

Christian student ministry workers in Sweden developed a series of questions to ask when reading a Bible passage. Called the “Swedish Method” because of its origins, these questions can be used when reading the Bible by yourself or with others.

The daily readings in this family worship guide have a few questions. However, we encourage you, as appropriate for your family, to ask the following general questions of the text each day.



Is there something that ‘shines’ from the passage—whatever impacts most, or draws attention?



Is there something you don’t understand, or a question the passage raises in your mind?



Is there a personal application to your life?



Is there something you plan to share with someone else – and who will you share it with?



How do ideas in the passage interrelate? Or with other passages in this book – or in the whole Bible?

Worshipping Together is part of the vision and is a ministry of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Frankston, Victoria, Australia. frankstonrp.org.au bit.ly/WTrpcaf

The concept and layout draws heavily from *Let’s Worship God*, a ministry of the Reformed Presbyterian Church in Airdrie, Scotland. airdrierpcs.org

The readings are from Tim Chester’s 3-year weekly reading plan. bit.ly/WkBbl or bit.ly/3yrBbl

The quote on the cover is from the article *What Shampoo and Family Worship Have in Common*, Written by Randy Greenwald, (Quoted from *Tabletalk* magazine, Nov 1997.)

All the notes this week are from Chapter 6 (*Cursing in Faith with the Psalms of Imprecation*) in Michael LeFebvre’s book, *Singing the Songs of Jesus: Revisiting the Psalms*

Worshipping Together



We love God because He first loved us.

And we love to tell God that we love Him.

Joyful and faithful worship together twice each Lord’s Day is the highlight of our week. We are glad that they said, “Let us go to the House of the Lord.” Corporate worship prepares us for the week and prepares us for Heaven.

In addition, we regularly worship God as families and as individuals.

One father put it this way:

The back of my shampoo bottle says, “Lather, rinse, repeat.” Simple enough that even I can do it. Though family worship may be a bit more complicated than shampooing hair, it ought not to be rated with “home dentistry” in the scale of difficulty.



If you could buy family worship in the store, it would come in the form of a Bible, and the directions would simply say, “Read, pray, repeat.” Men should gather their families at least once daily. They should read a portion of the Scriptures to them. And they should pray with them. There need be no fireworks or pizzazz to keep the kids interested. There needs to be only a father* with a heart-love for God – who desires to see that love appropriated by his children.*

Read, pray, repeat.

* Fathers leading their family in worship is always the goal. When, in the Lord’s providence, the father is absent or uninterested, a godly mother will lead her children

Reading

Psalm 137:1-4 By the Rivers of Babylon

Notes

(All the notes this week are from Chapter 6 (*Cursing in Faith with the Psalms of Imprecation*) in Michael LeFebvre's book, *Singing the Songs of Jesus: Revisiting the Psalms*)

While it has sometimes been argued that the imprecations in the Psalms are remnants of an 'Old Testament ethic' which has no place in the Christian church, we have to recognize that prayers for judgment are as much a feature of the New Testament church as the Old

In Mark 11:12-26, the Evangelist reports an imprecation that Jesus announced against the temple. In Matthew 23:1-36, Jesus delivers a series of curses against the scribes and pharisees. On the Isle of Cyprus, Paul called down judgment upon Elymas (Acts 13:10-11). Peter likewise pronounced Christ's judgment on Simon the magician in Acts 8:20. In fact, in Galatians 1:8-9, Paul actually instructs us to pronounce Christ's curse on those who bring heresy into the church (cf., Titus 3:10-11; 1 John 5:16). Furthermore, in the Book of Revelation, we are told that the saints in heaven pray for judgment on the foes of the church (Rev. 6:10).

Imprecation is not strictly an Old Testament feature. It is found all through the Scriptures, even on the lips of the apostles, of Christ himself, and in the assemblies in heaven. But in all these examples, the judgments announced are articulations of God's judgment, not personal vendetta.

Questions

(see back page for explanation of symbols)

1. Why do we have prayers for judgment in the Bible?
2. What are some of these prayers in the New Testament?
3. Whose judgment is announced in these prayers? Whose isn't?

4.     

Praise

Psalm 137a²

Pray

1. Commit in prayer to understanding this Psalm, by God's help
2. Pray for a member of your church
3. Pray for your family
4. Pray for a non-Christian friend/family member

¹ You will notice we only have a printed guide for 6 days. We recommend each Lord's Day you review the previous week's readings and/or the previous or current week's sermons and pray together

² Psalm selections are taken from the *Book of Psalms for Worship*. We encourage our congregation to sing the same selection each day for a week to gain familiarity with the selection

Reading

Psalm 137:1-9 Happy is the one

Notes

(All the notes this week are from Chapter 6 (*Cursing in Faith with the Psalms of Imprecation*) in Michael LeFebvre's book, *Singing the Songs of Jesus: Revisiting the Psalms*)

It is crucial to note that it is *God's* judgment that is here proclaimed. The Psalm is not leading us to invent our own judgment, our own sense of 'what those Babylonians deserve,' and then attaching God's name to it. We have no right, either in blessing or in cursing, to announce our own ideas and then attach God's name to it. The curses announced in Psalm 137 are a sung articulation of the judgments which the LORD himself had pronounced [in] Isa. 13:1-16.

The similarity of wording between Isaiah 13 and Psalm 137 suggest that the Psalm is, indeed, invoking this known announcement of judgment already declared by God. It is not inventing a new judgment. It is a horrible warning that God had given! It is supposed to be horrible. None of us, especially parents of little ones, can or should enjoy that vision. But perhaps it is in Psalms like this that we finally come to realize just how horrible and treacherous human sin is before God. It is *that* horrible to God, that this indeed is just judgment.

The announcement of judgment down to the littlest is presented as a message of hope and rest, not because there is delight in such destruction (cf., Ezek. 18:32), but because of what it accomplishes. It is a *final* judgment, so that this persistent and perpetual source of persecution will now stop and be no more, forever. Violence will be laid to rest forever, never to rise again. It is always the announcement, not of judgment, but of *final* judgment, which brings true rest to God's people (cf., Ps. 34:16; 109:13-15).

Questions

(see back page for explanation of symbols)

1. What must limit any blessing or curse we offer in God's name?
2. What is made clear by God's horrible judgment?
3. How does the hope of final judgment give God's people rest?

4.     

Praise

Psalm 137a

Pray

1. Thank God that there will be final rest for His people
2. Pray for your family
3. Pray for a non-Christian friend/family member
4. Pray for the reading and preaching of God's word tomorrow

Reading

Psalm 137:1-9 Remember, Lord

Notes

(All the notes this week are from Chapter 6 (*Cursing in Faith with the Psalms of Imprecation*) in Michael LeFebvre's book, *Singing the Songs of Jesus: Revisiting the Psalms*)

Only secondly, then, do we find the Psalm leading us in pronouncing God's judgment upon the Babylonian and Edomite persecutors (vv. 7-9).

Imprecatory Psalms remind us that Jesus is a good king, but not a 'tame' king. He is a just king, who loves his people and comes to their aid. Sometimes he brings peace to his church by bringing our persecutors to their knees in repentance and faith, like Saul who once ravaged the church but was converted himself into a great minister in the church (Acts 9:1-31). What a glorious deliverance that is when that happens! But sometimes God brings peace by exacting justice on persecutors, like when he brought Herod's sentence of death on James, and attempt to kill Peter, upon his own head, by which judgment 'the word of God increased and multiplied' (Acts 12:1-24).

There is, at the heart of the Christian faith, a gospel that announces both life and death, forgiveness and judgment, eternal life and eternal damnation. These are not contradictory, but rather express the unified glory of God applied to sinful humanity, saving many to life and passing over many to judgment. Jesus teaches us to pray according to the *fullness* of the gospel. And in the Psalms, he provides for our meditation and singing according to the fullness of the gospel.

Questions

(see back page for explanation of symbols)

1. What 2 different ways does Jesus come to his people's aid?
2. What are both, non-contradicting sides to the gospel?
3. How does Jesus teach us to sing and meditate in this Psalm?

4.     

Praise

Pray

Psalm 137a

1. Pray for persecuted Christians throughout the world
2. Pray for a member of your church
3. Pray for your family
4. Pray for a non-Christian friend/family member

Reading

Psalm 137:1-4 We remembered Zion

Notes

(All the notes this week are from Chapter 6 (*Cursing in Faith with the Psalms of Imprecation*) in Michael LeFebvre's book, *Singing the Songs of Jesus: Revisiting the Psalms*)

Of the various imprecatory lines in the Psalter, probably none has caused as much difficulty as the vivid expressions in Psalm 137. This is the Psalm which closes with the graphic words of judgment against Edom and Babylon (v. 9): Blessed shall he be who takes your little ones and dashes them against the rock!

Reading commentaries on this Psalm, you will find all manner of ways in which men try to explain this awful description...All these approaches are demonstrations of a spirit of Christian grace seeking to make sense of how so horrible a petition should fit into Christian hymnody. But rather than sidestepping or softening the image (it is supposed to be dreadful; judgment is a terrible thing), we'll best appreciate its place in the Christian faith by making sense of its role within this Psalm.

The opening verses (w. 1-4) give us the tone and setting of this sad hymn. Historically, the Psalm is recalling the exile of Judah into Babylon (2 Kings 24-25... Raping, pillaging, burning, plundering, and torturing the Jews, the Babylonian army devastated the kingdom, carrying off the survivors into captivity.

Anguish is running high in this Psalm. But notice in these opening lines, that the Babylonian cruelty *against us* is not the main focus here. What grieves us most deeply of all is how they have mocked the LORD and defiled *his* house in their cruelties to this people! This is not a song of personal vengeance; it is a song which helps us to 'remember Zion' in this time of sorrow.

Questions

(see back page for explanation of symbols)

1. What is this Psalm remembering in Israel's history?
2. What is more significant even than cruelty against God's people?
3. Why is it important to "remember Zion" in hard times?

4.     

Praise

Pray

Psalm 137a

1. Commit in prayer to remember God's church under hostility
2. Pray for a member of your church
3. Pray for your family
4. Pray for a non-Christian friend/family member

Reading

Psalm 137:1-6 How can we sing?

Notes
(All the notes this week are from Chapter 6 (*Cursing in Faith with the Psalms of Imprecation*) in Michael LeFebvre's book, *Singing the Songs of Jesus: Revisiting the Psalms*)

First of all, in Psalm 137, we remember what they did to violate God's house in the past ('we remember Zion'). Furthermore, then, we agonize that the mocking and persecution continues and will not stop. Even here, back in Babylon, 'our captors required of us songs...saying, "Sing us one of the songs of Zion!" How shall we sing the Lord's song in a foreign land?'

The point here is that the Babylonians were continuing to mock Israel's God. They were asking the captives to sing the songs which boast of God's greatness, all the while laughing in mirth at the God whom these Hebrew Psalms celebrate with such majesty, but whose house and people *they* had just humbled. The response of the captives was to hang their harps and weep: how could they sing of the glory and majesty of God who had just let this happen?

Isn't that a feeling which you have at least encountered, in some form or another, before? How can I praise a God who just let this happen (whatever, in your experience, the 'this' might be)? And that is where a Psalm like 137 is vital for sustaining Christian faith and praise. When we have sinned, we need to turn to Psalms of repentance. When God has been mocked, we need hymns that help us to wrestle with that, too.

Questions
(see back page for explanation of symbols)

1. How were God's people being mocked?
2. Why is it hard to praise God when hard things happen?
3. How does this Psalm help us sustain our faith and praise?

4.     

Praise Pray

Psalm 137a

1. Commit in prayer to praise God even when He lets hard things happen
2. Pray for a member of your church
3. Pray for your family
4. Pray for a non-Christian friend/family member

Reading

Psalm 137:1-6 If I do not remember you...

Notes
(All the notes this week are from Chapter 6 (*Cursing in Faith with the Psalms of Imprecation*) in Michael LeFebvre's book, *Singing the Songs of Jesus: Revisiting the Psalms*)

Because of the shocking image of the condemnation called down on the children of Babylon and Edom in verse 9, we often overlook the fact that the imprecation of this Psalm is actually double-sided. And the first imprecation is invoked against myself, when I sing it.

How can I praise God in the midst of the utter collapse of the church before the world? The sense to which verses 1-5 brings us is one of surrender: we cannot sing any longer. But we must. And that is the determined resolve which now emerges. I must continue to play my harp; I must continue to sing to the God of Jerusalem with my tongue. In fact, if during these years of captivity and oppression, we set aside the Psalms of faith and glory and abandon our faith in God's sovereign redemption, may it be that my hand and my tongue serve no other purpose. The very purpose for which I exist is to glorify God, and if that stops, then so must everything else I do.

In Psalm 137, Christ as our covenant king is leading us in a profession of faithfulness to God even in the deepest of sorrows and injustices. The first imprecation of this Psalm is one that we take upon ourselves.

Questions
(see back page for explanation of symbols)

1. What is the first imprecation of this Psalm?
2. Why is it so hard to praise God in the midst of deep trouble?
3. What is our primary purpose and how does this Psalm relate?

4.     

Praise Pray

Psalm 137a

1. Rejoice in prayer that Christ our covenant King leads us in faithfulness to God even in injustices
2. Pray for a member of your church
3. Pray for your family
4. Pray for a non-Christian friend/family member