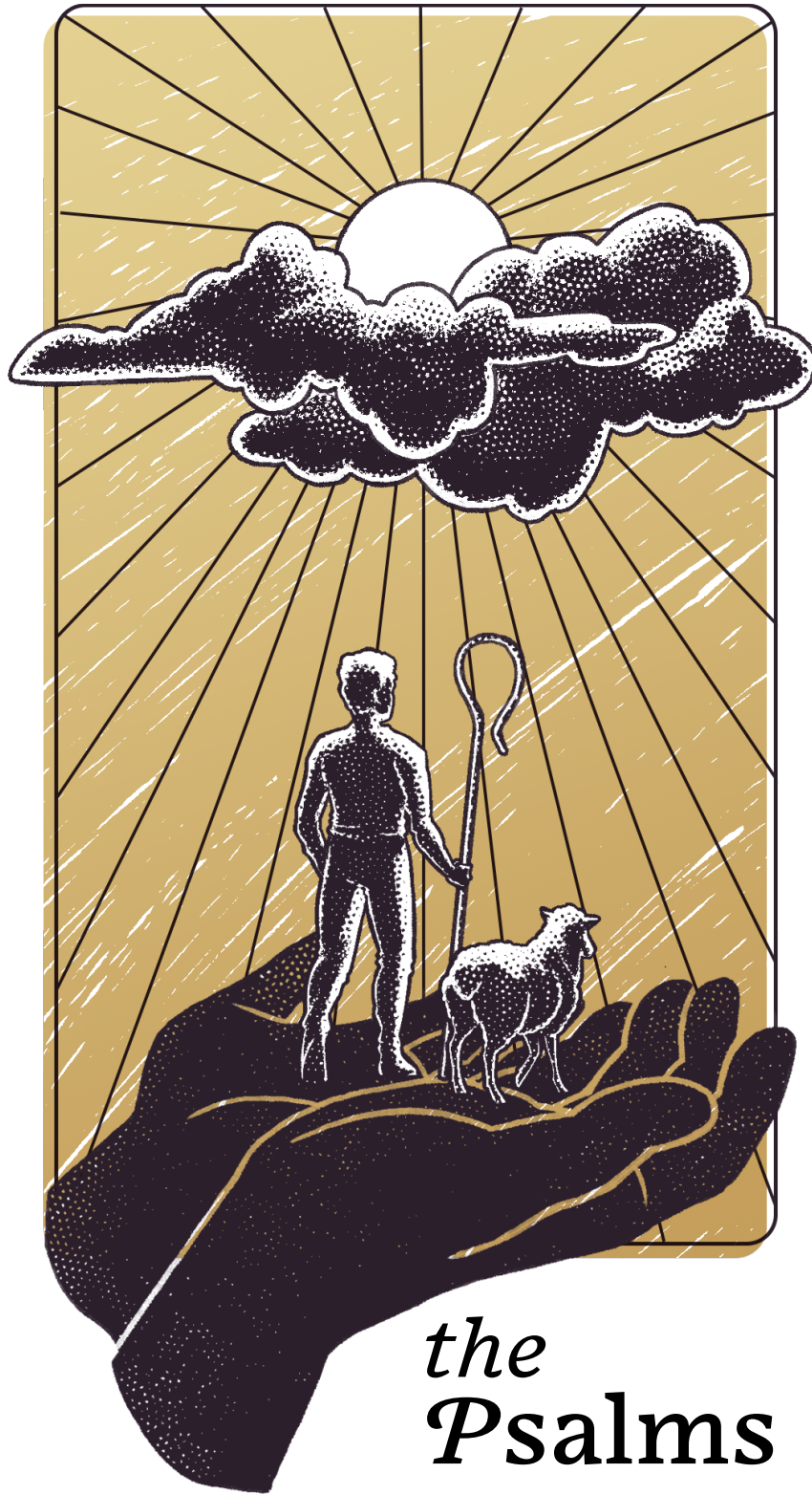


EFCA Theology Conference 2021



the
Psalms

The Undershepherds'
Shepherd



the Psalms

The Undershepherds' Shepherd

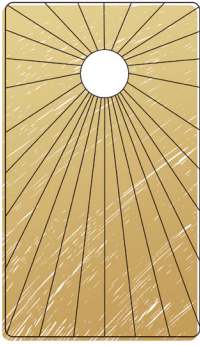
EFCA Theology Conference 2021

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*All Scripture referenced within this booklet is from the Holy Bible, English Standard Version (ESV).
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GREETINGS IN THE LORD!

We extend a warm welcome to you and are grateful you have joined us virtually for the 2021 EFCA Theology Conference.

Much has occurred since our last Theology Conference gathering. This has been a year with challenges and changes in our lives and ministries. Our limitations and limps have been revealed, and we have realized our desperate dependence on the Lord. In situations like this, God's people are drawn to the Psalms, the Christians' and Churches' prayer and songbook.

For this reason, we believed it would be encouraging to focus on "The Psalms: The Undershepherds' Shepherd." Our goal as we address this theme is that these truths about God and his Word in the Psalms might strengthen, edify and nourish heart, soul and mind. Our prayer is that it would not only nourish and refresh you, but also that it would renew you personally and give you strength to serve others.

In livestreaming the conference, we will still receive the rich nourishment from God's Word, but we will miss one of the blessings of gathering – fellowship. Even though we will not all be gathering in the AT Olson Chapel on the campus of Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, we are eager to foster smaller gatherings across the EFCA. There are numerous ways to maximize the fruitfulness of the conference individually and with others, so we encourage you to avail yourself in one of those ways.

We are prayerful this conference notebook is helpful. You will note that each of the speakers has provided questions for reflection and discussion. They have also provided bibliographies for those who want to pursue any of these topics in the Psalms more thoroughly.

There are two other important matters to the conference. First, we will begin each of our main sessions with corporate worship. This has become a great encouragement to participants. To sing biblically rich and theologically robust hymns and choruses in worship of and to our Trinitarian God is greatly edifying and deeply encouraging. Please plan to participate.

Second, we will have live interaction between the messages among the emcees. One of the ways to engage will be to text in questions. Details related to this will be forthcoming.

There will be a rich feast of books available. NextStep Resources has provided the books recommended by our speakers for you to browse and purchase: Visit [nextstepresources.com](https://www.nextstepresources.com) and search for "2021 Theology Conference".



As in previous years, the conference will conclude with a book giveaway. Although you do not have to be present to win (since this is livestreamed), you must be registered. Books will be sent to the winners.

One final matter: the EFCA Network annual meeting will be held immediately after the conference. The board will give an update on their efforts to enhance the EFCA culture of mutual encouragement and unified mission. All EFCA leaders with an active credential are voting members of the network and are invited to contribute to the discussion and to approve the budget and board for 2021.

The conference recordings will be available after the conference on the *EFCA Theology Podcast* (efca.org/podcast).

Thank you for attending the Virtual 2021 Theology Conference.

In Christ, the Great and Good Shepherd,

Greg Strand

Executive Director of Theology and Credentialing

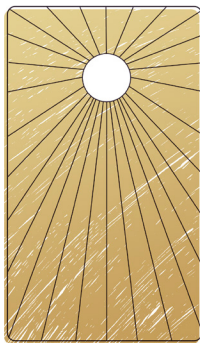


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CONFERENCE SPEAKERS



The Psalms and Christian Worship

Scott Manetsch

Chair of the Church History and the History of Christian Thought Department
Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Deerfield, Illinois

More info: <https://www.tiu.edu/faculty/scott-m-manetsch/>



The Psalms, Christ, and the Christian Scriptures

James Hamilton

Professor of Biblical Theology
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky

More info: <https://www.sbts.edu/academics/faculty/james-m-hamilton/>

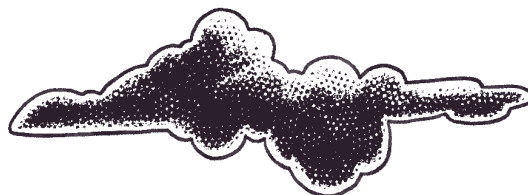


The Psalms and Christian Living

Walter Kim

Pastor for Leadership
Trinity Presbyterian Church, Charlottesville, Virginia and
President of National Association of Evangelicals

More info: <https://www.trinityville.org/Walter-Kim>



CONFERENCE SPEAKERS



The Psalms and Christian Lament

Mark Vroegop

Lead Pastor and Elder
College Park Church, Indianapolis, Indiana

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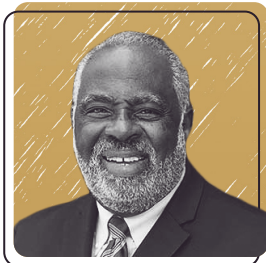


The Psalms and Christian Prayer

Donald Whitney

Professor of Biblical Spirituality and Associate Dean of The School of Theology
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky

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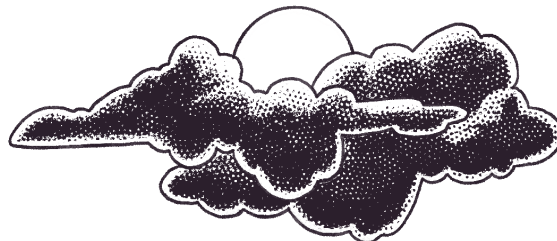


The Psalms and Christian Preaching

Robert Smith, Jr.

Charles T. Carter Baptist Chair of Divinity and Professor of Christian Preaching
Beeson Divinity School, Birmingham, Alabama

More info: <https://www.beesondivinity.com/directory/Smith-Robert>



the **Psalms**

EFCA Theology Conference



The Undershepherds' Shepherd

February 3-4, 2021

Greg Strand

Executive Director of Theology & Credentialing
Evangelical Free Church of America, Minneapolis, Minnesota

We are thankful to the Lord you are joining with us in this Theology Conference. We wish we could be together to learn, worship and fellowship, but gathering through this virtual means, we trust the Lord, we entrust ourselves and our conference to the Lord, and we make the best, by the Spirit, of our present circumstance.

A Word About the Present

At the beginning of 2020 I prayed the Lord might give us 2020 biblical vision. Who would have thought it would have come through and in the midst of a global pandemic that will likely, this month, reach one-half million deaths in the United States, the killing of George Floyd (and Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor and others) followed by protests and riots, racial unrest, a presidential election, the politicization and divisions over most everything and conspiracy theories? And then when we turned the pages of the calendar to a new year, we still faced the pandemic, though thankfully now with a vaccine, and it only took six days in the new year to see violence at our Capitol. What else is coming?

We are living through a few more challenges than in recent years. Figuring out how to live life in a pandemic and all the changes required in our personal lives and in the life and ministry of the church has raised numerous questions and issues for us. None of us living here have previously experienced such a pandemic, though pandemics are not without precedent in the history of the church.

One of the things we have learned is this is reflective of life in this fallen world. Pining after a past day as if that is “normal” or the “way life is supposed to be” reflects a misunderstanding, a blindness, of the world and God’s *telos*, his end-goal for the world. Looking back is a glance in the wrong direction.

All of this has influenced and impacted Christians, pastors and local churches, in which some have parroted the world rather than the people of God. But thankfully, there are exceptions.

Pastors, ministers, church leaders and others in the church are tired. They are confused. Most everything they say is scrutinized, most every decision made is criticized. They are hurting. Where do they go? To whom do they turn? We turn to the Lord, remembering he is both with us and for us. We are drawn to the Psalms. As those who shepherd others during times of hurt, pain, sorrow and grief, we often turn to the Psalms. It is important that we do that now, not only for others, but also for ourselves.



A Word for the Ages: The Psalms

In this year of changes and challenges due to COVID-19, we have been made aware of our desperate dependence on the Lord. We have also been drawn to the Psalms, the Christians’ and Churches’ prayer and songbook. For this reason, we believed it would be encouraging to focus on “The Psalms: The Undershepherds’ Shepherd.” Our groaning and our gaze will be focused on the Psalms. The subtitle comes from Paul’s exhortation to Timothy regarding the tasks of ministry, which Paul also states is the ministry of the inerrant Word (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

In God’s design, the Scriptures serve as a shepherd to the undershepherds, those who serve God’s people under the Good/Great/Chief Shepherd, Jesus Christ. God who spoke in the Word, the Scriptures, which is inspired, inerrant and authoritative, is the same God who speaks in and through that same Word in the present tense to us today. The Word of God is not something we simply give to others; it is our life. Added to this, of course, is Jesus Christ, the Shepherd of Psalm 23 being fulfilled in the Good Shepherd in John 10. As Christians, all the Scriptures have a Christ-centered focus, as all the Scriptures are fulfilled in Him (Matt. 5:17-20; Lk. 24:25-27), all the promises find their “yes” in Christ (2 Cor. 1:20).

Our goal, as we address this theme, is that these truths about God and His Word in the Psalms might strengthen, edify and nourish heart, soul and mind. Our prayer is that it would not only nourish and refresh you, but also renew you personally and give you strength to serve others.



The Psalms have been a comfort to Christians throughout time. Calvin refers to the Psalms as “An Anatomy of the Soul; for there is not an emotion of which anyone can be conscious that is not here represented as in a mirror. Or rather, the Holy Spirit has here drawn to the life of all the griefs, sorrows, fears, doubts, hopes, cares, perplexities, in short all the distracting emotions with which the minds of men are wont to be agitated.”

The beauty and richness of the Psalms is that they give expression to the height and the depth of our emotions, our responses to situations, circumstances and events. They are mirror reflections of our souls. And yet, they are more than that. They ground these emotions, our responses to those situations and circumstances, in the truth of who God is and his promises in Christ to his children.

In summary, the Psalms (1) teach us about God in all his fullness and faithfulness, (2) they give expression to all of life’s experiences and accompanying responses and (3) they model for us how we think and live and respond in our own situation and circumstance based on the truth of God. This is what makes the Psalms unique; it is what resonates with Christians through time.



A Few Fellow Believers on the Psalms

In the providence of God, many other believers through history have found great comfort and encouragement from reading and praying the Psalms. Here are a few of those believers:

Athanasius: “The other Scriptures speak to us, but the Psalms speak for us.”

Martin Luther: “The Psalms are ‘a little Bible. . .[they] set out in briefest and most beautiful form, all that is to be found in the Bible.’ ”

John Calvin: It is worthwhile to consider a few more lengthy comments from Calvin, which are contained in the preface to his commentary on the Psalms. Regarding the uniqueness of the Psalms in the whole of the Scriptures, he writes,

“There is no other book in which there is to be found more express and magnificent commendations, both of the unparalleled liberality of God towards his Church, and of all his works; there is no other book in which there is recorded so many deliverances, nor one in which the evidences and experiences of the



fatherly providence and solicitude which God exercises towards us, are celebrated with such splendour of diction, and yet with the strictest adherence to truth; in short, there is no other book in which we are more perfectly taught the right manner of praising God, or in which we are more powerfully stirred up to the performance of this religious exercise.”

In addition to focusing on God and his promises, the Psalms are also mirror reflections of the soul.

“I have been accustomed to call this book, I think not inappropriately, *An Anatomy of the Soul*; for there is not an emotion of which anyone can be conscious that is not here represented as in a mirror. Or rather, the Holy Spirit has here drawn to the life all the griefs, sorrows, fears, doubts, hopes, cares, perplexities, in short, all the distracting emotions with which the minds of men are wont to be agitated. The other parts of Scripture contain the commandment which God enjoined his servants to announce to us. But here the prophets themselves seeing they are exhibited to us speaking to God, and laying open all their inmost thoughts and affections, call or rather draw, each of us to the examination of himself in particular, in order that none of the many infirmities to which we are subject, and of the many vices with which we abound, may remain concealed. It is certainly a rare and singular advantage, when all lurking places are discovered, and the heart is brought into the light, purged from that most baneful infection, hypocrisy. In short, as calling upon God is one of the principal means of securing our safety, and as a better and more unerring rule for guiding us in this exercise cannot be found elsewhere than in the Psalms, it follows, that in proportion to the proficiency which a man shall have attained in understanding them, will be his knowledge of the most important part of celestial doctrine.”



Ben Patterson: “By praying the Psalms back to God, we learn to pray in tune with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit... The Psalms are *God’s* prayer book, and they teach us to talk to God in his own language.”

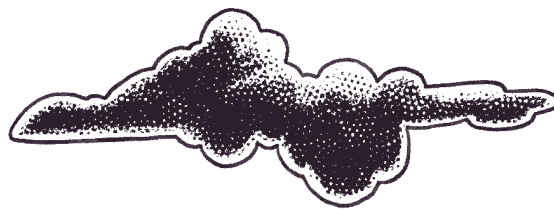
Tim Keller: After Keller published *The Songs of Jesus*, he was asked how reading through the Psalms every month shaped his thinking and his praying. He noted,

“Just reading all the Psalms every month all the way through, and then praying after reading a psalm, changes your vocabulary, your language, your attitude. On the one hand, the Psalms actually show you that you can be unhappy in God’s presence. The Psalms, in a sense, give you the permission to pour out your complaints in a way that we might think inappropriate, if it wasn’t there in the Scriptures. But on the other hand, the Psalms demand that you bow in the end to the sovereignty of God in a way that modern culture wouldn’t lead you to believe.”



In another interview Keller was asked about how his discipline of reading through the Psalms formed and shaped him as a Christian and as a pastor. He highlighted the following:

“First, I’ve learned that I have to read them as a Christian if they are going to shape me as a Christian. That is, I need to see Christ in the Psalms, as he did himself. Jesus saw himself as the priest-king of Psalm 110, as the cornerstone of Psalm 118, and as the sufferer of Psalm 22. If I am to follow my Lord, I must see him in the Psalms. When I do that, the Psalms teach me to do the things the psalmists do: (1) commit myself to God; (2) depend on God; (3) seek solace in God; (4) find mercy and grace in God; and (5) get perspective and wisdom from God—all through Jesus Christ. Finally, the Psalms give me as a pastor a “medicine chest” to help people do all these things, too. I don’t have to only exhort others to seek God in their situation. I can find that situation represented in the Psalter and then read (and pray) the psalm with them, which shows them how to live before God in their condition.”



Messages in the Psalms

We are both excited and grateful to be learning together in the Psalms. We give thanks for those who have joined us, not only to teach us, but also to learn with us. We have planned a feast for us in the Psalms through our six messages. What follows are the titles of the messages along with their description and the speaker.

The Psalms and Christian Worship

In this message we will focus on the profound significance and importance of the Psalms in the worship of God’s people through the ages, considering individual and corporate worship, individual and corporate prayer. The Psalms have been foundational and formative in both personal and corporate worship. As one has written, “By praying the Psalms back to God, we learn to pray in tune with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. . .The Psalms are *God’s* prayer book, and they teach us to talk to God in his own language.” We are grateful to have Scott Manetsch, Chair of the Church History and the History of Christian Thought Department, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Deerfield, Illinois with us to give us this message. Scott provides a historical survey, highlighting the immense importance of the Psalms in the life of Christians and the church through time.

The Psalms, Christ, and the Christian Scriptures

In this message, we will learn how to understand and interpret the Psalms through their fulfillment in Christ. We will follow the hermeneutical principles established by Jesus with the two men on the road to Emmaus. In other



words, we will establish how we as Christians read the Old Testament Scriptures and how the Psalms guide us as Christians and the church. We are excited to have James Hamilton, Professor of Biblical Theology at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky, bringing this message to us. As we will learn, James presents a canonical approach that appreciates the order and arrangement of the Psalms that reflects something of Israel's history and that also presents a pattern of suffering followed by glory exemplified by Christ.

The Psalms and Christian Living

The Psalms give us rich truth about God and his ways. They also depict the ups and downs, the highs and lows of life. In this message we will learn that the Psalms not only teach us about God, but they also teach us how to think and process circumstances and situations in the presence of God. They ground these emotions, our responses to those situations and circumstances, in the truth of who God is and his promises in Christ to his children. We are thankful to have Walter Kim, Pastor for Leadership, Trinity Presbyterian Church, Charlottesville, Virginia and President of National Association of Evangelicals, sharing this message from the Psalms. This message on Thursday morning begins with an encouraging exposition by Walter of Psalm 103, that speaks to us as pastors.

The Psalms and Christian Lament

The Psalms ground the believer in the truth of who God is and it guides us in our responses to the ebbs and flows, the highs and lows of life. The Psalms give expression to our faith and our experiences. It is the hymnbook and prayer-book of the Christian. One of the prayers in the Psalms is that of lament. Lament is not a cry of despair, but a cry of trust in the midst of the pains and sorrows of life. We will learn how to profess and express truth and trust in our great God through the language of lament, the unique language of the Christian. We are eager to learn from Mark Vroegop, Lead Pastor and Elder, College Park Church, Indianapolis, Indiana, about Christian lament. In this message Mark challenges us to embrace lament as a neglected feature of Christian living.

The Psalms and Christian Prayer

In this message we will learn about praying the Psalms, why it is we are drawn to them especially during times of challenge or crisis, and we will also engage in actually praying the Psalms as part of the application of the message. Not only will this be a balm to one's own personal and spiritual life, it will also model how we engage in praying the Psalms in and with those with whom we serve. We are thankful to have Donald Whitney, Professor of Biblical Spirituality and Associate Dean of The School of Theology, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky, with us. Donald both teaches and models for us how to pray Psalm 23.

The Psalms and Christian Preaching

As Christians, we preach the Psalms as understood through their fulfillment in Christ. What we have learned we now see applied in the Christian preaching of the Psalms. For those specifically called to preach and teach



the Psalms, they share with others what they have first learned and experienced. This is reflective of preachers throughout history. In this message/sermon, we will hear a sermon and be nourished by the Psalms, and we will also have a model of how to preach the Psalms. We are excited to learn from Robert Smith, Jr., Charles T. Carter Baptist Chair of Divinity and Professor of Christian Preaching, Beeson Divinity School, Birmingham, Alabama.

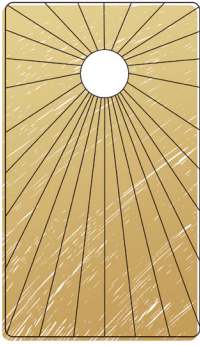
Conclusion

Dear friends, as you engage in this immersion in the Psalms, keep the bookends of the Psalms, the first (1:1) and last verses (150:6) of the 150 Psalms, in mind: “Blessed is the man who[se] . . . delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night. . . Let everything that has breath praise the LORD! Praise the LORD!”

We pray the truths we learn in this conference through our immersion in the Psalms will bear fruit in your lives. We pray you will be encouraged and experience spiritual refreshment in your lives, that your weak and weary hearts and souls will be strengthened.

Greg Strand
Executive Director of Theology and Credentialing





Dr. Scott Manetsch

Chair of the Church History and the History of Christian Thought Department
Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Deerfield, Illinois

The Psalms and Christian Worship

Dr. Manetsch's Select Bibliography:

Athanasius. "Athanasius' Letter to Marcellinus on the Interpretation of the Psalms." In *On the Incarnation*, 97-119. New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1996.

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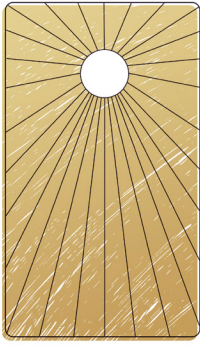
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Questions for Reflection and Discussion

Scott Manetsch

1. What is your favorite Psalm? Why? In what ways has God used this Psalm in forming you as a Christian?
2. According to Athanasius (c. 296-373), God uses the reading and singing of the Psalms to form Christian souls in faith and virtue. What do you think he means by this? What are some ways that the Psalms have shaped your life of Christian discipleship?
3. Basil the Great (330-379) asserts that singing and reciting the Psalms together can unify the body of Christ. Who does he mean by this? Do you agree with him?
4. What does Calvin (1509-1564) mean when he describes the Psalms as that "anatomy of the soul" of a Christian? In what ways do the Psalms help God's people to see themselves and God rightly?
5. Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906-1945) claims that the Psalter is a divine prayer book that helps men and women pray to God in the name of Jesus. What does he mean by this? Do you agree with him? If so, how might this be significant for your prayer life?
6. What role do the Psalms play in your devotional life and in the week-to-week ministry of your local church? How do the Psalms teach Christians to pray? How might the Psalms play a greater role in your spiritual life and in the worship of your church?



Dr. James Hamilton

Professor of Biblical Theology

The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky

The Psalms, Christ, and the Christian Scriptures

Dr. Hamilton's Select Bibliography:

Hamilton, James M., Jr. *Psalms*. 2 vols. Evangelical Biblical Theology Commentary. Bellingham: Lexham, 2021 (forthcoming, should be available in electronic format from Logos early in 2021).

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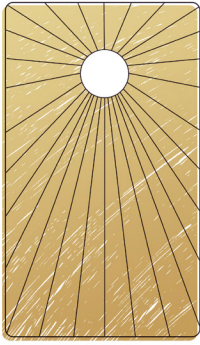
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Questions for Reflection and Discussion

James Hamilton

1. Was this your first exposure to the idea that the Psalter can be read *as a unified book* (as opposed to more of an anthology)? How does that idea strike you? Are you able to identify ways this will help you see Christ in the Psalms?
2. How is typology described/defined? What would David have to have understood to view himself as a type of the one to come? Do you find the idea that David had processed these ideas convincing?
3. What is the relationship between the Psalms and the Christian worldview? How should the Psalms influence the way we see the world? Should we embrace the full range of ideas articulated in the Psalter?
4. Bonus question: what is your reaction to what was stated about imprecatory Psalms? Should Christians pray these today? What is your reaction to the idea that these prayers always implicitly include what is explicitly articulated at Psalm 83:16–18?



Dr. Walter Kim

Pastor for Leadership

Trinity Presbyterian Church, Charlottesville, Virginia and

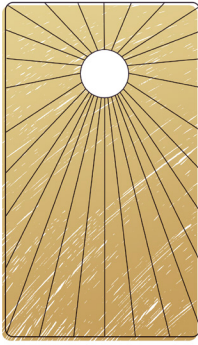
President of National Association of Evangelicals

The Psalms and Christian Living

Dr. Kim's Select Bibliography:

Bailey, Kenneth E. *The Good Shepherd: A Thousand-Year Journey from Psalm 23 to the New Testament*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2014.

Peterson, Eugene H. *Praying with the Psalms: A Year of Daily Prayers and Reflections on the Words of David*. New York: HarperCollins, 1993.



Rev. Mark Vroegop

Lead Pastor and Elder
College Park Church, Indianapolis, Indiana

The Psalms and Christian Lament

Rev. Vroegop's Select Bibliography:

Emerson, Michael O. and Christian Smith. *Divided by Faith: Evangelical Religion and the Problem of Race in America*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.

Perkins, John M. *One Blood: Parting Words to the Church on Race and Love*. Chicago: Moody Press, 2018.

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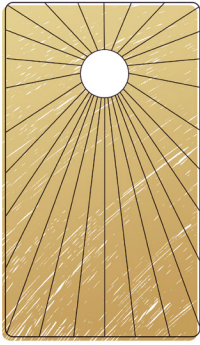
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Vroegop, Mark. *Weep with Me: How Lament Opens the Door for Racial Reconciliation*. Wheaton: Crossway, 2020.
(see bibliography)

Questions for Reflection and Discussion

Mark Vroegop

1. What does it mean that anyone can cry but only Christians can lament? What is lament the Christian's language?
2. What is the difference between your understanding of lament before and after this message?
3. What are some ways that you could practically apply lament to your personal life?
4. Take a few minutes and write a brief prayer of lament based upon the TURN-COMPLAIN-ASK-TRUST framework.
5. How might you utilize lament in your ministry of caring for other people?



Dr. Donald Whitney

Professor of Biblical Spirituality and Associate Dean of The School of Theology
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky

The Psalms and Christian Prayer

Dr. Whitney's Select Bibliography:

Mathis, David. *Habits of Grace: Enjoying Jesus Through the Spiritual Disciplines*. Wheaton: Crossway, 2016.

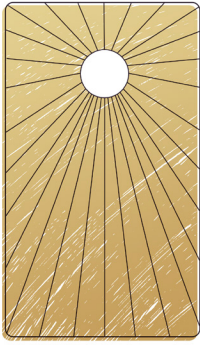
Whitney, Donald S. *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life, Rev. and Updated*. Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2014.

Whitney, Donald S. *Praying the Bible*. Wheaton: Crossway, 2015.

Questions for Reflection and Discussion

Donald Whitney:

1. Can you relate to the common perception of prayer that “we say the same old things about the same old things?”
2. We generally pray about “the same old things,” but how do we grow so that we do not “say the same old things”?
3. What is the difference between praying the Bible as opposed to praying without the Bible?
4. Please share your reflections about your seven-minute prayer experience.



Dr. Robert Smith, Jr.

Charles T. Carter Baptist Chair of Divinity and Professor of Christian Preaching
Beeson Divinity School, Birmingham, Alabama

The Psalms and Christian Preaching

Dr. Smith's Select Bibliography:

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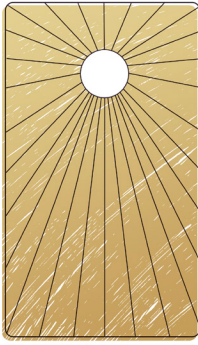
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2021 SCHEDULE

February 3-4, 2021 – Livestream

The Psalms: The Undershepherds' Shepherd

Wednesday, February 3

- 12:50 p.m.** Instrumental Music – Michael Strand
- 1 p.m.** Scripture and Worship – Michael Strand
- 1:20 p.m.** Theme Introduction – Greg Strand
- 1:45 p.m.** **Session 1: The Psalms and Christian Worship – Scott Manetsch**
- 2:30 p.m.** Q & A
- 2:45 p.m.** Break
- 3:05 p.m.** **Session 2: The Psalms, Christ, and the Christian Scriptures – James Hamilton**
- 3:55 p.m.** Q & A
- 4:15 p.m.** Dismiss – Greg Strand

Thursday, February 4

- 8:20 a.m.** Instrumental Music – Michael Strand
- 8:30 a.m.** Scripture and Worship – Michael Strand
- 8:45 a.m.** **Session 3: The Psalms and Christian Living – Walter Kim**
- 9:50 a.m.** Q & A
- 10:05 a.m.** Break
- 10:20 a.m.** **Session 4: The Psalms and Christian Lament – Mark Vroegop**
- 11:10 a.m.** Q & A

- 11:25 p.m.** Lunch Break
- 12:25 p.m.** Scripture and Worship – Michael Strand
- 12:40 p.m.** **Session 5: The Psalms and Christian Prayer – Don Whitney**
- 1:30 p.m.** Q & A
- 1:45 p.m.** Break
- 2:00 p.m.** **Session 6: The Psalms and Christian Preaching – Robert Smith**
- 2:50 p.m.** Q & A
- 3:15 p.m.** Closing Comments

