

# READING THE PSALMS TOGETHER

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For many Christians, the Psalms are one of the most familiar and precious parts of the Bible. They cover a wide range of human experiences and emotions, contain lots of memorable images and give us words to pray. Often we read individual psalms by themselves, but for RBT we'll read them all in order, starting with Book 1 (1–41).

Four important things to notice about Book 1:

- Most of these 41 psalms are **Psalms of David**, whose reign we read about in 1–2 Samuel. Some connect with specific events in his life. These psalms are therefore the words of a king, pointing us to a greater King, Jesus.
- The **first two psalms** give us an introduction to the whole book. They call us to follow the way of the righteous by delighting in God's words and taking refuge in his Son, the anointed King.
- A lot of the psalms are **laments**. These wrestle with difficult circumstances where it's hard to remember that the Lord reigns and cares for his people. They teach us about trusting God in challenging times.
- Although the psalms are mostly addressed to God, they are still **God-breathed words**, which teach us, train us and equip us for every good work.

## ADVICE FOR READING THE PSALMS

There are some extra resources you might find helpful on our website: [litchardmission.co.uk/rbt](http://litchardmission.co.uk/rbt).

If you're struggling with a passage, the **best thing you can do is ask God about it!** Also, remember we're reading together. Who in the church could you speak to?

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The Psalms use lots of **imagery**, like metaphors and similes. So the blessed person is a flourishing tree (1), the Lord is our shepherd (23) and we take refuge in the shadow of his wings (36). As you read, ask: What is this a picture of? How does it make me feel? Maybe choose one image to meditate on through the day.

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One common feature of Hebrew poetry is **parallelism**, where pairs of lines develop the same idea. Both lines may contain similar language, as in Psalm 24:

The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof,  
*the world and those who dwell therein.*

Or they may include a contrast, as in Psalm 1:

The Lord knows the way of the righteous,  
*but the way of the wicked will perish.*

We understand more of the psalm's message as we read both lines together and reflect on the differences.

Many psalms contain **imprecations** (words which call for the wicked to be judged) such as in Psalm 10: "Break the arm of the wicked and evildoer." At first glance, these may sound self-righteous or seem to contradict Jesus' command to love our enemies. We need to remember:

- These are prayers for God to act in justice, not expressions of personal vengeance;
  - They are prayers about God's enemies, not personal enemies;
  - The psalm writers all know they are sinners who rely on God's mercy;
  - One way these prayers are answered is through repentance, as sinners turn to the Lord (Psalm 2:12)
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## **A POSSIBLE READING PLAN**

You can read all of Book 1 by reading two shorter psalms on some days. Here's one way of doing that:

<b>1</b>	<b>9 &amp; 10</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>26 &amp; 27</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>3 &amp; 4</b>	<b>12 &amp; 13</b>	<b>20 &amp; 21</b>	<b>29 &amp; 30</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>5 &amp; 6</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>7</b>	<b>15 &amp; 16</b>	<b>23 &amp; 24</b>	<b>32 &amp; 33</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>8</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>40 &amp; 41</b>

# FIVE KEY QUESTIONS FOR EVERY PSALM

## 1) **What is God teaching me about himself?**

The Psalms have a lot to teach us about the character of God and his work in creation, salvation and judgement.

## 2) **What did it mean for Christ to pray this psalm?**

When he was on earth, Christ prayed all of these psalms, which point in different ways to his life, ministry, sufferings and glory.

## 3) **How does this psalm teach me to pray?**

These are God-given words teaching us how to speak to him in life's different circumstances. They include words of praise, thanks, petition and lament.

## 4) **How does this psalm help me to trust the Lord?**

The psalms reassure us that the Lord is king, even when it doesn't feel like it. The variety of the psalms helps us to trust him in our own varied situations.

## 5) **How can I use this psalm to pray for Litchard**

**Mission?** Are there truths we need to remember, encouragements we need to hear, areas where we need to grow, or warnings we need to heed?