

EXERCISES

THE PSALMS: PRAYER BOOK FOR THE PEOPLE OF GOD

HIS PLACE CHURCH, OCTOBER 31 – DECEMBER 19, 2019

A. QUIZZES ON N. T. WRIGHT'S *THE CASE FOR THE PSALMS*

Purpose: To ensure that students are reading the textbook with sufficient comprehension to integrate the readings into classroom learning.

Instructions: We will take 10 minutes for each quiz. Each quiz will have about 7 questions. The class will be awarded for every question that at least 75% of the class answers correctly.

QUIZ 1: QUESTIONS 1–7

CHAPTER 1: "INTRODUCTION" (PP. 1–12):

1. In his opening plea that we read the Psalms, Wright cites each of the following reasons EXCEPT:
 - a. The Psalms are among the oldest poems in the world
 - b. The Psalms translate into modern languages with surprising power and clarity
 - c. The Psalms served as the hymnbook for ancient Judaism and Christianity
 - d. The Psalms are treasured by all world religions today

2. With which of the following phrases does N. T. Wright characterize contemporary worship songs that are not rooted in the Psalms?
 - a. They are a "great impoverishment"
 - b. They are "more accessible to the modern ear"
 - c. They can "better reflect the cultural needs of the day"
 - d. They are "theologically hazardous"

3. N. T. Wright sees the regular praying and singing of the Psalms as which of the following?
 - a. Monotonous
 - b. Exhilarating
 - c. Transformative
 - d. Sublime

4. N. T. Wright explains what a “worldview” is with which of the following metaphors?
 - a. A worldview is like a pair of spectacles through which we see reality
 - b. A worldview is like the foundation of a building, providing the strength and stability for the rest of the structure
 - c. A worldview is like the summit of a mountain, from which one can view the rest of one’s intellectual world
 - d. A worldview is like a compass, providing direction in times of uncertainty

5. According to Christian and Jewish tradition, who is seen as the primary author of the Psalms?
 - a. Moses
 - b. David
 - c. Isaiah
 - d. Jeremiah

6. According to N. T. Wright, the Psalms were likely collected and edited into their final form during which period of Israel’s history?
 - a. The United Kingdom (ca. 1095–975BC)
 - b. The Divided Kingdom (ca. 975–586BC)
 - c. The Exilic Period (ca. 586–445BC)
 - d. The Post-Exilic Period (ca. 445–1BC)

7. In his book, N. T. Wright follows the numbering system for the Psalms from which of the following?
 - a. The Septuagint
 - b. The Hebrew Bible
 - c. The Vulgate
 - d. The Peshitta

QUIZ 2: QUESTIONS 8–15

CHAPTER 2: “PRAY AND LIVE” (PP. 13–36):

8. Wright says that the Psalms are all based on faith in the one, Creator God, who made the world and who remains active in the world and in dynamic relation to the world. What does Wright call this belief system?
 - a. Therapeutic Deism
 - b. Secular Humanism
 - c. Creational Monotheism
 - d. Adoptionist Monarchianism

9. N. T. Wright takes which two characters from the Bible as primary examples of devout Jews from the first century who lived and prayed the Psalms?
- Jesus and Paul
 - Peter and Andrew
 - Moses and Abraham
 - Nichodemus and Joseph of Aramathea
10. Which of the following philosophers from classical antiquity proposed that the world was not created by God or the gods?
- Pythagoras
 - Porphyry
 - Plotinus
 - Epicurus
11. According to N. T. Wright, which of the following represents the proper use of poetic form?
- To add emotional qualities to the bare communication of facts
 - To probe deeper into human experience than ordinary speech or writing is customarily capable of doing
 - To cause the reader or listener to pause and reflect longer than usual on an important point
 - To frustrate the reader and encourage free thinking
12. N. T. Wright invites us today to inhabit the worldview of the Psalms. He says that the main difference between the first-century Jews and today's reader is not that that the former is ancient and the latter is modern, but rather...
- That the first-century Jews believed in a magical worldview, but we believe in a scientific worldview
 - That the first-century Jews thought in terms of local politics, but we think in terms of global politics
 - For the first-century Jews time was relational, but for us time is mechanical
 - That the first-century Jews were creational monotheists, but modern people often think in terms of naturalism
13. According to N. T. Wright, which of the following represents the set of elements that serves as the matrix in which the Psalms are supposed to be sung and understood?
- Earth, fire, water, and air
 - The sun, the moon, and the stars
 - Time, space, and matter
 - Heaven, earth, and hell

14. N. T. Wright says: "The psalter forms the great epic poem of the creator and covenant God who will at the last visit and redeem his people... and his whole creation. The early Christians believed that that was precisely what had happened in Jesus." In this quotation, N. T. Wright is explaining which of the following?
- Why he believes the Psalms promote creation care
 - How messianic prophecy works in the Psalms
 - How the biblical theology of poetry is fulfilled in the Psalms
 - How the Psalms foreshadow the eschatology of Paul and John
15. In reference to Ephesians 2:10, N. T. Wright says that the word *poiēma* (ποίημα) translates to which of the following?
- Poet
 - Popery
 - Poem
 - Pomp

QUIZ 3: QUESTIONS 16–21

CHAPTER 3: "AT THE THRESHOLD OF GOD'S TIME" (PP. 37–75):

16. Wright introduces the phrase "now and not yet," which, he explains, represents the intersection between God's time and ours. Wright says that grasping this dynamic is especially important for understanding which of the following themes?
- The installation and victory of God's chosen King
 - The exile and return of the people of God
 - Morning and evening prayer
 - The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ
17. According to Wright, which of the following represents the paradigmatic example of the rescue of God in the Psalms?
- The conquest of Jericho
 - The return of the Jews from exile
 - The Exodus
 - The snake on the pole raised by Moses
18. What did the prophets and poets refuse to believe?
- That God would punish them
 - That God could redeem them
 - That God loved them
 - That God had abandoned them

19. What is the theme of Psalm 51?
- Asaph's question why the wicked prosper
 - The rightness of the law of the Lord
 - King David's sin with Bathsheba
 - The beauty and majesty of God's creation
20. N. T. Wright affirms that Israel had been granted a very special mission from God. What was this mission?
- To show the world how to live out the true standard of righteousness
 - To act as a rescue squad for the purposes of God in the world
 - To enjoy a life full of the earthly blessings of God
 - To become missionaries and carry the gospel to the ends of the earth
21. N. T. Wright acknowledges that it can be tempting to read the triumphal themes in the Psalms to favor our own political agendas. Which of the following best represents Wright's conclusion on this point?
- That the Psalms point toward an eschatological fulfillment of a Davidic King who will indeed reign over the earth
 - That the Psalms should be read as allegorically fulfilled in the coming of the church age
 - That the Psalms properly celebrate the triumph of politicians who use their power in favor of Christian agendas
 - That a Christian reading of the Psalms simply must reject the triumphalism embedded in the Psalms

QUIZ 4: QUESTIONS 22–29

CHAPTER 4: "WHERE GOD DWELLS" (PP. 77–115):

22. Which of the following is another name for the Pilgrim Psalms?
- Psalms of Descent
 - Psalms of Ascent
 - Psalms of Progress
 - Psalms of Wandering
23. Which Psalm tells the story of the return of the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem?
- Psalm 23
 - Psalm 132
 - Psalm 119
 - Psalm 129

24. If the purpose of the Temple is not so that we can escape the world, what is it for?
- To recreate the world from within, to set up a place for God's glory
 - To have a static place of worship
 - To have a religious center in a city
 - To contain God's presence so that our cities are not destroyed
25. According to Ezekiel, why did God leave the city and temple?
- Because it was time to establish a new covenant
 - Because God wanted to show that He was not limited to a temple
 - Because God was now allowing Gentiles to be saved
 - Because of the wickedness and idolatry within Israel
26. The Israelites thought that the temple was a place where they could go to find God, but their views changed. Which of the following best represents this change?
- By realizing that God himself is the "place" where worshippers can go any time
 - By realizing that they could read the Bible wherever they went
 - By realizing that they could set up altars in every town
 - By realizing that God had never really been interested in animal sacrifice
27. According to N. T. Wright, what does God want more than Temple worship?
- He wants constant worship
 - He wants His people to be morally pure
 - He wants an obedient ear and heart
 - He wants a multitude of followers
28. How is Psalm 119 structured?
- Thematically
 - Alphabetically
 - Scene-by-scene
 - Scholars cannot detect any specific structure
29. Which of the following statements does C. S. Lewis apply to Psalm 19?
- "The best Psalm ever"
 - "The truest confession"
 - "The finest poem ever written"
 - "Not bad, for King David"

CHAPTER 5: "ALL THE TREES OF THE FOREST SING FOR JOY" (PP. 117–162):

30. What is the basic concept of chapter 5?
 - a. Matter
 - b. Time
 - c. Place
 - d. Knowledge

31. According to N. T. Wright, what two philosophers greatly influenced Western thought?
 - a. Epicurus and Plato
 - b. Plato and Aristotle
 - c. Pliny and Homer
 - d. Epicurus and Aristotle

32. What verses state: "The heavens are telling the glory of God; and the firmament proclaims his handiwork. Day to day pours forth speech and night to night declares knowledge."
 - a. Psalm 3:5–6
 - b. Psalm 22:1–2
 - c. Psalm 19:1–2
 - d. Psalm 110:12–13

33. N. T. Wright says that humans are unique among creatures because of our capacity for which of the following?
 - a. To build civilizations
 - b. To be image bearers of God
 - c. To rule and subdue the earth
 - d. To live in community

34. What Psalm does the old Anglican prayer book prescribe to be read daily?
 - a. Psalm 95
 - b. Psalm 23
 - c. Psalm 75
 - d. Psalm 109

35. According to N. T. Wright, which of the following is the significance of the filling of the earth with divine glory?
 - a. Creation becomes fully alive, human society becomes ordered through justice and prosperity
 - b. God's presence rests in the earth
 - c. The earth possesses total peace
 - d. None of the above

36. What is a key characteristic of Psalm 104?
- The writer speaks of himself in third-person
 - The writer speaks to God himself
 - The writer never refers to God
 - The writer does not mention himself
37. According to N. T. Wright, which of the following best represents the reason for which God created “that which is not God”?
- For the ruling of the created order
 - In order to create a reflection of Himself
 - Out his generous love
 - Because of divine obligation
38. Wright says that, although the Psalms do not offer an answer to the problem of evil, they do offer which of the following?
- A framework for understanding the problem of evil
 - A celebration of the promise that God will renew his creation
 - A statement of the goodness of God
 - Confirmation of the greatness of man as God’s ideal creation
39. Wright says that Psalm 150 is a call to which of the following?
- To submit our lives to God and His law
 - To toil for God and nothing else
 - For everything to live in peace
 - Everything that breathes must praise the Lord
40. The Psalms indicate that we who sing the Psalms are changed through the process of singing the Psalms. Which of the following is the best description of this transformation?
- By singing the Psalms, we more easily memorize them and therefore can apply them to our lives
 - By seeking answers to our problems in the Psalms, we come to see God’s wisdom for our world
 - By coming to see the value of emotional prayer, we become in turn with our own emotional needs
 - By allowing the Psalms to shape our worldview, they become “second nature” for us

CHAPTER 6: “AT HOME IN THE PSALMS” (PP. 163–169):

41. For N. T. Wright, modern Christian worship music is worrisome for which of the following reasons?
- It does not quote Scripture enough
 - Much of it is not rooted in Psalms
 - It does not mention God frequently enough
 - It is generally not very theological

AFTERWORD: "MY LIFE WITH THE PSALMS" (PP. 171–196):

42. According to N. T. Wright, which of the following is the best explanation of "practicing the presence of God"?
- Pretending that God is standing next to you every day, so that you learn to live a moral life
 - Going to a sacred place to worship Him
 - Making time for Him in our busy lives
 - By engaging in group prayer regularly

B. SCRIPTURE MEMORY

Purpose: By coming to know small portions of the Psalms intimately, we will learn to recognize the overarching dynamics of the Psalms that we read more casually.

Instructions: We aim to recite from memory each of the Psalms listed below. The Psalms listed below are in the English Standard Version (ESV), but you may memorize the Psalms in whatever version you wish. If you decide to memorize the Psalms in an alternate translation, come prepared to provide this alternate translation via Zoom's chat feature to the student who checks your work. Recitations of the Psalm must be word-perfect, but you may make as many attempts to recite the Psalm as time allows.

1. Psalm 1

[1] Blessed is the man
who walks not in the counsel of the wicked,
nor stands in the way of sinners,
nor sits in the seat of scoffers;
[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
that yields its fruit in its season,
and its leaf does not wither.
In all that he does, he prospers.
[4] The wicked are not so,
but are like chaff that the wind drives away.
[5] Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment,
nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous;
[6] for the Lord knows the way of the righteous,
but the way of the wicked will perish.

2. Psalm 23

[1] The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.
[2] He makes me lie down in green pastures.
He leads me beside still waters.
[3] He restores my soul.
He leads me in paths of righteousness
for his name's sake.
[4] Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil,
for you are with me;
your rod and your staff,
they comfort me.
[5] You prepare a table before me
in the presence of my enemies;
you anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.
[6] Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me
all the days of my life,
and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

3. Psalm 67

[1] May God be gracious to us and bless us
and make his face to shine upon us, Selah
[2] that your way may be known on earth,
your saving power among all nations.
[3] Let the peoples praise you, O God;
let all the peoples praise you!
[4] Let the nations be glad and sing for joy,
for you judge the peoples with equity
and guide the nations upon earth. Selah
[5] Let the peoples praise you, O God;
let all the peoples praise you!
[6] The earth has yielded its increase;
God, our God, shall bless us.
[7] God shall bless us;
let all the ends of the earth fear him!

C. CASE STUDIES

Purpose: To give the class opportunities to reflect on the practical application of course material to ministry scenarios.

Instructions: You will be presented with a scenario and four possible responses. Conduct this exercise in three steps: (1) have someone read aloud to your small group the scenario and the four possible responses; (2) determine among yourselves which position (choose only one) best reflects the viewpoint of your small group; (3) nominate one person from your small group to share with the entire class which position you selected and why. Small groups that select the position selected by the most number of other small groups will be awarded.

1. Imagine you are leading a Bible study on the Psalms in your neighborhood. Some of those who attend the Bible study have been Christians for many years and others never attended a church service in their lives. One evening, someone asks why the Psalms so frequently celebrate the Law. "I thought Christians didn't keep the law," says one of the unchurched participants. Another participant confesses that she was reared in a legalistic home, and that for her the Psalmist's love of the Law seems foreign and hard to believe. In which of the following directions do you first lead the conversation?
 - a. The Law is the revelation that God gave to his people in Old Testament times. In New Testament times, Christians now have the complete revelation of God in the Bible. Christians understand the Psalmist's praise of the Law as affirming the authority and truthfulness of the Bible as a whole.
 - b. Paul teaches clearly in Romans that Christians no longer have an obligation to keep the Law. Christians keep the Ten Commandments as the moral heart of the Law but do not keep the dietary or civic sections of the Law.
 - c. The Psalmist celebrates the Law as God's life-giving disciplines for his people. Christians are called to practice and to experience the blessings of the disciplines of Bible reading, prayer, church attendance, and faithfulness in family and community life.
 - d. The Law in the Psalms reflects God's order for his chosen people. While the Psalmist thanks God for the Law, we celebrate today the Holy Spirit, who daily directs the steps of the Christian.

2. Imagine that a Christian colleague at work whom you have known for two years confesses that he has been going through a difficult time during the past week. He recently discovered that he had been passed up for a promotion for another colleague whom both of you know to be dishonest, and his wife has been experiencing unexplained health problems. On top of all this, he got into a minor car accident with his family's only vehicle, and the insurance company is not being cooperative about the claim. If you were to recommend that your colleague read through one of the following Psalms, which would it be?
 - a. Read Psalm 4; it reminds us that our security is in God alone
 - b. Read Psalm 23; it reminds us of our intimate relationship with the Savior
 - c. Read Psalm 73; it reminds us that the prosperity of the wicked is but for a moment
 - d. Read Psalm 103; it reminds us that we have many spiritual benefits over which we can rejoice

3. The Imprecatory Psalms introduce us to spiritual warfare. Imagine that you are a youth pastor and that you become aware that one of the members of the youth group you oversee is exhibiting alcoholic tendencies. When you address the issue, the young person acknowledges self-destructive habits but claims that these behaviors are the result of demonic oppression. Which of the following represents your initial response?
 - a. Demons surely tempt us, but we can't blame diabolical forces for our moral failures. Saying "the Devil made me do it" only gives the enemy increased leverage in our lives as we abdicate responsibility.
 - b. Set yourself up for success and join an Alcoholics' Anonymous group. With proper accountability and emotional support, you'll experience victory over this problem.
 - c. Jesus said: "This kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting" (Matthew 17:21, KJV). First things first: I and other church members will pray and fast for your spiritual deliverance.
 - d. Memorize Scripture that you can pray during times of temptation. When we focus our attention on God's word, we have little time to experience temptation.

4. Imagine that you are a pastor and that, during a counseling session, Jeff (a middle-aged, family man who is one of your church members) confesses to having had an affair with Susan (a single woman who recently resigned from the church staff without explanation and left the church). Jeff expresses sincere remorse for his past actions and asks for your permission to confess his sin to the congregation. Later that week, you attempt to confront Susan about the issue but she refuses to meet in person or to communicate with you. Which of the following do you recommend?
- No, Jeff should not confess before the congregation because his sin did not directly affect the congregation; Jeff's confession to you as his spiritual authority is sufficient.
 - No, Jeff should not confess before the congregation because, although his sin did in fact directly affect the congregation, to confess would effectively be to indict Susan, who is unwilling to confess to the congregation.
 - Yes, Jeff should confess before the congregation, but the wording of the confession should be so general that Susan would not be suspected as being involved.
 - Yes, Jeff should confess before the congregation regardless of the fact that Susan would effectively be indicted.
5. You mentor Jane (or, if you are a man, "John") and meet with her weekly. Divorced and unemployed, Jane at first strikes you as a bit hard on her luck, but you soon discover that Jane is a spiritually minded person who constantly finds reason to praise of God to those around her. Once, when ordering coffee at Starbucks, Jane told your barista a detailed story about how God had provided money for her to have her car repaired; the barista did not know what to say, and customers waiting behind you in line seemed impatient, but for Jane this was an opportunity to proclaim God's miraculous care for her. Once you and Jane are seated at your table, which of the following best represents your response?
- Encourage Jane for sharing her story. God only knows how our barista or those waiting behind you in line may be impacted by this testimony, and too few Christians express their faith in public.
 - Encourage Jane for sharing her story, but point out that the encounter was awkward for the barista and those waiting behind you in line. Recommend that Jane share her stories with those who express clear interest.
 - Neither encourage nor discourage Jane for sharing her story with the barista. Emphasize to Jane that stories such these are best appreciated by people who already have faith in God.
 - Choose not to address the incident. Jane was out of place to inconvenience the others in line, but saying something about it would probably only discourage Jane.

6. One Sunday, as your church nears the end of a major campaign to raise finances for a building expansion, your pastor preaches a sermon titled "Genuine Thankfulness Gives Back." Your pastor challenges everyone in the congregation to tally up the things they are grateful for and then to pledge to give a specific amount as a way of expressing thankfulness to God. Which of the following best reflects your response?
- The premise of the sermon is false—genuine thankfulness does not necessarily require the receiver of the gift to share the gift with others.
 - The spiritual principle cited by the pastor is correct. The pastor perhaps overstated his case, but the sermon is a necessary counterbalance to our materialistic culture.
 - What I give to the church should be between me and God. The congregation should not be asked to pledge to give a specific amount.
 - For the sake of visitors who may not be Christians, the pastor should avoid addressing the topics of thankfulness and giving from the pulpit.

D. DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Purpose: To sharpen our skill in producing biblical and theological arguments.

Instructions: You will encounter an open-ended discussion question. Answer the questions in groups. Compile the best argument you can for your position. You will then submit your argument by chat to the teaching team, and after the break it will be revealed which team gave the best argument and what their argument was. The team that compiles the best argument receives points.

Format: Students are asked to submit their response as a group to the teaching team. The response that is deemed best by the teaching team will be presented to the class.

- In our technology driven world, we tend to think of waiting as something to avoid at all costs. In our minds, waiting evidences an inefficiency that we should fix or of a lack of control that we associate with failure. But the Psalms give us a very different picture when they exhort us frequently to "wait for the Lord" as a key spiritual practice. Write up a list of practical tips on how we can wait for the Lord.
- The Psalms display the full spectrum of human emotions, from sorrow to exultation to rage to sublimity. Are there any limits to the emotions and feelings that we may rightly express to God in our prayers today?
- Psalm 137:9 is no doubt the most problematic verse of the Imprecatory Psalms for contemporary readers: "Blessed shall he be who takes your little ones and dashes them against the rock!" If someone were to ask you how this verse could possibly represent the word of God, how would you respond?
- Is it proper for Christians to repent not only for their own sins but also for the sins of others? Include in your argument citations or themes from the Penitential Psalms.

5. After commenting briefly on modern worship music, N. T. Wright states: "To worship without using the Psalms is to risk planting seeds that will never take root" (*The Case for the Psalms*, 165). What do you understand Wright to mean by this and do you believe he is correct?
6. How could the Psalms be incorporated into public worship at your church? List as many examples as possible.

E. EVALUATION

Purpose: For class participants to have the opportunity to provide feedback to improve future courses.

Instructions: Please respond honestly and accurately to the evaluation questions below. At the end of the evaluation, there will be an opportunity to provide additional comments.

1. The instructor presented content in an organized manner
 - a. Disagree
 - b. Somewhat disagree
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Somewhat Agree
 - e. Agree

2. The instructor explained concepts clearly
 - a. Disagree
 - b. Somewhat disagree
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Somewhat Agree
 - e. Agree

3. The instructor was helpful when I had difficulties or questions
 - a. Disagree
 - b. Somewhat disagree
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Somewhat Agree
 - e. Agree

4. The instructor provided clear constructive feedback

- a. Disagree
 - b. Somewhat disagree
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Somewhat Agree
 - e. Agree
5. The instructor encouraged the students to participate and ask questions
- a. Disagree
 - b. Somewhat disagree
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Somewhat Agree
 - e. Agree
6. Considering both the limitations and possibilities of the subject matter and the course, how would you rate the overall effectiveness of this instructor?
- a. Poor
 - b. Substandard
 - c. Fine
 - d. Good
 - e. Excellent
7. This course was organized effectively
- a. Disagree
 - b. Somewhat disagree
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Somewhat Agree
 - e. Agree
8. The course developed my abilities and skills for the subject
- a. Disagree
 - b. Somewhat disagree
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Somewhat Agree
 - e. Agree

15. What advice would you give to another student who is considering taking this course?

16. Please provide any additional comments here: