

Psalms: Expressing Our Emotions

Lesson 9 - For or Against?

Warm up -

1. Did you ever read someone else's diary? What caused you to do such a dastardly deed?

2. Think of a parent or one of your best friends. Check all the emotions you have felt regarding this person in the last month.

_anger

_joy

_frustration

_sorrow

_love

_pain

_bewilderment

_other:_____

3. Although you may have felt all these different emotions, how would you describe the relationship overall?

Lesson -

Ever read someone else's diary? Well, you shouldn't - even if your sister leaves hers lying in plain view! But if the diary is published as a book, I guess it's OK. Anne Frank's *Diary of a Young Girl*, for instance, is the record of a young Jewish girl's honest, straight-from-the-heart thoughts and feelings, written while she and her family were in hiding from the Nazis during the second World War.

If you haven't read Anne Frank's diary, there's another famous diary you probably have read. It's called the book of Psalms. According to writer Philip Yancey, psalms are "personal prayers in the form of poetry, written by a variety of different people - peasants, kings, professional musicians, rank amateurs - in wildly fluctuating moods" (*The Bible Jesus Read*).

Now, if you've ever written personal stuff in a diary or journal, you know your moods fluctuate all over the place. One day you're way up; the next you are down low. That's the way it is with the psalms, our topic for the next few weeks. Sometimes the psalmists almost go crazy praising God for everything in sight; other times they grumble and grouse about why the good guys suffer while the bad guys live on easy street. And lots of times both things happen in a single psalm. 'Tis a puzzle.

But remember, the psalmists were people like us. They didn't set out to write a catechism book. They just wrote about life and how they felt about stuff that was happening to them every day. They let God know exactly what they were thinking and how they were feeling. They poured out their praise and their questions and their anger toward God. Why? Because they wanted to talk to God, and because they knew God really wants to hear.

So let's get started with the very first psalm. It's about making a choice, the most important choice of our lives. We have two - and only two - roads to choose from: with God or against God. The psalmist makes it pretty obvious which choice makes the most sense to him.

Read Psalm 1

1. As you read this, look for how the writer describes good people and how he describes the wicked.
2. How does the image of a tree "replanted in Eden" help us understand what it's like to be a person who loves God?
3. The psalmist is talking about someone who "thrills to God's Word." What is this person doing?
4. The psalmist seems to be saying that everything you do either moves you closer toward or further from God. (Or closer to or further from trouble.) Do you agree? What difference does this make to the way you make everyday choices?
5. How does verse 6, "God charts the road you take," comfort you? Talk about a time when you experienced God watching over you.

6. What will you take from this psalm that will help you during the week ahead?

7. This psalm does not always seem true - it doesn't always match your experience . What mood do you have to be in to appreciate this psalm?

8. Do you "thrill to God's Word"? What kinds of things can you do to share the psalmist's delight in finding out more about God? How does being in this Bible study help you to "chew on Scripture day and night?"