

Purpose

- To learn about the book of Psalm.
- To learn about the book of Ecclesiastes.
- To look at the book, Song of Songs, or Song of Solomon.
- To learn about Isaiah.

Materials

- Bibles
- Handouts

Background Information**PSALM**

The book of Psalm is a collection of 150 poems. Each chapter (each psalm) stands on its own and is not necessarily connected with the psalm before or after it. These psalms are passionate expressions of love and devotion to God. They are songs of the human heart lifted up to God. Every human emotion – from great joy to bitter despair-is expressed somewhere in these chapters. The psalms were originally sung – can you imagine Bible karaoke!! God enjoys it when his praises are not only spoken in words, but also sung in songs. Some were sung by the choir in the temple. Some were very personal songs sung by one person to God.

Most books of the Bible have only one author. The book of Psalm was written by many authors over a long period of time in a wide variety of situations. Each psalm was written individually and later collected into one book. You may hear Psalm called “The Psalms of David” but only half were written by King David. The dates of the psalms span a thousand years. They were collected in five stages during Israel’s history, so we have five divisions of volumes in one long biblical book.

Often above the text and under the number of the Psalm a “superscription” is there. Look up Psalm 50. Here it says *A Psalm of Asaph*. That means Psalm 50 was written by Asaph. Now look at Psalm 51 here we learn more. Psalm 51 was written by David. We also learn that it was written when Nathan, a prophet, came to him after David had committed adultery with Bathsheba. Not every psalm has a superscription, but don’t ignore the ones we have.

It is also interesting that the Psalm was written and looks like poetry, but it doesn’t rhyme. Remember that Psalms was written in Hebrew, but it doesn’t rhyme even in Hebrew.

Since the psalms were written with passion and emotion, try to read them with passion and emotion.

There are several styles or kinds of psalms.

- 1- Praise psalms – these exalt the Lord’s character or work.

- 2- Lament psalms (sad songs of despair or sorrow) – these are asking God to deliver or rescue him, they sometimes show frustration with God
- 3- Wisdom psalms – these talk about how God wants us to live our lives
- 4- Kingship psalms – these focus on the human king, but look beyond the King of Israel to the Lord God
- 5- Temple psalms – these were used in the formal worship of God.

The psalms touch our lives wherever we are emotionally-and they work instantly to bring relief. When we are discouraged, the psalms lift us up. When we are lonely or confused, these songs bring assurance to our spirits. When we are afraid, they put their arms around us and encourage us. When we are bursting with joy, they give expression to our happiness.

Many people have a favorite psalm and memorize it so that they can repeat it quickly when they need its comfort. One of the most commonly memorized Psalms is Psalm 23. Look it up and read it. See if it is different in different translations. My favorite is Psalm 121.

ECCLESIASTES

The book of Ecclesiastes is the journal of a man who tried everything the world has to offer and found it all empty. He's the guy who bails out of his life as a hardworking, faithfully married family man to buy a Corvette and date younger women. He's got the money and the time to do it all! But he ends up depressed, disillusioned, and close to despair. Fortunately, our friend wrote about this journey. He started with high hopes but ended on a dead-end street.

We are not sure who wrote this book, but many think it was King Solomon. (We studied him earlier) If Solomon did write this book he did it as the end of his life. He just wanted to learn from his mistakes.

SONG OF SONGS

The book Song of Songs (Solomon) is a story about a romantic love between a woman and a man.

Many believe that Solomon wrote this book also. If so he wrote this as a young man in the first bloom of love.

As you read this you will laugh many times because they thought some of the phrases were romantic, but they sound silly to us. For instance -- imagine telling your girl friend "your hair is like a flock of goats descending from Mount Gilead. That's certainly not what I want my boyfriend to say to me.

You may want to read this now or wait until you are older.

ISAIAH

Isaiah wrote the book of Isaiah. Many refer to Isaiah as a Bible in miniature. There are 66 books in the Bible and 66 chapters in Isaiah. Isaiah has two major sections just like the Bible. The first division of Isaiah contains thirty-nine chapters and covers

the rebellion and sinfulness of God's people the same way the Old Testament records Israel's failure to follow the Lord. The twenty-seven chapters of the second division of Isaiah parallel the twenty-seven books of the New Testament. In Isaiah this section announces that God will send a deliverer and it ends with a description of the new heavens and new earth. This is also true of the New Testament.

Isaiah's ministry spanned the reigns of five kings in the southern kingdom of Judah. He had the longest ministry of any prophet except Daniel. We know more personal stuff about Isaiah than any other prophet. He was the son of Amoz and he was probably one of the "royals" in Judah. Isaiah was married to a prophetess – we have no name for her- and they had two sons with incredible names –Shear-Jashub and Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz. What kind of parents give names that that to a little boy. Isaiah was the official historian for King Uzziah and King Hezekiah. He was highly trained as a scribe and had wide experience as an advisor to kings. His book is written in impressive Hebrew. You can tell it was written by a Professional writer.

Isaiah was also a very practical man. He spoke to people living in a shaky, uncertain world. Any day could bring the crisis of captivity or war-or downsizing or disability or any disaster. He challenged people in crisis to look to God alone for security. In a world falling apart, the only certainty could be found in an unfailing God.

Isaiah opens with Isaiah with a message to the spiritually diseased people of Judah. He preaches to the people that a Messiah is coming to tell them about God and tell of the reign of the Messiah as king. He then warns about an invasion by Assyria. God used Assyria to turn the Jews hearts back to God. Isaiah also tells the people of Judah that God's judgment will not last forever. He also stated that this Messiah would suffer for the sins of God's people. Doesn't this sound like the New Testament?

Isaiah always placed his trust in the Lord. This is proven in Chapter 6 when he reports standing at the entrance to the temple built Solomon. He suddenly feels that he (Isaiah) is standing in God's temple in the heavens. A great gathering of God's servants is discussing with God what to do about events in Judah. Clouds of smoke swirl around while seraphs chant of God's holiness. Isaiah confesses that he and his people are unclean and a ceremony of cleansing if done right there in the temple. This was not a ritual done by the Jews. A voice cries, "Whom, shall I send, and who will go for us?" At that point Isaiah cries, "Here am I; send me!" When we think of Isaiah we think of "Here I am Lord, send me."

Isaiah is a prophet who spends much of his life within the circle of the king's advisors, helping kings to rule more justly than they otherwise might have ruled. He is free to speak sharply against the kings when necessary but he is clearly a person actively involved in the political process. No doubt, this approach of Isaiah is partly responsible for his having been such an important prophetic figure for so many years in Judah.

Procedure

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- Read background information on Psalm.
- Give handout 49-1 You can look up one like help and see what Psalm 121 has to say about getting help from God.
- Read handout 49-2. I found it very interesting.
- Handout 49-3 and 49-4 are just for fun. I do have answers if you need.
- Read background information on Ecclesiastes and Song of Songs.
- Read background information on Isaiah. There are some very interesting facts in this, Isaiah is a very important person in the Old Testament, Save this in your folder because you might need it later.