A comprehensive introduction to biblical interpretation*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity.

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### RECOMMENDED PSALM COMMENTARIES

#### Basic

Kidner, Derek. (1973). *Psalms 1-72*. Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries. Downer's Grove, IL: InterVarsity.

Kidner, Derek (1975). *Psalms 73-150*. Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries. Downer's Grove, IL: InterVarsity.

VanGemeren, W. A. (1991). *Psalms*. In F. E. Gaebelin (Ed.), The expositor's Bible commentary. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

#### Intermediate

Mays, James L. (1994). *Psalms*. Interpretation Bible Commentary. Louisville, KY: John Knox.

Stuhlmueeller, Carroll (1983). *Psalms 1 & 2*. Old Testament Message. Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier.

#### Advanced (Some knowledge of Hebrew recommended, but not necessary)

Allen, Leslie C. (1983). *Psalms 101-150*. Word Biblical Commentary. Waco, TX: Word.

Craigie, Peter C. (1983). *Psalms 1-50*. Word Biblical Commentary. Waco, TX: Word.

Tate, Marvin E. (1990). *Psalms 51-100*. Word Biblical Commentary. Dallas, TX: Word.

## APPENDIX H

### FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW GUIDE AND TRANSCRIPT

### Introductory Statement

I want to begin by briefly explaining why we're here. We want to learn from you about how attending this seminar has affected you. We are especially interested in how it has affected you emotionally and spiritually. Our purpose during this time is not to come to consensus, but to gather a whole range of your perceptions, feelings, opinions, and thoughts about your experience of the seminar. The main reason we're doing this in a group is because people often clarify how they feel about something as they interact with other people. They formulate their opinions and identify their feelings as they listen to the opinions and feelings of others. We're trying to capitalize on this human tendency.

### Discussion Questions

I'd like to begin by having you think about the last two days--the things you learned, the thoughts and feelings you've had. You may even want to jot down a few notes if you think that would help. And then I'll ask four questions for us to discuss.

1. As you think about your experience here the past two days, what are some of the ways this seminar has affected you?
2. Specifically, we're interested in learning about how you may have been affected emotionally and spiritually. What kinds of thoughts and feelings were you aware of having during the seminar? And what kind of thoughts and feelings are you having now?
3. We'd also like to know about how you think this seminar will affect you in the future. Do you think your experience of this seminar will have any implications for your life, and if so, what will they be? (e.g., In your relationship with God, thoughts about God, feelings toward God, intentions, motivations.)
4. Is there anything else you think we need to know to understand how this seminar has affected you?



Kurt: We came up with a little statement that explains the purpose of this time. So, I'll read that and then we can proceed more informally. I'll begin by just briefly explaining why we're here. Mostly, we want to learn from you how attending this seminar has affected you. I'll break from this and just say a couple things about that. I was thinking, you've been taking these tests--Ted just said you've taken 20 tests over the last 24 hours. This is different from that in that a) This is not a test; and b) We are definitely not looking for any right answers here. The point of this whole discussion right now is to give just as clear and as broad an understanding of how being here and attending the seminar has affected you. So, I really want to underscore that there is no party line. We're interested in a whole range of effects that you're interested in discussing. There are two in particular. We're interested in hearing how it's affected you emotionally. Whatever that means to you, I'll just use the word, *emotionally*. You might think of feelings, whatever, how it's affected you emotionally, as well as spiritually. But again, we'll use *spiritually* in a broad sense, and maybe in a more narrow sense in terms of your relationship with God, thoughts about God. So whatever comes to your mind about either of those ideas--emotionally and spiritually--we're interested in knowing more about. And I think all of this, ultimately, goes to inform Ted about what this process was like. So, let's see if there's anything I left out here.

We do it in a group because some interesting things happen when you talk about this kind of thing in a group. You can hear other people's responses and that often triggers your own responses when you come to the realization, "Oh, I was thinking that same thing," or "No, I wasn't thinking that, but when this person gave that answer it made me think of these different things that I hadn't thought of before." And we think that's really good stuff. It sort of makes it a very rich experience. So it's not like we're trying to get a pure answer. We're trying to get a whole range of answers, so if other people trigger thoughts for you, that's interesting, too, for the purposes of this part of the day. So does that give you a clear enough sense of what we're up to here?

Group: Yes.

Kurt: Any questions about that? Okay. I have about four questions here and I promise you we'll be done, I'll say, we started at a quarter 'til on my watch, we'll definitely be done by quarter 'til and maybe earlier depending on how things go. So we won't be here more than an hour total. Is that okay with you? Does that fit your schedule?

Group: Uh-huh.

**Kurt:** Okay. What I'm going to do is I'm going to ask these four questions and they'll all be interrelated, but we'll sort of go through them one at a time. And, uh, I'd like to hear from each of you in response to each of the questions, but if you don't feel like answering them, or you just don't have anything to say, that's fine, too. There's no pressure to answer, but I would like to hear from all of you. So let me begin with this. Maybe you could just think for a couple of minutes about the last 24 hours. Maybe think about the kinds of things that you've learned, the kinds of impressions that you're left with, maybe some of the things that you felt, maybe spiritual ideas--ideas about God, ideas about your own life. All of that stuff is the stuff that we would be interested in. Just think about that and maybe take a minute to just jot down any ideas that occur to you, any words, or anything that stands out about how this experience has affected you, in any of those ways--thoughts, feelings, emotions, spirituality. If you want to jot something down, go ahead, and we'll use that to begin our discussion. (Pause.)

It looks like you've all been able to jot down something, so why don't we go ahead and begin. I think we'll just begin with a more general question and I'd like to hear from all of you if that's possible. The general question would be this: As you have thought about this experience of the last 24 hours, how many hours exactly was the seminar?

**Dan:** Ten.

**Kurt:** Well, ten then. What are some of the ways that the seminar has affected you? What comes to your mind in terms of some of the effects you think it's had on you?

**Joe:** I think Ted made an initial statement that the Psalms were written so that you can feel like you can relate to them. And a couple of them really struck home.

**Kurt:** Is that right?

**Joe:** Definitely. And it really sparked an interest in maybe studying the Psalms further in this sort of a structured way.

**Kurt:** So you related to them, and [have] an interest in studying them further?

**Joe:** Yeah, but with a structure as opposed to, he had mentioned also that you normally read it, or at least I used to read it like a paperback. But now, if you understand it in the structure, the form, there is much more meaning behind it.

- Kurt: Okay. I think you used the word "struck home," Joe. Was there anything in particular that struck home for you? Anything in general?
- Joe: Um, it will come up.
- Kurt: Yeah. I'd like to know more about that if you, okay, so you related to it, related to the Psalms, and developed an interest in studying them with this structure that you learned about. Good.
- Mary: The commonality of the human condition. Um, to me it was interesting to see more how other people reacted when they were in the same circumstances with their depression, whatever. They reacted, probably, in a better way than we do. There's some very good things we could research on that.
- Kurt: In seeing how other people reacted in, you mentioned the human condition, do you have a sense of how that affected you, seeing those reactions?
- Mary: Oh, I liked some of David's reactions better than I liked mine. (Group laughter.) And then the way he always, no matter how depressed and down he got, he did see God and hope at the end of the tunnel.
- Kurt: You know, this is, I'm getting ahead of myself into the third or fourth question here, maybe I'll just throw out the question. One of the things we're interested in is how you think having been part of this seminar will affect you in the future. So, I guess I was just thinking Mary, as you were saying that, I was just wondering, and maybe you can just think about this and answer later, what kinds of effects do you think it might have on how you live your life? Or things like that in the future. Are there any implications that this would have for the future? So, I'll just throw it out to think about for now, but we'll come back to it. So, you like just sort of seeing people experiencing the human condition and seeing how other people reacted, and saw some reactions that you actually liked better than your own? Good.
- Karen: I think I had a similar reaction to Joe where I felt like, it made me realize, just overall, attending this made me realize how little actual study I do versus just reading. And it made me get excited more about, I feel like I want to, I want to study again. And, um, although this was so condensed that it was hard to take it all in in such a short period of time.
- Dan: Yes.

Karen: It made me feel like I really would like to, I'd like to learn more in a more in-depth fashion.

Kurt: By the way, feel free to ask each other questions if you hear something that somebody says that you're curious about or want to ask a question about. I would encourage that. I think it becomes a richer exercise that way. But I do have a question. I was interested, Karen, you were just saying that you recognized how little studying you do, or something like that.

Karen: Yeah. In the past couple of years I haven't done study like this kind of study.

Kurt: Did that have any particular effect on you to recognize that, or think about it that way, have that realization?

Karen: Well, it made me feel like, it made me realize that it's harder for me to study this way because I haven't done it in a while. And, um, and I also feel like it's exciting to learn something new.

Mark: I can work off of that from what Karen said because I often times, many times in my life will pick up a subject and go into studying like that. And ever since, it was interesting that it was this that did it, but ever since our little fun episode there at Green Valley, I've had nothing to sink my teeth into. There's probably been something, but nothing that has stimulated me to put my teeth into and take a good bite out of and get back in and spend the time and energy that it takes. You know, there's a lot of difference in studying like this and reading the Bible. And like you said, it takes a lot of work and energy, but it's extremely challenging and extremely rewarding, and very stimulating for your whole, wholeness of your person, and your whole life. And there hasn't been anything. So it's kind of interesting with the mix of people that were here from Green Valley, and just the friendships, seeing everybody, and just the encouragement of being together, and having fun together, and enjoying one another's company, around a similar topic that we're all interested in. And then having that, the message, coming through to stimulate me to get back in, I'm looking forward to the next six months or longer, whatever it will be. I'm sure it's going to be an ongoing thing to just start taking these things. You know, I learn that way. I learn very little in the short term. If I'm going to learn something it's going to come to me through a long-term study and a lot of effort and sweat. And I'm looking forward to that, being in it. In fact, it made me think as you were talking, "Gee, it would be fun to get some of these people together for a Bible study," collect responses from people, take this thing on and go with it, and have some fun with it for a while.

**Matt:** Yeah. I had a couple of thoughts about it. One does relate to what Karen has said, that I don't feel like I've been in any in-depth study. I mean, when do daily devotions of five to ten minutes, you know, in the morning, and read a passage but you don't really meditate on it, in terms of really continuing to chew on it for the rest of the day. But then again, it made me thankful in looking at all of this material, because I recognize so much of it in what we are singing in songs in the choir at church. I recognized a lot of familiar passages. And I deal with such negative events generally, throughout the day as a Dean of Students, that when I play a couple songs on the way to work and go to work, and then have the relief of going to choir in the middle of the week, and singing these songs, I feel like I have to have that to energize myself. And this was a reminder of how good it is to be able to praise god even in the midst of some very troubling life situations that sometimes I tend to be in the middle of for one reason or another. So, I was grateful to sort of think about the worthwhile-ness of this kind of study.

**Kurt:** Was there anything in particular about it Matt, that was a reminder of that? Or was it just being exposed to the whole experience?

**Matt:** It was occasionally, as the words on our Psalm sheets were those of songs that we've sung recently, I said, "Oh, it's good to know that." And it makes me feel like, "I'm going to take my Bible to choir practice." And actually, when we're singing something, if the director hasn't told us, "This is scriptural," then I'd like to find out what it's based on. Sometimes he does mention where it comes from, and other times he doesn't, but it has a ringing familiarity. And so much of what we do sing, I realize, is based on scriptural thought or maybe even direct phrases from the Psalms or some part of Scripture, but particularly the Psalms.

**Dirk:** I'll go out there. This really, really showed me how little I know on just any passage and how deep you can get into it. I've seen a lot of how deep you can get and I've kind of looked into it a little bit, but this really showed me how far away I am from really understanding something like the Psalms, and really, like you were saying, just really making it so that you want to learn it and get in it, and learn it a lot more than you can in ten hours.

**Kurt:** So, recognizing how little you know and how deep you can get was sort of an encouraging thing to you, in terms of wanting to know more or learn more?

**Dirk:** Yeah.

Kurt: Good. Thanks. I think in this first round I'd like to hear from everybody, if that's possible. Let's see, Dan, and Jen, and Jill.

Jill: I was looking at, I'm not a scholar or a school person who likes to study. I'm the opposite side, the artistic side. And I've always read the Psalms whenever I'm really, really sad, I search through trying to find something that matches me. And I read it and oh, it just makes me feel so good that somebody else has been there. And I like, I think what Mary said, that they always say the good thing at the end. You know, I'm in the pits and I'm not thinking of the good stuff, God. But going through this study has, I don't mind doing some of the things that he has shown for the study. It gave me the *want to* to look into some of it. Like, I think one of those things he was talking about, you know, the one that this says a sentence and then he says the same sentence underneath it because he's trying to re-emphasize what he's talking about, and then the next one was building on each sentence. And seeing how he does that, and contrasting. I thought, "I never thought of looking at it that way," or historically, or anything else like that, you know where the person's coming from themselves. I'm always looking at me. And that's made me think, "I don't mind doing that." I don't mind, and I would like to go ahead and get in and look at it myself. And the next time I get into the Psalms, I'm going to look at it from a different perspective. With these notes, follow along what I'm reading, then look into a little bit more.

Kurt: So you think some of the notes will actually guide some of that study that you might do in the future?

Jill: Oh, yeah. I'm going to keep the notes because I think, let's face it, we're all going to hit times of despair and we're going to run for the Psalms anyway. Whether we study or not, we're going to run for the Psalms, and having the notes, because I have a place to put my notes, I can go ahead and pull them out and pull them up again to help guide me through them again. I think it will help me a lot.

Joe: Yeah, definitely. It was a format that Ted brought up today.

Dan: Yeah.

Kurt: A format to follow in studying?

Joe: Yeah. Well, it was just a structure to understand them.

Jill: And for a non-studying person like me, whenever I jump into the Psalms, I'm saying, "I really need help right now." And not reading in

the Gospels or anything, but just wanting that lament. Being able to go back to the structure, I'm going to get a little more out of this other than just me whining. (Laughter.)

Jen: Yeah.

Kurt: What do you think, Jill? What do you think the effects of that will be on you, now that you have this structure you can follow in the future when you go back and look at some Psalms? Do you have a sense that that will have any particular effect on you?

Jill: Well, I think that instead of just, like I said, whining to the Lord and looking at David whining to the Lord, I'll be able to study a little bit on why God put it there in the first place. Like Dirk said, dig a little bit deeper than just the surface part. Instead of leaning on my concordance here (she points to her husband and the group laughs), I can go ahead and look myself. And so I think that the structure will help a person like me that's non-scholarly.

Kurt: So looking at it yourself will open up some possibilities or some ideas that maybe you wouldn't have had otherwise?

Jill: A whole lot!

Kurt: Good.

Jen: I was kind of like Jill. I mean, sometimes when you're feeling like, ugh, you don't understand what's going on in your life, you try to find something in Psalms because it relates to you. And I think this last lesson, was like, describe sadness, loss. Well, you experience that. And the next thing was you question God. And the third thing was, what was it?

Dan: Narrative and the feeling of relief.

Jen: Yeah. The feeling of relief that your circumstances can change. And then the gratitude, praise, after that. But before, I never really looked at it that way. I mean, you might read something in the Psalms and it sort of feels like something that you feel inside, too, but to look at it that way. Hey, you're going to have this response first, and this is probably going to come, but hang in there because this is going to come in the future, or later. But you're going to see an end product to your pain and it is going to go away. I think you see that in small things every day. But, I mean, Ted. His teaching is, it's concise and it's something you take in your head and don't forget. You're going to use it.

- Kurt:** So, his teaching made a difference in terms of being able to pick up those ideas as well?
- Jen:** Definitely. Especially when you haven't heard it in a while. It's like, wow, I forgot how good Ted is! (Laughter.) You know what I mean, somebody that can communicate to you, and you enjoy listening to, and it's not notes like after being at church where you just throw them away or you don't even take them with you. It's something you're going to keep, I think.
- Kurt:** Dan, what would you say?
- Dan:** Yeah. I would just echo all of the above. I think it just made me want to do it more. It was a little overwhelming to get it all at one time. I was kind of brain dead towards the end. And I've read the Psalms all my life and thought I was pretty familiar with them, but I saw a lot of things I haven't seen before. So, I just need to go through it more slowly, go more in-depth. You know, have Ted get a church down here so we can . . . . (Laughter.)
- Kurt:** That's one of the future implications? (Laughter.) As you've been hearing people respond to this question about the effects, is there anything else that's come to your mind? I'm hearing some real common themes here: generating an interest in studying more, the fact that the structure or the format was particularly useful in terms of understanding as well as being a way to study, we've heard about people being stimulated, challenged. Mike, you talked about the notion of the community coming together, both the community from the past and even the possibility of a community for the future as part of the benefit of this or at least the effect of it. Um, anything else outside of those responses, which I think are really rich? Any other effects that you're aware of at this point?
- Mary:** Well, when you talk about studying more, one of the things that Ted does when he teaches is, depending on your level, you get different depths of teaching out of it. And that's one thing that I think you can do from the Psalms. You can go as deeply into it study-wise as you want, because he gave us different levels. And we can build on whatever level we're at at the time, then go deeper.
- Kurt:** So, somehow you recognize those different levels through his teaching style, and then the application is recognizing that you can build on whatever level you're on?



Mary: Right, because he builds very logically.

Kurt: Good, good. Anything else that comes to mind before we move on to the next question? You may not have any additional thoughts to this because we've already been talking about this, but let me name this question specifically. As I said, earlier, one of the things that we're especially interested in is what might be some of the emotional and spiritual affects of having been here and having taken part in this seminar. So, I guess if you think about the words emotion, or spirit, or spiritual, and think about this seminar, are there any things that you're aware of, any ways that you've been affected that you would call either emotional or spiritual or something that's close to those categories, that you think, something that has happened to you, that you're aware of occurring to you? And I would say that many of the things you've already mentioned fall into those categories. I'm just wondering if those words conjure up anything different for you: emotional or spiritual or thoughts and feelings. I would be interested in any particular feelings that you've had. You know, it sounds like it was evocative of lots of different experiences. So I was wondering if you could name any of the feelings that you've had during the seminar.

Dirk: Yeah. With me, it was strange seeing Ted back up here speaking again, because the last time, probably the last time I saw him speak would be at church, being our pastor. And I just remembered back when he was talking about it, and I had never ever heard it from his perspective before, things that happened. And it just really brought up some thoughts in my mind of what I was going through back then and how, you know, well, that's the other side of the picture. Now I've never seen that before and I didn't deal with it that way. I feel it was very helpful in bringing up certain things, um, with what happened back then. And how things in my life maybe still need to change from the way they were before that and the way they are now, even three years later. I'm still affected by it and I still need to change from it. So, even though it was completely off the subject of the Psalms, it was a situation that he brought up because of it, and it really affected me that way.

Kurt: Well, it was a part of, I suppose, the illustrations he was using to talk about the Psalms and the principles that had that effect on you.

Dirk: Uh-huh.

Kurt: Interesting. Are you, it sounds like, you mentioned change and sort of learning some things you hadn't known and having to reevaluate, perhaps, your own experience. Any particular emotions that you were aware of feeling in that experience?

**Dirk:** Well, at that time, I think when he left I was about a year and a half, two years out of high school. So, there were other things, the high school group at that time, when you get really involved in a high school group, I don't know if anybody has, but you get really emotionally attached to it. And the high school group carries on to college, and after that everything happens and the whole church was split. And it just seemed, all that time, I mean, like he was talking about difficulty can make you bitter or better. I did that. Even to this day I still am, a lot more than I should be. But it really brought up the issue of, well, you have to change some time. You've got to get back to where you were with God, with just getting your life back to where it was. It really is pushing me that way, in my mind.

**Kurt:** Good, good. I think that's an excellent illustration of the kinds of things we're interested in, some of the emotional impact. Thanks for sharing that, Dirk. Others of you, any particular feelings that you were aware of?

**Joe:** Yeah. I got slapped in the face during the seminar. (Laughter.)

**Kurt:** So, let's see, slapped in the face. . . .

**Joe:** No, no. I mean there were some feelings that were so strong, impressions between me and my wife, that I sat there and jotted down notes.

**Kurt:** Is that right?

**Joe:** Yeah. I can't pinpoint what it was that Ted had brought up, but uh, I think maybe by just concentrating on the Psalms, but yeah, definite emotions.

**Kurt:** You said, "slapped in the face."

**Joe:** Meaning that it was so evident, the feelings I had. So I had to jot them down.

**Kurt:** So, it sounds like a rich evoking of different feelings and thoughts. So, in both cases it was sort of thinking about things and remembering things that weren't directly related to what was going on.

**Joe:** I think, primarily for my situation, it was just the concentration led to a real clear thought.

**Kurt:** The concentration?

- Joe: On the Psalms, or possibly, like I said, I can't pinpoint it, but the seminar itself just brought about real clear thoughts.
- Kurt: So, just even the process of concentrating.
- Jen: Well, you're just kind of focused and saying, "It's clear, now. I know what you're talking about." I guess I understand what you mean when I get more focused.
- Joe: And you see it from a different level, too. You don't see it from a circumstance in your life, you see it sort of outside of the bubble. Do you know what I'm saying? You can visualize it from a different plane, so to speak.
- Mark: I've got to echo a lot of Dirk's feelings, too, and such, and what Joe was saying with that "focus." And I was trying to figure out why I was feeling that back as we were going over it, and I think what it is, what was coming out of me was this feeling, these emotions of "Gee, there's a lot of emotion still, tucked under." Whether it be bitterness, anger, frustration, all these emotions start coming up. And then you start wondering why and I started thinking, "Well, it's because the study of the Psalms," which is so much of what we were doing, "is the study of yourself so much," which we have a tendency to ignore. So, in doing a study of this nature and getting down to the level of it, hearing Ted with his illustrations, going into his emotions to bring out what was actually happening in those psalms--of course, that's why you go to the Psalms, because you want that crying out, or whatever is going on your life--well then, consequently, when you're in it, and you're studying it, well, you're studying yourself. You can't get around that. Whatever is going on in your life is right there in front of you and it brings it out. It's going to stir up whatever feelings are there. And he did a good job with it.
- Kurt: Interesting. So, you found some feelings being stirred up?
- Mark: Oh yeah, yeah. Absolutely.
- Dirk: Ventilation, I guess you could say.
- Kurt: Ventilation.
- Dirk: Sure.
- Jill: Well, everybody has hard times in their life, really, really deep, deep valleys in their life, and I think that's why people go to the Psalms,

because David did, too, and all of the people that wrote it. But I think what I found so neat was, kind of like Joe was saying, you get a different perspective on your own problem because somebody else has been there and you're looking at his problem and how he handled it, and how he came through it, and how he at the end of each one of those, he praised God. God was in control of everything and God was God. And I thought, you know, the next time I go through one of these deep things again, or whether I'm wrestling with an old one that's still there, I've got to be sure to do it, to write my own psalms and do it like the psalmists did. And writing the problem there, and then you cry out to God with it, and then you sit there and God relieves part of this, and you sit and praise Him. And I think, I've got to always have that praise there, and see that whenever I'm in the deepest part of it, to see that these other steps are coming, even though I can't see them there. But they are coming.

Karen: I have to say too, that I think the emotions I felt here--because I was trying to think when you said emotions, I thought, "I don't know what emotions I really felt"--but the emotions I felt were because of what Ted talked about. And I think he couldn't have brought better illustrations, because so many of us were from Green Valley. I think we related exactly to what he was saying. And like the lament psalms and stuff, boy, when he started talking about that--I, you don't even want to think about some of that--it does bring out, I mean you feel that hurt because you know exactly what he's talking about. But I think it really, I felt really good because I realized hearing Ted, that he's come through that. And that was really neat for me to hear that for him. Some of it, you feel sad when you hear it, but one thing almost made me crack up laughing: when he was talking about the policeman and they called the police. Because I was there! (Laughter.) And I thought, "It's not appropriate to laugh!" But it was funny. Now that I look back it's funny, but it wasn't at the time! And I think his illustrations brought out those emotions that we could all, or so many of us could relate to what he was saying, and that helped us relate, helped me relate to the Psalms.

Jen: Well, Joe and I were saying that, too. It's helpful when somebody is going to speak and they tell a small, little story about their life that you can relate to when they begin, before they start talking, that kind of makes it helpful.

Joe: You mean Ted's intro?

Jen: Oh yeah, yeah. His intro.

Joe: Yeah. He always brought up a descriptive episode in his life.

- Jill: It makes it so it's not some abstract thing he's trying to teach. He's teaching about a personal thing and then each one of us can relate to that.
- Kurt: Anybody else about this emotional, spiritual effects? Mary?
- Mary: I kind of got depressed because twenty years ago I studied Psalms a lot and I've forgotten most of it. And it's kind of depressing that I haven't been back to visit it in depth for a very long time. And I'm kind of regretting that. And the renewal of the interest.
- Kurt: So there was a renewed interest?
- Mary: Yes. So I felt relief, too. We'll get to praise the Lord later on. We know that's coming. I know that now.
- Jill: Right.
- Joe: We all have to change our "buts." (Laughter.)
- Jill: I loved that! That was my favorite thing, the whole thing about being on the wrong side of the "but." I thought, "Oh, I do that so much."
- Joe: Yeah, it made sense.
- Matt: I would relate also to mixed emotions here, I think, from yes, I loved the personal illustrations, but those personal illustrations, those of Ted, caused me to realize that I had some sense of loss from the breakup of a church group, and a family, and a fellowship that I really appreciated. And so, I felt like, yes, the Psalms are all about real life experiences. As you're sharing them I'm feeling still some of those emotions, and appreciating the teaching that's available to us through the Psalms, which are very honest and other people who are very honest, like Ted was in teaching. And it was good for me, although I still felt that sense of loss somewhat because I don't feel I get the depth of teaching sometimes that I experienced under his leadership, and that I experienced once again at this seminar. So, I think I want to seek that more than I have.
- Kurt: So, not only seeking, like other themes have been studying the Psalms more, but yours is even more general, seeking leadership and teaching.
- Matt: Yeah. The leadership and depth of study that's kind of missing.

**Kurt:** Okay. Interesting. Anything else around that question? These are very interesting and rich responses. Anything else you want to add to emotional impact, spiritual impact? (Pause.) Then let me sort of move the discussion into the third question. It was really a little future-oriented and it's about the implications of this for your life. The general question is the effect of having been part of this seminar in the future. And you've all sort of hinted at that if not outright stated it in terms of wanting to study more. So, you might say some of those things or other ideas that come to mind. Let me throw out another, a couple of ideas about this question. For instance, do you think your experience of this seminar will have any implications for you life? And if so, what do you think they'll be? Will it make any difference to how you live your life, for some of the things you do in your life? Will it make any difference in your relationship with God, thoughts about God, feelings toward God, any of your intentions or motivations? There's a lot there, but it's mostly future-oriented. Will it make a difference in your life? Or do you think it might? Do you have a hunch that it might? That's the general notion. What do you think about that?

**Mark:** I can start with that one, in the sense that the emotions that were stirred up, and the bringing me back to things that were just set aside. In doing so, when you do that kind of thing, you also have a tendency to become a little, what do you call it? *withdrawn*, I guess, is the word I'm looking for. *Withdrawing* because to step out, you've got to deal with those things. And the fun thing of it was, going through that, is the realization that, "Gee whiz, how many psalms do we have? And how many people have gone through so many things of greater magnitude or less magnitude?" But they're recorded there. The interest that you see that God has in this. If you believe in inspiration, you believe that He's interested in these kinds of emotions that are coming up inside of you. The problems, the struggles, the trials, the jubilation you have at times--you forget how interested God is in those things. And going back through and seeing these struggles, and Ted sharing his, and you're seeing the Psalms and the psalmists and what they went through, and some of those, it has stirred me up to come out of that isolation and say, "Hey God's been handling it for a few hundred years. I guess He can handle mine. It's no big deal." It was an encouragement to me in the next six months or whatever, to go through this study, and in the process, if you study the Psalms you're going to study yourself and I'm going to deal with things and have fun with them at the time of doing them. I'm going to look and learn. So it's a real stimulus to me. I'm going to take on the challenge of going through these lessons and working my way all the way through those psalms--all of them, whatever length of time it takes. And I think it will be a fun thing to do.

- Kurt:** I wanted to clarify something I think I heard you saying. Part of what I heard you saying, in terms of implications, is the studying part. But this other part about the withdrawing, but then, because God is interested in emotions, stirring you up to come out of isolation. Could you say any more about that? Were you referring to the studying part or something else?
- Mark:** Well, no. That's more on the personal level. The studying I'm hoping, and based on just what we got here today, I'm sure it will. But when you get in there and start dealing with those things, you have a tendency then to not be so isolated within those feelings and let those feelings isolate you from others, which I feel like it's done for me anyway. I've just not had any interest in being a part of other people so much in the last couple of years. So, it will encourage me, seeing all these people in the Psalms, going through those, and you become a part of them going through them. So, it will bring me, I hope, bring me back out of that to be a little more aware and a little more, not so much aware, but the desire to be with people and build friendships back up.
- Jill:** I think with me, too, it's changed my perspective on life and where hope is. There's hope. Because I deal a lot with, a lot of, I see people that are so hurting a lot of the time and I just find that I search out those people. But in my own life, it goes back to what I already talked about the darkness. I loved what he kept saying all through the seminar, "Darkness always gives way to the light." The darkness is there, but the light is coming. The morning is coming. Darkness always gives way to the light. And this is what the Psalms portray over and over and over again. I think that's the perspective I'll have, not only when I read the Psalms in the future, but also in my perspective on life. Whenever I am in something dark or my friend is in something dark, I can turn them that way. Look what the psalm is saying here. I mean it's not saying it, the words, but look at the way it is. This is dark, but then the light comes through. And so I think in my life that's how it has impacted me for the future.
- Kurt:** So a sense that when you or somebody else is in those dark times, you'll have this other thought about the light and the hope?
- Jill:** It's hope. It's a bigger hope instead of this little puny one.
- Kurt:** What do you think? How will that affect you, knowing that that's there, or having that to think about or talk about or read about, that hope? Will that have any particular effects on your life?
- Jill:** Oh, sure. I'll sure be a lot more cheerful person. After you go through

this set of rapids, you know it's calm right after this.

Kurt: Okay. Good, good. Other implications as you think about the future and ways that this may affect your life?

Karen: One of the things I just wrote down as I was taking some notes was, one of the things that I thought really struck me was, when he talked about the tree being planted firmly near the stream. You know you've read that verse so many times before, but he talked about it also is scorched by the sun. And I'd never thought about it that way before. So, that tree that's firmly planted as scorched by the sun, but it's established and so it's not going to wither up and die. So, I think that that's, you're not going to be like the chaff that gets blown around, you're going to be established, but you are going to be scorched by the sun. And we know that that's going to happen, but it just kind of hit me that, yeah, that's good to remember. It's something that I will remember as I go through rough times down the road. You can still be established.

Kurt: And remembering that?

Karen: I think that helps me to--helps you as you are going through rough times--remember that God holds you, you can be held firmly and planted firmly, but you're going to go through hard times. He mentioned, too, that Jan has learned to accept her journey. I thought, that's really a good thing to remember. He said he likes to get to the destination, and I know that's me.

Jill: That's me, too! (Laughter.) Mark likes the journey!

Dirk: Along the same lines, what it really made me realize is, and it made me question: Are my roots deep enough? When drought comes, am I still going to have nourishment, am I still going to have that water down deep? It really made me question and look in my life. Right now I don't have the group of people that I used to have around me. I don't have the relationship with God that I used to have, that when rough times came, people were surrounding me, or I was close enough to God that the drought would go over. But now, it makes me want that again because I know how much it's needed. Just like the verse was talking about, that having that tree with the roots deeply grounded is totally essential in life, or you're not going to make it.

Kurt: So, the implications might be doing something about that?

Dirk: Yeah. Uh-huh.



- Jill: And I'll come alongside and say, "There's hope!" (Laughter.)
- Mary: And as it gave us the incentive to study more, I felt that, along with the study, we're getting that good foundation. And we still have the confidence because we know God is going to provide that way out because we're well grounded. And it was kind of like an inter-weaving of being well grounded and God will be sure to be there.
- Kurt: And implications for you of those notions?
- Mary: Oh, get back to deeper Bible study, definitely, because of the many layers and everything. The Psalms, and the emotions in the Psalms, it's as though when everything's honky-dory, we know God is good. But He's not as good when everything's well as He is when He's just rescued us. Then He is really great. And I think we need to go through the depths of emotion, but we have to be seeing what process we're going through. And I think the Psalms are going to help toward that.
- Kurt: Anybody else? Implications that you think this might have, thoughts it evokes about your future, relationships, relationship with God?
- Matt: I mentioned the need to find study and deep study. I think part of that is turning to, besides the Psalms, literature that reflects Scripture, Christian literature, some of the books that Ted pointed us to and using those as an aid. Because that's been helpful to me in the past and I have not really done much of that recently. So, I think I'll put a book or two on my Christmas list and that will give me some material. I want to do that.
- Kurt: So, a real concrete application for your Christmas list?
- Matt: Yeah.
- Kurt: I'll sort of ask, anything else about this that you want to throw in before we ask, there's just one, brief, little follow-up question to this. Anything else about implications? Just to make sure that we cover all the territory, there was a lot of it: Have you had any thoughts about this discussion that maybe fall outside of some of the things that the majority of people have said? Do you have some thoughts about the effects or implications that maybe you know, are also there, but not necessarily the same as everybody else's? Other things that you can mention just so we know the whole range of what ways you've been affected, or the different kinds of thoughts you've had, different kinds of feelings, different kinds of implications you're thinking about? Anything else you would just want to say? Like, yeah this also happened for me and for

the record, anything else? Any thoughts?

**Matt:** As I was thinking about the conduct of this seminar, sort of how it flowed and moved and everything, I was sort of having the feeling that I'm sure Ted would have liked to incorporate this, perhaps if he were teaching this over a longer period of time, and that is bringing in illustrations of the music that reflects the Psalms.

**Dan:** Yeah.

**Jill:** I was thinking the same thing!

**Matt:** You know, I felt like, "Ted, did you bring your guitar?" (Laughter.)

**Jill:** That's what I was just going to tell him!

**Matt:** Or have Ted sing, you know. I mean, he's got a great voice that he kind of demonstrated. So, I think there could have been a little more activity related to the use of Psalms, and song, and worship or something, as we did the study.

**Jill:** At the end of each session, I thought, "We just studied this. Where's the music? Let's sing one of these songs at the very end." That's what I thought of! (Group laughter and agreement.)

**Kurt:** Do you have a sense of how that might have made a difference? What kind of difference that might have made in any particular way?

**Mark:** Well, Bert might not have fallen asleep as much. (Laughter.)

**Jill:** Oh, there's nothing like music to uplift my soul! And after a session like that, getting the oxygen in my brain and singing to Jesus out of the psalm that David or whoever had written, I think it would have just been uplifting.

**Karen:** Church starts in 25 minutes if you want to hear a great worship service!

**Jill:** Oh, it's Saturday night!

**Karen:** Yeah.

**Kurt:** Those are great. Anything else along those . . .

**Dan:** I think along those lines, I would have liked a little bit more of the last lesson, Lesson Ten, in the first lesson, just kind of knowing where it was

going. He opened with the frame of teaching somebody to fish so they could eat for the rest of their lives, and I kind of needed, What am I fishing for? And just a little stronger frame. He started this morning and after lunch with really strong frames, but I didn't have the sense of that last night. And just a little of the application. Okay, simile, metaphor, personification, I know these things, so how do I apply that? Even today I didn't get the tie-over of some of those things as strongly as I think I would have liked.

Kurt: That came through at the end?

Dan: Yep. The last lesson, when he was saying "Personal Elements" I was like, yeah, this is it. This is what I'm fishing for.

Kurt: Do you have a sense, Dan, of how that might have made a difference for you if you had a clearer frame right from the start?

Dan: Yeah. It would have. I was motivated because it was Ted teaching, but I think it would have motivated me even more. And I think that's where I missed the longer time frame, the homework, the practical stuff. And Ted, I know you would do this. (Laughter.) And the other application is, Ted, I'm going to buy your book whenever it comes out! (Laughter.) But that was just the one thing, I felt that it was a little more academic than practical. And that appeals to me, and that's something I need to be aware of. As a college teacher, I deal with the academic and so the emotional stuff, I'm trying to let that out more. I need more of the application.

Kurt: So, some value in having more application.

Mark: I'd echo a hardy amen to that, too.

Dan: And that's where the songs would have also, I was thinking the same thing. I was thinking, "Ted! Where's your guitar? How dare you show up without your guitar!"

Jill: That was okay, too. Let's just go for it guys. I almost came out of my seat and said, "Ted!" Then I thought, "Oh, man, it's this chocolate talking." (Laughter.)

Kurt: Great. Anything else you want to add before we're . . .

Jen: That's kind of weird, but I kind of felt opposite. Not opposite, but like, I was kind of excited about all this stuff. I haven't studied in school in a long time. So, it was like, this is kind of cool. I mean, words that I didn't know, or all those little . . .

- Jill: A simile and a personification? Things I haven't heard of in thirty years.
- Jen: Yeah. But it was like . . .
- Dan: And I teach that stuff!
- Jill: I've never heard that. Some of that stuff I've never even heard, and I thought, "I feel like I'm back in high school."
- Kurt: So, for you there was an appreciation just for studying again?
- Jen: Yeah, just studying, words that you haven't used in a long time or even heard of. And then he came to the practical.
- Dan: True. Yeah.
- Kurt: Final word, anybody? Or a message to Ted or anything? (Pause.) Well, I appreciate all of your comments and for staying around the extra time. Thank you very much. Ted will listen to this and transcribe it and I think it will really enrich both him and the product.

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### EDUCATION

- Ph.D. Religious Education** 1996  
Andrews University (Berrien Springs, MI).
- Master of Divinity** 1991  
International School of Theology (San Bernardino, CA).
- M. A. Biblical Studies** 1987  
International School of Theology (San Bernardino, CA).
- B. A. History** 1979  
Indiana University of Pennsylvania (Indiana, PA). Major: Ancient History.

### WORK EXPERIENCE

- College Lecturer** 1993  
William Tyndale College, Farmington Hills, MI. Youth Ministry Programming and Biblical Philosophy of Youth Ministry.
- Senior Pastor** 7/91 - 12/92  
Green Valley Church in San Diego, an Evangelical Free church. Preached weekly, planned the worship service, began a small group ministry, and directed a church staff of five.
- Associate Pastor** 6/89 - 6/90  
Coordinated the college and single adult ministry at Trinity Church (Evangelical Free), Redlands, CA. Taught a class on The Apostles Creed and led weekly worship services.
- Youth Pastor** 6/85 - 6/89, 9/80 - 9/83, 6/79 - 8/80  
Coordinated the ministry to junior high, senior high and college at Evangelical Presbyterian Church (Levittown, PA), 6/79-8/80, then moved to Highland, CA to help plant Trinity Evangelical Free Church.
- High School Teacher** 9/90 - 6/91, 9/83 - 6/85 - 6/88  
Taught Bible and U.S. History at Calvary Chapel Christian School in Redlands, CA in '90-'91. Taught Bible to grades 7-12 full-time until 6/85, then part-time from 9/85 - 6/88 at Arrowhead Christian Academy (Redlands, CA).