

A. Read and reflect:

1. Read the Psalm extracts below, and think about what their main themes are—what do they express about God? How do they view the created world?
2. Look at how the Psalms are structured. Look for repetition of words, phrases, or sentence patterns. Look for how the ideas develop through the Psalm.
3. Consider the length of each passage. How might its effect be different if it were twice as long? Or half as long? (Check the context in the Bible to see how long the original Psalm is.)

Write a short paragraph summarizing what you noticed about these Psalms.

B. Engage:

1. Think about what parts of the created world (nature and the world of human relationships, for both are seen as part of creation in the Bible) most interest or impress you. Think also about aspects of the world that grieve you. Make a list.
2. Look back at the items on the list. What is it that intrigues or impresses you about each one? Is it particularly intricate, for instance, or powerful, or beautiful, or challenging? Make a note next to each item about what draws your attention to it.
3. Consider how each item on the list might suggest or call out to some facet of God's character—wisdom, power, mystery, care, or something else.

Write a short paragraph summarizing your ideas.

C. Write and respond:

1. Using the Psalms that you read as a loose model, write your own Psalm based on your notes and your own list of items.
2. Consider what kind of language to use. If the Psalm is to be a prayer, should its words be simple and direct or detailed and descriptive? Is there a place in the Psalm for both poetic and scientific language for describing things? Why/why not? How can the language of your Psalm reflect our present world and what we know about it?
3. Consider how to use your Psalm as a personal response to what you have been learning. You may wish to pray your psalm, read it aloud together with a family member, share it with someone else, or add visual elements.

Add your Psalm to your earlier paragraphs, and close with a brief comment on what you think makes your Psalm similar to or different from the biblical Psalms.

Extracts from the Psalms

Psalm 74

¹² But God has been my king from ancient times,
performing acts of deliverance on the earth.
¹³ You destroyed the sea by your strength;
you shattered the heads of the sea monster in the water.
¹⁴ You crushed the heads of Leviathan;
you fed him to the people who live along the coast.
¹⁵ You broke open the spring and the stream;
you dried up perpetually flowing rivers.
¹⁶ You established the cycle of day and night;
you put the moon and sun in place.
¹⁷ You set up all the boundaries of the earth;
you created the cycle of summer and winter.
¹⁸ Remember how the enemy hurls insults, O LORD,
and how a foolish nation blasphemes your name!
¹⁹ Do not hand the life of your dove over to a wild animal!
Do not continue to disregard the lives of your oppressed people!
²⁰ Remember your covenant promises,
for the dark regions of the earth are full of places where violence rules.

Psalm 136

⁵ to the one who used wisdom to make the heavens,
for his loyal love endures,
⁶ to the one who spread out the earth over the water,
for his loyal love endures,
⁷ to the one who made the great lights,
for his loyal love endures,
⁸ the sun to rule by day,
for his loyal love endures,
⁹ the moon and stars to rule by night,
for his loyal love endures,
¹⁰ to the one who struck down the firstborn of Egypt,
for his loyal love endures,
¹¹ and led Israel out from their midst,
for his loyal love endures,
¹² with a strong hand and an outstretched arm,
for his loyal love endures...

Psalm 139

O LORD, you examine me and know.
² You know when I sit down and when I get up;
even from far away you understand my motives.
³ You carefully observe me when I travel or when I lie down to rest;

you are aware of everything I do.

⁴ Certainly my tongue does not frame a word without you, O LORD, being thoroughly aware of it.

⁵ You squeeze me in from behind and in front; you place your hand on me.

⁶ Your knowledge is beyond my comprehension; it is so far beyond me, I am unable to fathom it.

⁷ Where can I go to escape your spirit? Where can I flee to escape your presence?

⁸ If I were to ascend to heaven, you would be there. If I were to sprawl out in Sheol, there you would be.

⁹ If I were to fly away on the wings of the dawn, and settle down on the other side of the sea,

¹⁰ even there your hand would guide me, your right hand would grab hold of me.

¹¹ If I were to say, "Certainly the darkness will cover me, and the light will turn to night all around me,"

¹² even the darkness is not too dark for you to see, and the night is as bright as day; darkness and light are the same to you.

¹³ Certainly you made my mind and heart; you wove me together in my mother's womb.

¹⁴ I will give you thanks because your deeds are awesome and amazing. You knew me thoroughly;

¹⁵ my bones were not hidden from you, when I was made in secret and sewed together in the depths of the earth.

¹⁶ Your eyes saw me when I was inside the womb. All the days ordained for me were recorded in your scroll before one of them came into existence.

Psalm 147

¹⁴ He brings peace to your territory. He abundantly provides for you the best grain.

¹⁵ He sends his command through the earth; swiftly his order reaches its destination.

¹⁶ He sends the snow that is white like wool; he spreads the frost that is white like ashes.

¹⁷ He throws his hailstones like crumbs. Who can withstand the cold wind he sends?

¹⁸ He then orders it all to melt; he breathes on it, and the water flows.

¹⁹ He proclaims his word to Jacob, his statutes and regulations to Israel.