

Journal Psalms in the First Person, as though God Himself were speaking to you

The Psalms are written from the point of view of the Psalmist talking about God. But what would it sound like if God Himself spoke the Psalms to you? Not David talking about the Shepherd, but the Shepherd Himself speaking Psalm 23...

This model came from an unusual experience I had while facilitating a prayer retreat for Cornell University. The students had time alone to journal in Psalm 23 and John 10 about the Shepherd/sheep relationship. As I prepared to journal, I had a slightly pessimistic thought, "I probably won't get anything new out of Psalm 23." Then the most amazing thing happened. It was like God showed up with a smile on His face. "So, you don't think you'll get anything new out of Psalm 23?" That's when He gave me Psalm 23 in the First Person, as though Jesus, the Shepherd was speaking of Himself! After speaking, He seemed to smile and say, "You can do this in the rest of Psalms if you would like. And you can tell your friends about this experience." Here is Psalm 23 that I received that day in the Adirondack Mountains of New York:

"I, the LORD, I am your Shepherd. You have no need of anything because I am all you need. I will lead you to green pastures and cause you to lie down. I will lead you to quiet waters, to waters of rest, and cause you to drink your fill. I am very serious about your rest and restoration. I will even restore your soul. I will guide you, not push you, down the particular path of righteousness, for the sake of My name. You will know this is the right path because you will see My tracks, My footprints of righteousness and holiness right in front of you. When I say so, together we will leave this quiet and restful place and go to other places that are not so restful. Some of these places may be scary. Some will be places of deep darkness and even death. But don't be afraid, I'm with you. My footprints are still right in front of you. My rod and My staff will touch you during those dark and scary times to keep you on the path and to reassure you of My presence. I may even prepare a table before you right in front of your enemies. But remember, I'm right there too! I will anoint your head with My oil. It's My oil of authority and recognition as well as My oil of healing for your wounds. Your cup will run over with Me! With My very presence. You will become more and more convinced that My goodness and My lovingkindness will aggressively pursue you for your entire lifetime. You will also become more and more convinced that you will live comfortably in My house for all the length of your days, not only on this earth, but in eternity! I love you! You are that little lamb on My shoulders!"



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As I began to experiment receiving other Psalms in the first person, several principles soon fell into place. First, this is much more a listening exercise than a writing exercise. There is harm in forcing yourself to write something. There is freedom and peace in waiting and soaking in a Psalm. Allow God to speak. Give yourself freedom to experiment. This is for enjoyment and relationship. This is not about doing it right or wrong. It is about intimacy with the Lord.

This is a meditative exercise in which you are asking God, “What would it sound like if You, Lord spoke this Psalm to me right now, in the first person? I don’t want to put words in Your mouth. I don’t want my imagination to run away with me. But I do want to use my imagination, as well as my heart, my soul, my mind, all of my faculties. What I want more than anything is to truly hear Your voice. Would You give me ears to hear and block out all distractions? Please engage with my heart through David’s Journal, the Psalms.”

I would encourage you to have several translations available and open. Observe the footnotes, definitions and cross references that expand the meaning of the passage. Live in one Psalm for a period of time. The objective is not speed. You are not trying to do one Psalm a day. The Psalms flowed out of David’s life (as well as Moses, Asaph, Solomon, and the sons of Korah...). Now you want the Psalms to flow out of your life and into your life. You may spend hours or even days reflecting, meditating, soaking, marinating in a favorite Psalm. Let the Psalm live. Let it breathe. Let it live in you. Let God speak.

- ☞ Relax. Enjoy the exercise. Pray, “Lord, what would it sound like if you spoke this Psalm to me?”
- ☞ Soak in the Psalm. Read it meditatively in several translations. Allow fresh, new phrases to form.
- ☞ Allow the footnotes and cross references to add color and meaning to the Psalm.
- ☞ Allow your sanctified imagination to soar and expand the Psalm.
- ☞ Work on one complete thought at a time. Don’t force it.
- ☞ Allow God to take your pen and add His personalized phrases.
- ☞ Listen to the Lord speak these thoughts to your heart.
- ☞ This is much more a heart exercise than a head exercise.
- ☞ Once you have finished the Psalm, read it over and over and receive it as the Lord’s blessing to you.
- ☞ Suggested Psalms: 1, 15, 24, 27, 34, 40, 42, 51, 57, 63, 84, 91, 96, 97, 98, 99, 139

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